



著
Y・A

八男って、それは ないかでしょう!

11







エルヴィン

「ヴェンデリンさん、壁と床に刻まれた模様のなにが嬉しいのでしょうか?」

「やあ?」

カタリーナも俺も考古学者じゃないからなあ。お宝のない、埃とカビだらけの地下遺跡になんて興味はない。

アーネスト

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Prologue - Demon

"Say, Wend. We have forgotten due to the final moments of the enemy's boss, but..." (Luise)

"Forgot?" (Wendelin)

"Did the demon die?" (Luise)

"Damn! I totally forgot!" (Wendelin)

Being reminded by Luise, I hurriedly order the soldiers to search for the demon in the wreckage of the huge golem.

However, faster than discovering him, the demon appeared from below the wreckage.

Yet, the blisters are terrible and he apparently can't move well as his body's functions are seemingly paralyzed.

"It's not fatal though, is it?"

"I suppose demons are tough..."

Although she examined the demon medically, there's no danger to his life. I was astonished by the strength of a demon's vitality.

"If possible, I would like you to heal me."

"Since we wouldn't be able to handle you if you went on a rampage after healing you, I'd like you to die just like that, if possible." (Wendelin)

There's still a huge amount of mana remaining in this demon.

It would be difficult to disable him once more, if he went ballistic after getting healed.

Since I would hate being killed by an opponent that I already defeated once, I'd like him to pass away here, even though it's a bit pitiful.

"It might be better to finish him off here." (Ina)

Everyone agrees with Ina's opinion.

"Uuh...how brutal of you, Earl Baumeister..."

"That's not something I want to be told by you, who caused a rebellion and took part in a genocide." (Wendelin)

I responded cynically to the selfish complaint of the demon.

As I was pondering what to do about this demon, Wilma pulled my robe.

"Wend-sama." (Wilma)

"Yes?" (Wendelin)

"Won't it turn into a problem with the Demon Country if you kill this demon?" (Wilma)

"Oooh! There was that, too!" (Therese)

Therese, who should know the most about this whole story among us, agrees with Wilma and her strangely sharp intuition.

"The possibility that the demon country will dispatch its soldiers because one of its citizens was killed certainly exists." (Therese)

Once it becomes an international issue, I don't know what excuse to attack they might use. I guess we shouldn't risk anything.

"Therese-san, this demon has taken part in the civil war..." (Katharina)

"That's true, but we have no choice but to take an evasion of a war with the Demon Country into consideration..." (Therese)

Emotionally I agree with Katharina's opinion, but if one considers the risk of a dispute with the demon country, one is compelled to approve of Therese's thinking.

"Even though the civil war has ended at long last, the Empire would enter a war against the Demon Country. No, in this case it's also possible that the Kingdom will be targeted as well. There's a danger that we will be attacked before both countries are able to mend their relationship." (Therese)

The only one knowledgeable about demons among us is Therese, the former Duchess Philip. Katharina, who has become a noble suddenly just like me, didn't possess that knowledge.

"I believe that mana surpassing Wendelin-san's is terrifying, but...is this person, no, are the demons that much of a threat?" (Katharina)

"It seems that all demons possess a lot of mana. However at most that's knowledge I obtained from old books..." (Therese)

I guess that means that their entire army consists of powerful magicians. Even if we defeated some of them by throwing the few magicians we have at them, the soldiers, who can't use magic, would be simply overrun as soon as we got defeated. Certainly, we can't easily choose to kill this demon.

"Doushi, what should we do?" (Wendelin)

"Hey, demon! We can heal you, but I can't recommend you to oppose us!" (Armstrong)

Doushi doesn't seem to be very amused about his own way of talking to resemble with the demon, but he probably decided to separate his own feelings and his political deliberations. He chose the option to save him.

"You magicians of the Helmut Kingdom belong to the cautious types. Even if I were to fight you here, allowing me to escape, I will be captured by the imperial soldier on the upper floors and die. This esteemed me prefers to avoid anything pointless."

"Don't give me such impudent talk... Elise, please heal him." (Armstrong)

"Yes, uncle-sama." (Elise)

Once Elise cast some light healing magic, the demon, who couldn't move well, recovered and stood up. Even though he had received damage from an overdose of healing magic, it's not like the healing magic will stay in his body forever. Thus, he easily recovers with light healing magic. That was one of the reasons why the phenomenon of over-healing couldn't be utilized readily. That being the case, it's more effective to attack with normal magic.

"You have my thanks for the treatment. This esteemed me is called Arnest Blitz. I'm an archaeologist of the Demon Country." (Arnest)

"Archaeologist?"

The mysterious, middle-aged man with a big, white tuxedo on his head introduces himself as archaeologist.

"Quite so. The object of my life is the investigation and exploration of unknown underground ruins." (Arnest)

We are immediately told about his circumstances by the demon, but he boasts that he sneaked into this country as illegal immigrant from the western island that is the Demon Country. After smuggling himself in, he heard rumors of many undiscovered ruins within the Nürnberg Dukedom. He accepted to repair the excavated items as compensation for being allowed to investigate those ruins.

In the end it was no more than a give-and-take partnership, he says.

"Give-and-take, eh...?" (Armstrong)

"That's quite the egoistic view after having caused this many casualties." (Katharina)

Even Katharina, who endured many things herself as former loner, follows Doushi's view and seems to be disgusted with this demon.

"As I am an archaeologist, I wanted to investigate and explore underground ruins. The permission of Duke Nürnberg, the feudal lord, was necessary for that." (Arnest)

The demon had also talent as researcher and artificer. That's why the weapons used by Duke Nürnberg's feudal army were items which had been made usable by this demon repairing the excavated items.

"Even if the owner of a knife, which had been given to them by me after making it usable, commits murder, this esteemed me can not do anything about it." (Arnest)

"Hey! Don't screw around with us!" (Erwin)

"Erw-san, please calm down." (Haruka)

Erw snapped due to the demon's blunt shirking of any responsibility.
Haruka restrains him in a hurry.

"Even if you get angry over that; that agreement allowed me to freely investigate the ruins located within the Dukedom Nürnberg." (Arnest)

I could understand and accept it as valid.

He is a scholar with all his heart.

He merely acts for the sake of quenching his thirst for knowledge, and doesn't consider the problems he creates to others with that.

I won't go as far as calling him a Mad Archaeologist, but he might be a typical researcher.

And that type of people is actually capable of achieving results because they partially lack morals.

In accordance to the contract with Duke Nürnberg, he repaired the items excavated from underground ruins, allowing those items to exhibit their might on the battlefield. He has assisted in the civil war, but the one who caused that was no other than Duke Nürnberg.

It's also his way of thinking that he fought in the huge golem to defend himself...and if you consider his birthplace, we can't simply execute him either.

"Enough of that. Even if you try to harm us or run away, it will turn into a nice story of us all beating you up. Our goal is the investigation of the rooms located on this deepest floor. I will have you guide us." (Wendelin)

"You can leave that to me. First off, the ornamental crest engraved on this wall is typical for the latter period of the Ancient Magic Civilization's era..." (Arnest)

"No, not that." (Wendelin)

The demon was about to start an explanation of the crest on the wall, but since that's meaningless right now, I directed the talk towards the whereabouts of the excavated items.

"The location of the excavated items? I have already finished their examination and as such can't see any scientific value in them." (Arnest)

"Even if that's the case for you as archaeologist, seeing that the items are indispensable if you live in the real world, there will be people who will try to find them, making it necessary to get rid of them appropriately." (Wendelin)

"I understand." (Arnest)

The demon first guides us inside the room behind the wall crushed by the golem.

There we found a device that seemed to be a combination of a huge antenna with a length of around 15 meters and a typewriter.

"Is this the device jamming 『Movement』 and 『Communication』?" (Wendelin)

It looks like it was a good idea to fire spells following Therese's advice.
With a part of the antenna broken, it lost its ability to emit jamming waves.

"I guess it'll work once repaired?"

"Is there such a magic tool?"

There's no merit in expressly saving a device that obstructs magic, my sole selling point.

"I do not mind if you break it, but I recommend to set aside the parts that can be used in the future."
(Arnest)

Advanced magic tools are an assembly of many parts. There are also many parts that can be reused in other magic tools.

The demon advises us that we shouldn't destroy it all of a sudden, but rather do so after salvaging all those parts.

"Especially the magic crystal that has been used in this device is huge." (Arnest)

"You supplied the mana used in this device, didn't you?"

"This esteemed me is an expert in investigation and analysis. I also had the task of repairing and maintaining the excavated items because of that. Consequently it's not like I was next to this device all the time. I activated the device by charging a huge amount of mana into the huge magic crystal."
(Arnest)

The demon opened a hatch on the back side of the device, revealing the magic crystal installed there.

"I guess he readily explained everything..."

Upon my order, soldiers led by Erw begin to collect the magic tools scattered on the lowest floor. They gather various items such as destroyed breath-emitting devices, the wreckage of the huge golem, spare parts for the golem, a golem that seems to be a prototype I don't really understand and items that look like weapons.

"As long as it's explanation and repair of technology, I can handle it."

"Then it's fine."

I put all the collected items into my magic bag.

There's no issue with that since the handling of the plundered loot is up to us, even if this is imperial territory.

Since there's the possibility that the Empire will start a war with Kingdom next because the imperial army got too strong after confiscating the magic tools from Nürnberg Dukedom after the civil war, I collect all of them.

What's left is...

"Arnest Blitz, can't you disguise yourself?" (Wendelin)

"I am pleased to hear that you have remembered mine name. I am able to do as you say." (Arnest)

"Change into a human then." (Wendelin)

There's no way that I can hand over this demon to Peter.

Given that this guy will be happy as long as he can illegally excavate undiscovered underground ruins, he will join forces with any kind of villain as long as that's guaranteed.

I will hide him in the Kingdom or the Baumeister Earldom as it's necessary to learn about demons. Because the demons haven't shown up on this Lingaia Continent for close to 10,000 years, it might turn into a scramble to understand their true nature.

"Magic tools for disguising also existed in the Ancient Magic Civilization." (Arnest)

Arnest takes out a ring from his pocket and puts it on a finger.

He immediately transformed into a middle-aged male soldier one can find anywhere.

"It will be safe with this." (Arnest)

Having finished cleaning up at the lowest floor, we run through the underground fortress where fierce battles still continue despite Duke Nürnberg having died.

The battle between both armies mainly focused around the military stations and the residential areas still under construction rather than the lower floor.

Especially the retainers and soldiers in the area with Duke Nürnberg household's mansion struggle bitterly after having set up the remaining breath-emitting devices and suicide-bombing golems. They caused heavy losses among the approaching soldiers of the imperial army.

"Surrender! Your leader died!" (Wendelin)

"Don't make up such stupid lies! Our Lord went to pick up a new weapon at the lowest floor!"

The vassal in charge of the defense around the mansion reply while exposing his anger at my capitulation demand.

He probably doesn't want to accept that Duke Nürnberg died at all costs.

"Look at this!"

Duke Nürnberg's corpse is held up on my instructions.

There was also the option to only hoist up his head, but they might have reacted very emotionally if we had done that.

That's why we displayed the corpse in such manner.

"Lord!"

"It's a lie! It's a well-made fake!"

"As if we would have had time for that! It's the real Duke Nürnberg! His ambitions came to an end with this. Once the leader's gone, the accomplishment of their ambitions becomes impossible. I expect an upright attitude from you, who were left behind." (Wendelin)

"...What are we going to do?"

"Fight to the last soldier!"

"But, is there any sense in doing something like that?"

The remaining officers and soldiers of the rebel army differ in their opinions and start to quarrel amongst each other due to my speech.
And then the highest-ranking person fell a decision.

"Due to the fact that our Lord has passed away, already, at this point...we will surrender..."

Even after this I move to all the places where there are still ongoing battles and persuade the enemies. Eighteen hours after the start of the underground fortress capture all battle has ceased with the rebel army having surrendered.

The imperial army lost 7,857 soldiers. The rebel army has 5,678 casualties.

It was a battle that cost many people their lives, but with this the civil war in the Empire has finally come to an end.

Chapter 1 – Trying to Grill Eel since It suddenly Turned into a Vacation

"Here's the money."

"Thank you as usual, Earl Baumeister-sama."

"I'm sorry for taking your precious merchandise." (Wendelin)

"Since the stock is low right now, it has become expensive. The fishing season is already running for three months, so it's not that expensive, but..."

"No, you did well to get your hands on it." (Wendelin)



With Duke Nürnberg's defeat, the long civil war finally came to an end.

The Duke Nürnberg household has lost its peerage and right now the stationed imperial army is ruling the Nürnberg Dukedom.

Leading that army, Peter seems to still be busy with rebellious residents and retainers, but we had absolutely nothing to do.

Currently we are stationed in a sparsely populated region alongside the Mizuho army.

Occasionally we help with the maintenance of roads, which had been destroyed due to the war, but the imperial army or rather Peter play the main act.

Until they finish dealing with the former Nürnberg Dukedom and return to the imperial capital, we are going to spend our time leisurely for the first time in a long while.

Accordingly I bought a certain item from a peddling Mizuho merchant.

Since I was regarded as good customer, who likes the Mizuho cooking and culture, by the Mizuho people, there are several merchants I have become familiar with.

"Customer-sama, you have a discerning eye. This is a hair ornament manufactured from the valuable 『Northern Coral』. The Northern Coral lives in the colder areas of the ocean. As result of it being special, its growth is slow and thus it has become a very valuable item."

"This will suit your black hair well, won't it Haruka-san?" (Erwin)

"Erw-san. I can't accept something so expensive." (Haruka)

"I intend it to serve as substitute for an engagement ring. Since it'll be a commemorative present, you don't have to hold back, Haruka-san." (Erwin)

"Thank you." (Haruka)

Merchants are shrewd beings. He skillfully palmed off a hair ornament made out of an expensive coral to the betrothed Erw.

"Uuh...Haruka isn't a child that will be deceived by such an expensive accessory..." (Takeomi)

"You are really bad at giving up...he said that it's a replacement for an engagement ring, didn't he?" (Burkhart)

Watching Haruka happily receive the ornament from Erw, Takeomi-san grinds his teeth out of vexation. Burkhart-san looked at him with an expression telling that he's a lost case.

"Wend, what's that?" (Erwin)

After the Mizuho merchant is gone, Erw comes to ask me what I bought. Moreover, Takeomi-san still looked at Erw enviously.

"It's slightly out of season right now, but as a matter of fact I bought this." (Wendelin)

"Oohh! Isn't that an eel!?" (Erwin)

"We will eat this after turning it into unadon¹ or kabayaki. ²"

"How nice. Isn't that a real treat!?"

Eel exists in this world as well.

Since their movements become dull during the cold season, they can't be caught much, but as it was sold on bamboo skewers prepared by the Mizuho merchant, I got some.

Its freshness will stay topnotch because they keep it in magic bags, but as supply falls behind demand, the price has risen.

I paid quite a hefty sum, but it looked as if the eel was in its best condition with the fat still clinging to it.

"I have prepared charcoal and a stand to barbecue it. The preparations of the steamer are okay as well. And!"

I take out an arm-sized earthenware pot from my magic bag.

There's something very important with a worth unattainable for something like jewels inside this pot.

"As usual you are holding it with utmost devotion, aren't you Wend?"

"It's because only this 『Kabayaki Sauce』 is unobtainable, no matter how much money you pay. It's more valuable than any treasure." (Wendelin)

"I feel like you are exaggerating a tiny bit, but...it's a fact that I'm looking forward to it. I will help you as well, so let's get grilling as soon as possible." (Erwin)

Why do I have kabayaki sauce with me?

That originates from an incident that took place a little while after I became an Earl.

* * *

"Wend-sama, this is it." (Wilma)

"River Fish Restaurant 『River』, huh...?" (Wendelin)

Probably almost two months after I've become an Earl, I came to the royal capital with everyone. Wanting to grab lunch somewhere as we had finished our business without issues, I wanted to eat something unusual for a change. Just then I heard from Wilma about a restaurant she frequented often being nearby and thus I had her lead us there right away.

That restaurant, which we reached in almost no time, seemed to possess history and tradition going by its quite old structure.

"River Fish...Restaurant, it is?" (Wendelin)

"I often sold river fish here before meeting you, Wend-sama." (Wilma)

"Wilma caught fish as part-time job in her childhood," Elise adds.

"That's because I was allowed to dine for free for selling the ingredients." (Wilma)

"Wilma-san, you had it difficult, didn't you?" (Katharina)

"Filling up my stomach was hard." (Wilma)

Once I consider the amount Wilma eats, she surely had to catch a considerable amount of fish. She likely wasn't able to still her hunger unless being an expert at fishing.

Was Wilma skilled or were the restaurant employees kind...? No, it might have been both.

"You are good at fishing, Wilma?"

"I think I'm quite skilled at it. But it was rather difficult for me to become full." (Wilma)

"Wouldn't the fish vanish around here, if you had always caught enough to fill your stomach completely, Wilma?" (Erwin)

"It's a fisher's duty to abide to the periods when certain fish species are prohibited to be caught and to release small fish. It's impossible to catch enough within such circumstances." (Wilma)

Wilma replied to Erw's banter with a slightly sullen expression.

But for there to be voluntary release rules and fishing prohibition periods in this world...I was truly surprised.

"Eh? Such restrictions exist? There are no such rules in the territory of my family." (Erwin)

"It's likely because of the difference in population between your home and the capital, Erw. Though, there were no such rules in the Knight Baumeister household either." (Wendelin)

The only ones catching fish in the rivers located in Erw's family's territory are the fief's population. There's no way for the fish resources to decrease that easily as long as they don't overfish. But, given that the consumption of fish is different around the capital, they will probably become immediately unable to catch any fish if they don't place any restrictions on the haul. However, even within the Kingdom such restrictions seem to only exist in a small area around the capital and in case it had been independently established by a noble. Come to think of it, such limitations didn't exist in Breithilde Margraviate either. I think at most it's manner to not catch small fish. As for Baumeister Earldom, there's a heap of fish. Because of the too many animals inhabiting the area, it's dangerous for people to live there, so it's a situation where I ask everyone to relentlessly hunt them down.

"Fishermen have to pay an annual fee and a registration fee in advance. Those who poach without paying are..." (Wilma)

"What happens with them, Wilma?" (Erwin)

"There will be a slightly good haul of river shrimps and eels in the next year." (Wilma)

"Eh...? Do you possibly mean...?" (Erwin)

"Poachers receive divine punishment." (Wilma)

"That's not a laughing matter..." (Erwin)

Is it her revenge for just now?

Wilma implicitly described the tragic last days of poachers in order to scare Erw while deliberately staying expressionless.

"But, it will be alright if you travel away from the capital. In that case you fish over several days." (Wilma)

However, if you go far away, the freshness of the fish becomes a problem.

Since the price will drop if you don't sell them alive, Wilma apparently limited the types of river fish she caught.

"Won't it be fine as long as you use a magic bag?" (Erwin)

"You can't put living creatures into a magic bag, and since it's very expensive, it's unlikely that a fisherman can afford it. Erw, your perception has become deranged since you are always together with Wend-sama." (Wilma)

"True. You can't buy something like an all-purpose magic bag unless you are quite rich."

He misunderstood because I can easily use the magic bag for magicians, but that's a bag that can't be used by anyone except for magicians. It changes the possible storage capacity in proportion to the user's mana.

All-purpose magic bags with a fixed storage capacity experience a fearsomely steep increase in prices depending on the amount they can carry.

It's not something a normal commoner can afford.

"I guess fishermen have it difficult, too. So, what kind of fish did you catch?"

"Konul are durable, but they don't sell for much. Namasa spoil unexpectedly fast, so they are only caught nearby. Pon turtles and eels are the best." (Wilma)

Konul refers to koi carp.

I ate sashimi chilled in iced water and koikoku³ in my previous life, but I didn't consider it to be overly delicious.

Namasa is catfish. I never experienced eating this one.

Though I heard that it's tasty if you make tempura out of its white meat.

"Pon turtle; what kind of turtle is that?" (Wendelin)

"It won't let go once it bites you." (Wilma)

Once I hear of its characteristics from Wilma, I judge that it seems to be a soft-shelled turtle.

Soft-shelled turtle was delicious, but I didn't understand why it was said to boost vitality.

Even now I remember the tastiness of the first-class kabayaki I was treated to by my boss in Japan.

Eel-liver soup and grilled-liver-on-skewer were delicious as well.

"(I feel the urge to eat eel kabayaki...) I'm looking forward to what kind of dishes will be served." (Wendelin)

As it's meaningless to only talk in front of the restaurant, we enter at once.

Once we do, they are seemingly not yet open for business. There wasn't a single customer inside the restaurant.

"Welcome...ah, Wilma-san, is that you!? It's been a while!"

"I came to eat after a long time." (Wilma)

"You are very welcome. Now, come on, here are your seats."

The owner, who looks to be around forty, appeared from within the restaurant. At first he wasn't very lively, but once he saw Wilma, he rushed over happily.

"Did you come to sell fish today?"

"Only for eating. I also brought customers along." (Wilma)

"Umm, the ladies and gentlemen here are?"

"Earl Baumeister-sama." (Wilma)

"Ooh! I heard of you in rumors! It's an honor for a so famous person like you, Earl Baumeister-sama, to kindly visit my restaurant."

The owner realized that we are celebrities and seemed somewhat overjoyed.
Is he possibly going to ask me for my autograph?
This isn't a Japanese restaurant, so I guess it won't happen.

"According to the gossip, it appears you have come to be Earl Baumeister-sama's wife, Wilma-san. Ah, in that case you won't come to sell fish any longer, right? Oops, this was a slip of tongue. I will immediately serve the food."

The owner led us to our seats, served some tea, entered the kitchen and immediately started to cook. It looks like there are no other employees.

"Which reminds me, for me river fish..." (Wendelin)

I remembered that I didn't like them much.
I recall the mud-smelling stew I was offered in the Knight Baumeister territory in my childhood. Even so, if there's at least eel and soft-shelled turtle, I might be able to handle it somehow. Come to think of it, I wonder whether eel kabayaki exists?
My interest in the dishes here amounts to only that much.

"Wend-sama, are you bad with river fish?" (Wilma)

"I won't know until I try eating them. After all it completely changes depending on the way of handling the fish and the cooking methods." (Wendelin)

"I have heard that this restaurant is a longstanding establishment continuing for more than 200 years." (Wilma)

Since they are in the suburbs of the capital and as they serve traditional river fish cuisine, it seems that there are very many customers coming here regularly.
I think them having been kind to Wilma was based on the leeway of being a well-established restaurant.

"You say it's well-established, but there's relatively few, or rather no customers here at all."

Just as Erw says, even after a closer look, there's not a single customer present, despite it being lunch time right now.
Since it's not like they have a day off, I felt slightly uneasy about that.

"It might be a little-known insider tip. Erw, do you like river fish?"

"In winter I caught, grilled and ate carp and minnow at a river close to my family's home. The taste was ordinary?" (Erwin)

Even in Japan cold daces and beeches have become a specialty in certain areas.
Since it's autumn right now, delicious carp might be served today.

"What about you, Ina and Luise?" (Wendelin)

"At the dojo we cooked Konul in a big pot after cutting it into round slices and treated the pupils to

it. I didn't like it since it smelled like mud." (Ina)

"What kind of seasoning did you use in the cooking?" (Wendelin)

"Only salt. It was often served after the training since it has good nutritional values. Mum and the wives of the instructors prepared it and cooked it together." (Ina)

They stewed koi carp without even using miso?
I don't think that's something I would want to eat.

"Now that you mention it, there was Konul at your place, wasn't there Ina-chan. We cooked prepared pon turtle, but I was bad with the earthy smell, too." (Luise)

Luise's home apparently provided stew with boiled soft-shelled turtle to their disciples. However, it's obvious that they haven't properly washed off the mud. Given that there's no way for them to have cooked it with ginger and soy sauce, this was also something I don't really want to taste.

"Removing the intestines of small fish and frying them in oil is delicious." (Ina)

"Small fish tend to not have any peculiarities in flavor after all." (Luise)

Neither Ina nor Luise seem to like river fish much. Even so, they recall having eaten the fried small fishes that were served in Breitburg's restaurants without reservations.

"How about you, Elise?"

"I'm slightly bad with them, too. Since the capital is far away from the ocean, there are dishes using river fish even on the dinner menus of noble households. There's also a traditional river fish cuisine in the Hohenheim household, but..." (Elise)

It seems they have a tart dish that uses carp, but since it's not overly tasty, even on parties there are only few people, who grab it, and it ends up being leftover.

"We reluctantly serve it since it's a tradition." (Elise)

I guess it's impossible to improve its taste because they can't change the recipe of a traditional dish either.

"Huh? I don't remember having eaten it?" (Wendelin)

"Father and the old man have been considerate as you are picky with your food, Wendelin-sama." (Elise)

So far I had been invited to several dinner parties of the Hohenheim family, but in order to not offend me, they didn't serve dishes known to not be tasty from the start, Elise explained.

"After all we haven't told you about our traditions, Wendelin-sama." (Elise)

"Certainly, that's true." (Wendelin)

There's no problem if it's delicious, or more precisely, food has to be delicious, right?

"What about you, Katharina?" (Wendelin)

"Me? Let's see. During my adventurer time I often caught and grilled fish at mountain streams. I removed the intestines of mountain and rock fish⁴ right after catching them, applied salt to them and grilled them thoroughly over open fire. They were delicious." (Katharina)

"I guess you have been unexpectedly living in luxury."

Rock fish and mountain fish refers to chars and masu salmon. They are high-class ingredients in the capital, but for Katharina, who can easily reach mountain streams with 『Flight』, it shouldn't be that much of trouble to obtain them.

"Seeing as I earned money by collecting rock and mountain fish during my prep school time, cooking is also one of my strong points." (Katharina)

If you put freshly-caught fish into a magic bag after pickling them, they can be sold for a lot of money at fancy restaurants since they are still fresh.

I happened to eat them in the past as well, but dishes, which use fresh rock and mountain fish, are so high-class that a single plate easily costs close to 100 cents.

"After all normal fishermen and adventurers can only bring those back after grilling and drying them."

If you walk normally, it takes five days from the capital to go to the closest river stream with rock and mountain fish.

Therefore it seems common to bring them back after preserving them on site.

With that they become long-lasting. Even so, as one fish is sold for more than 30 cents, they seem to turn into good profit.

Soups and stews, which used those as stock, are considered high-class cuisine in the capital.

However, even if there are no monsters deep in the mountains, bears and wolves will appear.

Therefore there are only few ordinary people trying to use this for making a living out of it, resulting in the price of mountain stream fish with good taste being high.

The ones capable of eating those without reservations are likely the local residents living close to mountain streams.

"30 cents for one fish is amazing."

"Since I brought them back in a fresh state, I was paid 50 cents per fish by fish dealers and restaurants." (Katharina)

"How nice..."

I think that catching fish at river streams is difficult, but Katharina can manage with her skills. Meaning, catching fish becomes easy if you can freely use magic.

It was probably the most suitable business for earning money by herself in her prep school period.

"So you were alone even during your part-time job back then, weren't you Katharina?"

The scene of Katharina grilling and eating fish instead of normal meals crosses my mind.



It might be a fun leisure activity if you do it with several people, but for Katharina that might not have been the best option.

The image of Katharina catching fish and eating it that floated up in my mind was that of a very handsome man.

"Wendelin-san, is it some kind of problem for you that I caught fish by myself?" (Katharina)

"No. Probably it would have been a burden for you to take others along. Let's go catch some next time. I want to eat fish grilled with salt." (Wendelin)

"Somehow I feel tricked.... But well, whatever." (Katharina)

I only felt sympathy as likewise former loner.

After all I by myself also used the Savage Lands as my turf during my childhood.

"Come to think of it, there aren't that many river streams in the Baumeister Earldom."

It's situated in the south, so there's only few tall mountains except for the Great Lieg Mountain Range.

"In exchange there are Southern Trouts that travel upstream from the ocean in the Baumeister Earldom. Those might turn into great business if we introduce them as local specialty."

It might be possible to even export if we make preserved food such as salted fish entrails, salted salmon, saketoba⁵, fish preserved in miso and smoked fish by aiming for a production increase and the protection of fish resources through artificial hatching of juvenile fish.

After all we must not rely on only magic bags to have fish flow onto the market.

"So you do think about feudal lord-like matters, Wendelin-san." (Katharina)

"For better or worse, I'm an Earl." (Wendelin)

"Though I'd like you to not call it for better or worse by yourself..." (Katharina)

Even if I'm told that; in my previous life nobles and such only appeared in fairy tales or television programs. Since I was involuntarily appointed to nobility without even wanting to become a part of it, my actual feeling of being a noble is equal to zero.

"Wend, you only take things related to food serious, don't you?" (Luise)

"I'm seriously training my magic as well, Luise." (Wendelin)

I swiftly refuted Luise's observation.

I never miss my daily magic practice after all.

"Magic to mix mayonnaise, magic to force fish and meat to mature or 『Exclusive magic for a certain, particular purpose?』; there are many of those, aren't there?" (Luise)

One must not look down on magic to mix mayonnaise.

The mixing speed and angle are crucial. I finally learned the proper way after piling up many trials and errors.

At first the ingredients were wasted as they were sent flying all over. Either way, it was a chain of hardships.

"Something that can be mixed with a magic tool..." (Luise)

"The texture of the mayonnaise is much finer with my spell than it is from using a magic tool. That changes the taste." (Wendelin)

"Is it all that different?" (Luise)

"Luise, you must not underestimate that small difference." (Wendelin)

It might be a very small difference, but it's possible that there will be a big change in taste for the actual dish.

I repeatedly advocated to Luise that it's wrong to simply discard that pickiness.

"Besides no magic, which is that useful, exists, right?"

"Really? It's more useful than 『Wind Cutter』 for example?" (Katharina)

"Isn't that quite obvious!?"

『Wind Cutter』 only tears apart enemies and monsters, but thanks to the magic to mix mayonnaise being able to also handle meringue and fresh cream, Elise can make wonderful desserts. It can even be applied to the creation of juice and the kneading of hamburger meat.

Because magic has its value in being useful to people, I can say that I'm learning magic correctly.

"People can't survive without food. That's an eternal rule. The useful magic for mixing mayonnaise is amazing." (Wendelin)

"That seems to be a quite strained interpretation..."

In addition, it's also related to my previous life's job.

Anyway, being interested in various food and investigating it didn't result in a dull work.

That habit and the reality that there are still much more development possibilities for the food culture of this world, tempts me towards the pursuit of food.

"Good grief, if it's about food, you don't pull punches, do you Wend?" (Luise)

"I have the resolve to crush a high-ranking noble if it's for the sake of food." (Wendelin)

"Let's refrain from that..." (Luise)

At present it was alright, but in the future nobles, who will hinder my eating habits, might appear. I believe it to be necessary to have at least the resolve to crush their household, if that happens. Though Luise opposed me on that for a change.

"It looks like the food is ready."

"Yaaay, time to eat." (Erwin)

While all of us are chatting, the owner carries in the finished river fish dishes. Seemingly hungry, Erw frolicked around like a child.

"Here comes Stir-fried small fishes and river shrimps, Boiled Konul Scales, Grilled Salted Carp, Namasa Stew, Eel and Pon Turtle Hot Pot."

He brings one dish after the other, but at this point in time Ina and Luise felt that it was no good. That's because there was still a bit of the characteristic river fish smell lingering, albeit it might have been lowered through the processing and seasoning.

"Has the characteristic smell of river fish and the mud smell been lowered by using herbs?" (Wendelin)

Once I try a bite, I could eat it normally.

But, if I were to be asked whether it's delicious, I would deny that.

It's not disgusting, but in my eyes there's no way for a guest to pay money to eat something that's not disgusting.

I was somehow able to grasp the reason why this restaurant has no customers.

"Owner-san, don't you have mountain and rock fish in stock?" (Katharina)

"We are a restaurant for commoners, so..."

The owner explained to Katharina that he can't procure high-class fish.

"Wilma-san, how is the taste?" (Katharina)

"Hmmm. No different from before." (Wilma)

Wilma might not look like it, but she's sensitive to the taste of food.

If she says that it's the same as before, there's likely no mistake in that.

"I ate various new dishes at Wend-sama's place. The desserts made by Elise are very delicious. Because I ended up becoming particular about my food, this river fish dishes are..." (Wilma)

"Wilma, aren't you going a tad too far there?" (Erwin)

Eating the dishes normally, Erw chides Wilma.

He apparently believed that it was ungrateful towards someone who treated her kindly in the past.

"No. I was ready to being told that, young Knight-sama."

The owner doesn't seem to be angry about Wilma's remark.

"Wilma-san is someone who understands taste. That doesn't mean that she's telling me that my

skills have declined."

"Same as before, your cooking skill is magnificent." (Wilma)

She praised him.

"Certainly, erasing the smell, which is the flaw of river fish, through skill has reached its limit. I believe it to be even more superior than that of the cooks of the Hohenheim household." (Elise)

Elise praised him as well.

"But, an unchanging taste is also powerless against the change of times. In reality, the number of customers has decreased..."

"There were many customers before." (Wilma)

"We had a daily menu for lunch time and a considerable number of customers came to eat here. Nowadays the restaurant is in this state, but..."

Even though lunch time has mostly passed, not a single customer besides us has visited. It's at a level where one worries about the financial situation of this restaurant.

"Are your finances doing fine?" (Wilma)

"In the evening our long-standing regular customers come to eat the full course meal. However, there's only old people among them."

The owner explains the current circumstances of the restaurant to Wilma. The only ones sustaining this restaurant now are the elderly who want to enjoy a nostalgic flavor. Young people apparently stopped coming altogether.

"I see. Can't you acquire a new customer base at all?"

"Currently it's working out somehow, but the sales will likely drop before long." (Wendelin)

Once the elderly customers are gone, the sales will only decline. The future prospects weren't bright.

"Owner-san, what's the reason for it turning out like this? It's strange for customers to decrease so easily despite the taste not having changed, right?" (Erwin)

Erw asks.

"The reason for the number of customers at lunch falling are those dishes."

"Those dishes?"

"Yes. I hear that the Arterio Company is successively opening stores that sell new dishes such as fried chicken or fried vegetables and meat on skewer..."

"The Artur Company, eh...?" (Erwin)

Hearing about the reason, Erw's look started to waver and he turned my way.
And his expression is telling me 『It's your fault, ain't it?』

"Certainly, the one who sold business ideas to Arterio-san is me, but..." (Wendelin)

Even so, we are doing proper business that follows the laws.
The one actually managing the whole enterprise is Arterio-san, but since competition is a part of business, I can't really really do anything about it.
As I'm thinking something along those lines, my arm is suddenly pulled.
Once I turn around, I found Wilma with teary eyes behind me.

"Wend-sama, save this restaurant." (Wilma)

"Eh? Me?" (Wendelin)

Certainly there are plenty ideas I can rip-off from modern Japan, but there's no guarantee that it will go smoothly by doing it just like that.
First, I'm not that skilled in cooking.

"I won't be able to save it with my own cooking abilities. Since they treated me well in the past, I want to return the favor." (Wilma)

Despite her having sold all her fish here, this owner saved Wilma in regards to food if you consider the amount she eats.

"Wendelin-sama, can't you do anything about it?" (Elise)

"Elise, I'm not that skilled at cooking though..." (Wendelin)

"I believe I won't even lose to the royal palace's chefs in ability to come up with new dishes. I will help as well."

"True, abandoning this restaurant will leave a bad aftertaste."

"If we revive this restaurant, the numbers of restaurants we can frequent will increase."

Ina and Luise seem to approve of me helping this restaurant.

"Wendelin-san, won't it be fine to try it as a test at least?" (Katharina)

"As a test, huh...?" (Wendelin)

Given that we only developed my territory recently, Katharina seems to be slightly fed up with it, too.

With the agreement coming from all sides, I started my consulting task.



"I'm the mysterious fake consultant, Earl Baumeister."

"Fake; is that something you'd say about yourself?"

Ina is astonished, but that's the image I have of consultants.

Anyway, I think they are a full assembly of sly, old dogs.

I often had work related to consulting restaurants and dealing with ingredients, but there was a small fraction of people at the level of swindlers, who think that a novel opinion = wonderful, and others, who talk to their customers about harmless things like sham psychological counselors. If you leave it to a splendid person, there will be tremendous results, but if you leave it to a useless person, it won't only result in a waste of money, but it will also serve as milestone towards bankruptcy.

What makes matters worse, it depends on the ups and downs of luck and business conditions. And, coupled with the misdeeds of a small portion of wrongdoers, the flaw in the crystal is the liability of consultants to give a bad impression.

Well, there are various difficult occupations, but going by my experience as person who has seen competent experts, it's reasonable for me to call myself a fake.

"Wend-sama, thank you." (Wilma)

"It seems interesting, so don't worry." (Wendelin)

I answer while caressing Wilma's head.

Besides, Wilma is a very nice and obedient girl with her only weakness being her gluttony. As it's her very own wish, I judged that I will comply with it.

"First up is what you will do about the management, right?"

"Changing the menu towards fried food, which is currently a fad in the capital, or something like that?"

"No, that's risky."

At the moment Arterio-san controls and sells the seasonings and ingredients in the capital. His franchise-styled shops are at their height of prosperity.

Considering profit, other stores introduce those as well, but due to Arterio-san procuring the ingredients and seasonings in batches, we won't be able to win against Arterio Company with its stable taste and cheap prices in the present state.

Even if we serve the same dishes in such remote area and moreover in this kind of situation, it's highly unlikely for us to have a chance of winning.

"What's the selling point of this restaurant?"

"River fish."

"River fish, no?"

"It's river fish."

"It is river fish."

"It is river fish." (Katharina)

"It's river fish, right?"

"It's so obvious that even Erw understands." (Wendelin)

"Hey! As what kind of idiot do you regard me in your mind, Wend?" (Erwin)

Erwin protested.

"There's a way to use this characteristic. Though it uses frying as cooking method." (Wendelin)

"You are ignoring me...!?" (Erwin)

I immediately head to the kitchen located at the inner part of the restaurant, but it seems the owner here is really capable.

Even though it's an old kitchen, it's as clean as a whistle. The maintenance of the cooking utensils such as cooking knives was flawless as well.

It's also equipped with a refrigerator, which is expensive as it's a magic tool.

It's likely for the sake of preserving the ingredients' freshness because he's handling fish.

"We will use river shrimps and small fish instead of chicken meat for the fried food6."

Even if it's the same fried food, the fact that they can eat fried river fish in this restaurant should increase the number of customers who want that.

"After rubbing in salt, you remove the mucus and scales. Then you properly shake off the water and apply flour to it..." (Wendelin)

Once I gave the instructions for the cooking, the owner and Elise started to cook skillfully. The small fish and river shrimps turned into fried food and served on a plate look very delicious.

"Well then time to sample..."

Everyone samples the fried food and just as it looks, it's tasty.

The characteristic river fish smell has dissipated as it's fried food. Come to think of it, the rivers in this world are mostly so clear that they can be labeled as what-is-called clear stream in Japan.

As long as one doesn't mess up the cooking method, it likely won't be that smelly.

"However, I think it's better to keep the river shrimps in clean water for two or three days to extract the mud." (Wendelin)

I call it extracting the mud, but basically it's for the sake of emptying the shrimps' stomachs.

As small fish and shrimps are eaten together with their intestines, it's likely unpleasant to have the things eaten by them remaining in their stomachs.

"Next is deep-frying and tempura..."

Stocking up on flour and sauce is indispensable, but it will be fine to simply procure these from Arterio-san.

If I tell him that I helped with a reconstruction, Arterio-san shouldn't say anything unreasonable either.

"The tempura is delicious as well."

The kakiage⁷ that mixed the meat with vegetables after filleting the small fish bodies into three pieces was wonderful as well.

River shrimp kakiage should become popular.

"This is served together with alcohol as side dish to boost the sales per customer. It makes it easier to make a profit on the alcohol."

"Wend, what's sales per customer?"

"Well, it means just what it says..."

Erw apparently can't understand the term sales per customer.

"It's the average of how much a single customer paid in total." (Elise)

"As expected of you, Elise. And Erw, you are really stupid..." (Wendelin)

"Hey you! Shut up! I'm a retainer in charge of the military, you know?" (Erwin)

Being ridiculed by me, Erw lost his nerve a bit as he was eating the prototype kakiage.

"The cooking of this is alright, right?"

"Yes. But, for such cooking to exist, the world is sure wide."

After taking notes, the owner starts on his own trial products as well.

I guess it should be expected, but the owner beautifully completed the karaage and tempura even faster than Elise.

"Professionals are really amazing..."

After being told once, the owner with his long-standing cooking experience skillfully makes the rest.

Elise was good as well, but the owner seems to go beyond that.

"Wend-sama, amazing." (Wilma)

"It will probably be quite easy. Since the cooking skill of the owner here is great, it's enough for me to simply teach him new cooking methods." (Wendelin)

Next I introduce roasted fish marinated in a spicy sauce, sweetened boiled fish, fish preserved in miso and cooked in miso.

"In the end it's good to eat and delicious if it's cooked with miso and soy sauce, but ain't that in itself the taste of miso and soy sauce?"

"Pfft...Erw, you sure have a childish sense of taste." (Wendelin)

"You are really dishing out insults as you like today, aren't you?!" (Erwin)

"Say, Erw. Occasionally Elise cooked edible wild plants for us, didn't she?"

"Those were delicious."

Elise cooked plants which were picked up in the mountainous area located in the Savage Lands.

"Elise removed the astringent taste before preparing the food, but if you remove all the astringency, the wild plants become unappetizing." (Wendelin)

"Really?" (Erwin)

"Yes. If you don't leave some bitterness, the taste of the plants themselves will be gone." (Elise)

As expected of the perfect super-woman Elise.
She gives Erw an explanation befitting my intention.

"There are also people who like a faint trace of river fish smell remaining in their dishes. Even if you season it with miso and soy sauce, it will become something completely different from a meat dish with those faint traces."

The delicate balance of the taste depends on the skill of the cook though.

"But, won't the customers avoid ordering it then?" (Erwin)

"What's so bad about that?" (Wendelin)

"Eh!? That's fine with you?" (Erwin)

"Yeah, don't worry. Rather than a taste that's called 『Well, it's tasty, I think?』 by 90%, it will be a taste regarded as 『I will definitely come again to eat it』 by 30%!"

The success of a restaurant relies on securing repeating customers.

At the same time of seizing a new type of customers with a new cooking method in a river fish restaurant with too hackneyed cooking recipes, the number of repeat customers, who will definitely desire want to eat these new dishes, will increase.

"The reason why this restaurant managed to somehow stay afloat despite the falling number of guests is the regular customers who order the full course meal at night. Of course a full course menu also has a high profit ratio as well as pay per customer."

"Certainly, it's just as you say, Earl Baumeister-sama. The restaurant is still running because of the evening guests."

"Is that so? By the way, what's profit ratio?" (Erwin)

""""Oh god!""""

Even though he expressly received an explanation, Erw didn't understand the meaning of profit ratio.

Everyone except for Erw ended up tumbling over in shock.

"What, you ask. Doesn't it simply mean what it says? It's about how much profit you made." (Ina)

Without a moment's delay, Ina explained profit ratio to Erw.

"Wend, you are difficult to understand as you only use complicated technical terms." (Erwin)

"That's not a technical term, and I don't think that it's complicated either though." (Wendelin)

It seems that I won't be able to entrust work related to the domestic affairs of my territory and money calculation to Erw.

He has absolutely no aptitude in this kind of area.

"I guess that's all for the dishes? It won't work unless the owner grasps his own way of cooking and the fine-tuned seasoning." (Wendelin)

"Such new cooking methods are currently popular in the capital and its surrounding areas. The new flavoring is wonderful as well. I will go immediately buy some more to do several experiments. By just fussing over traditions, I eased up on the creation of new tastes. I have to do my best while allowing both, new creations and tradition, to coexist successfully."

Having discovered a hope to continue the restaurant, the owner was suddenly full of power to get things done.

He is going to challenge new things while keeping the good things in his repertoire.

There are many people misunderstanding that a well-established restaurant will last eternally by serving always the same dishes, but since the taste of people changes with the eras, the majority of the restaurants actually changes its taste subtly.

As long as he can understand that, this restaurant should be alright for the next hundred years.

"(I did something very good, didn't I?) I wonder, is there anything else? By the way, where do you preserve your fish?" (Wendelin)

"If you are looking for a pond, it's in the backyard."

I detected another point that should be improved.

Once we come out at the backyard after following the owner, several wide ponds had been dug out, making use of the fact that this is the suburbs.

Once I peer into them, dozens of carps and catfish are swimming within.

But, I wonder, why has only a part of the fish a different way of naming compared to Japan?

It's slightly bothersome.

"The water in the ponds is clean."

"Fine spring water gushes out at my plot."

"Hee, how much mud extraction do you do?" (Wendelin)

"Eh? Mud extraction? I don't do that. I erase the bad smell with herbs."

"That's no good!" (Wendelin)

"Eh? It's wrong?"

He sure has some nerve to not wash out the mud, including the carps, too.
If it's that much, even I with my little knowledge about river fish am aware of it.
Or rather, for them to be reasonably edible even without doing that is probably owed to this world's nature not having been polluted at all.

"You dig a pond into the ground and put them in there?"

"It's for the sake of keeping them alive."

Given that he's putting the fish into the ponds solely for the sake of keeping them alive, he seems to give them normal feed.

Because it's also in order to make it easier to prepare them at the time of cooking, emptying their digestion organs doesn't make sense here.

Basically erasing the bad smell with herbs is a tradition, the owner explained.

"You said that spring water is appearing inside the plot."

"Yes. Moreover a large quantity of it. Thanks to that, I can use good water for my cooking."

"You have to also wash off the mud from the fish—!" (Wendelin)

"I'm sorry!"

Therefore I forcibly create a stone fish tank for washing off the mud in a hurry.

That's because the mud smell can't be washed out in the ponds.

So that the effort to change water, used to constantly stream the fish with, doesn't change, I completed several isolated stone fish tanks in a mere hour.

"Magic is sure amazing."

The owner is deeply moved by the tanks completed in the vast back yard.

"Of course I will take a teaching fee, but seeing as I have become so deeply involved, I will have the restaurant become popular again." (Wendelin)

"Yes... So they can stay in there for around a week without fodder?"

"It's around that long when I tested. Please study the exact number of days by yourself. After all it differs on the state of the specimen and the producing area. Eel will be alright for around three days before eating as long as you sprinkle water on it from above after putting it inside a cage so that it can't run away."

This is what I saw in an eel breeding farm.

They put the eel in separate buckets and keep them alive by pouring water on them to the extent of keeping their bodies' surface wet.

Of course that will force the eel to fast, but it will be possible to maintain them in a fresher state than putting them into fish tanks, even if you do it like this.

"Let's meet again after a week."

Since there's no reason for us to be in this restaurant until the fish' mud has been extracted, we finished the first day of consulting with this.



And then after the promised one week.

"The river fish restaurant? It's a store in the suburbs of the capital, isn't it? I went there to sell fish in the past, but why are you supporting that restaurant?" (Roderich)

"I was asked to by Wilma and it looked somewhat interesting." (Wendelin)

"Is that so...? I don't particularly mind since the territory's development is advancing faster than planned, but..." (Roderich)

He seems unable to understand my obsession, but since it's not like it holds back the development, Roderich didn't object to us visiting the capital.

He comes to see us off in the same manner as usual when we go hunting in the Demon Forest.

Once we instantly transferred to the river fish restaurant with 『Teleportation』, we were awaited by the owner who was sharpening his kitchen knives.

A 『Temporarily Closed』 tag hangs at the entrance door of the restaurant and he seems to have been eagerly expecting us.

It's the start of the second day of the fake consultant job.

"First we start with the Konul."

Following my instructions, he carefully makes miso stir-fry, koikoku and braised carp.

Since sashimi has the issue of parasites, we passed on that this time.

The cooking method is roughly proper and the owner makes the dishes while arranging them skillfully in his own way.

"It's delicious."

"I wonder, is it the cooking method? The one in our dojo smells really muddy."

"Washing the mud off is effective, isn't it?"

Since the fish lived in clean water to begin with, they turned out delicious without any smell after washing them properly.

If this was Japan, it probably wouldn't have worked out like this unless you raised them in quite the controlled aquaculture.

"Next is whole-fried fish with sweet and sour sauce."

It's a dish combining vegetables in a sweet sour red bean sauce with carp that had been carefully fried twice in oil while alternating high and low temperatures after removing its intestines and scales and covering it with flour.

This is a menu from my memories, which my parents told me about in detail in the past and which was often offered at a Chinese restaurant I had grown accustomed to.

The cooking method was at parts a bit unclear, but the owner covered for that with his experience and his skilled handling, wholly frying the carp in a huge pot.

He had apparently procured potato starch through the church.

"Wendelin-sama, is this fine?" (Elise)

"It has a really nice red bean taste. As expected of you, Elise." (Wendelin)

The fried carp in the sweet and sour red bean sauce made by Elise seems to be very delicious.

"It's an amazing dish. But it takes quite a bit time."

It has to be fried for a long time so that it can be eaten completely, including the bones. Come to think of it, I remember talking with my parents about the current price value.

"Won't it be fine if you serve it on a pre-order basis?"

"It looks as if serving it on a big plate would rouse any party."

I tried sampling it, but it was as tasty as it took up time.

I fully understand why it was a hero in the Chinese restaurant in the past.

"I ate my fill." (Katharina)

"Katharina, you are only eating." (Wilma)

"Wilma-san, this is not the stage for me to enter, is it? In the first place, you aren't helping with anything either." (Katharina)

"No, Wilma went to catch a nicely-shaped carp from the fish tanks in the backyard. Then, Katharina, go and fetch a Namasa next." (Wendelin)

"Eh!? Me?" (Katharina)

Katharina hesitated quite a bit after I handed her a big net.

"The appearance of Namasa is slightly..." (Katharina)

"You can even defeat wyverns, and yet why are you afraid of something like Namasa, Katharina?" (Wendelin)

Even though wyverns seem to be a lot less popular with women than Namasa, Katharina was never afraid after seeing a dragon.

And yet, for her to be bad with Namasa; I really don't understand women well.

"Its appearance is physically no good. It slimy and slippery..." (Katharina)

Most of the women might be bad with slimy and slippery things. But, if you look properly, it has a really cute face, you know?

"So you do have woman-like parts as well, Katharina."

"Wendelin-san, there's no one as womanly as I am." (Katharina)

"Umm, what about Elise?" (Wendelin)

"Wendelin-sama, I went to fetch Namasa." (Elise)

Before I had realized, Elise went to get Namasa with a big net.
Elise seems to be fine with them.

"" ... ""

"...Yes?" (Elise)

Given that undead are quite unpleasant, Elise might have developed a strong resistance.

"Owner, you handle the business conditions well."

"Please have a look at my skills from 20 years of experience as a cook."

Being able to learn various dishes, the owner gets quite motivated.

After perforating it on a chopping board, he swiftly and splendidly filleted the big catfish into three parts.

"Wow. So you perforated it."

"It's because Namasa are slippery and slimy."

The owner cuts and trims the catfish efficiently, making tempura, fried catfish, teriyaki, deep-fried catfish and hot pot prepared with miso out of it.

"Its stomach seems to be a delicacy."

"I will turn it over, sprinkle it with salt after washing it properly with water and grill it."

In addition, the owner created dango by frequently hitting the leftover fish, its head, its bones and its liver with a kitchen knife and mixing that with miso. It resulted in him creating a soup with dango floating in broth.

"The seasoning called miso is convenient. I tried this cooking with various river fish, but if it's just salt and herbs, the taste is lacking..."

The owner apparently carried out a personal cooking method research. Even without being told by me, he made various types or original dishes.

It seems the existence of miso and soy sauce, which are fermented seasonings, is a big deal.

"If it's Sho, it won't result in an overly good taste as the ingredient is fish as well."

Since Sho is fish paste, it probably has a fishy taste.

"Let's cook Pon turtle next."

"You are going to eat that turtle?" (Katharina)

"You haven't eaten it at home, Katharina?" (Wendelin)

"Sorry, but we didn't have such a custom...hiii!" (Katharina)

Katharina screamed a bit after watching the owner cut off the head of the big soft-shelled turtle that Wilma brought from the tanks.

"And yet you can calmly behead a wyvern with magic." (Wendelin)

"This and that are different. Isn't the Pon turtle cute if you look at it?" (Katharina)

Now that she mentions it, I remember there were people who bought it as pet in Japan. While I'm talking with Katharina, the owner magnificently finishes dismantling the soft-shelled turtle. I introduce standard dishes such as fried turtle, hot pot, stir-fry and rice gruel containing vegetables and turtle flesh to him with this as ingredient and have him make them. Even here the owner capitalized on his skills after seeing it for the first time and created unbelievably skilled dishes.

"Now then, time to sample."

Since the daytime has turned evening at last, it's just the right time for dinner. The restaurant is on break, and since we have planned to stay here and continue the consulting work tomorrow as well, we decide to take dinner comfortably in a private room inside the restaurant.

"It's really tasty."

Since the ingredients and cooking is excellent, all the river fish dishes were delicious. They were raised in clean water and had the mud removed, thus it was nice as it didn't have the

smelliness of river fish.

"With this, plenty of customers will come. I have to procure plenty of miso and soy sauce."

The owner seems very happy while serving the finished dishes.

"It's great with its adult taste."

Erw also ate plenty of dishes while looking satisfied.

"Since it will be difficult to win even if you challenge the large funds of Arterio-san, who bets on small profits and quick return, we will fight with a multicolored menu featuring river fish. It will be a good idea to sell fried fish and sweetened boiled fish at the storefront. We will create a special lunch menu, single dishes and alcohol for those enjoying that and several course menus for parties..."

"I see. Different menus aiming for different customers."

"Yeah. But I guess manpower is still a problem."

"It's alright. My parents, wife and children are around."

Since the restaurant is on vacation right now, his wife is only at night here and his sons are part-timing in other restaurants.

"If the restaurant becomes busy, everybody will come to help out here."

"In that case tomorrow will be the crucial moment."

"Tomorrow?"

"Yes. Tomorrow we will tackle eel."

It was beyond expectations that the river fish cooking was more delicious than expected, but there's a reason why I taught him river fish cooking, which I don't really like much, and had him make it. It's for the sake of observing the skills of this restaurant's owner.

Speaking of eel, it must be that dish.

Is he a person worthy of allowing him to make kabayaki which requires technique?

In order to make sure of that, I spent some time.

"Owner, how do you cook eel?"

"Let's see. After cutting it in round slices, I blanch it. Then I cook it together with salt and herbs..."

"That sounds unappetizing..."

In all honesty, I have absolutely no craving for such a dish.

"Sounds unappetizing, you say...it's pretty much the local cuisine around here..."

In this world they don't wash off the mud and remove the bad smell of river fish with herbs. It makes me angry that the majority is boiling it with salt or grilling it.

"Traditions are important, but you have to challenge new dishes!" (Wendelin)

I spontaneously stress towards the owner.

"Wend, why are you so picky about cooking?"

"Because it's my hobby, I guess?"

"Even if that's the case, it has developed into something close to an obsession."

"You are not wrong there."

Erw and Luise are saying rude things from the sidelines, but it's important for humans what they eat.

If everybody can eat delicious food, the causes for dispute in this world will decrease.

"Anyway, once we have eaten the food, we will go sleep earlier than usual in preparation for tomorrow."

"I will do my best tomorrow as well."

"Wilma, if the owner displays the soul of a cook tomorrow, it will cause an uproar in the river fish circles. He might be called 『Eel King』 then." (Wendelin)

"Such an amazing dish... I will go sleep quickly." (Wilma)

"You're right. Let's prepare for tomorrow by going to bed early." (Wendelin)

Wilma and I wrap ourselves in blankets next to each other and close our eyes. The location is a room we borrowed on the second floor of the restaurant.

"Eh? You are going sleep this early on?" (Ina)

Ina seems to be dissatisfied, but tomorrow will be busy from early morning. That's because we must pour all our energy into making kabayaki tomorrow.

"If I can eat plenty of delicious dishes tomorrow as well, I'm fine with that." (Erwin)

"I will help out, too." (Elise)

"Even though something like eel isn't overly tasty as it's only greasy..." (Katharina)

Erw and Elise were enthusiastic, but only Katharina seems to have a hard time with eel.

"However, I will declare that even you will begin to like eel tomorrow, Katharina!" (Wendelin)

"I don't quite understand from where you're getting that confidence..." (Katharina)

On that day we go sleep earlier than usual. And then, early morning of the next day. We grab a light breakfast and then set up a special cooking space in the front yard of the currently closed restaurant.

With Erw playing the main role, we finished the carpenter work by using the restaurant's utensils, such as a stand to grill with charcoal and a kitchen table to process the eel.

"Since charcoal will be used for grilling the eel, all that's left is to build a stand for grilling over a high flame." (Wendelin)

Using a high flame is great for grilling eel.
They even said so in a certain gourmet manga.

"That's fine and all, but Wend, your blueprint sucks." (Erwin)

"There's no issue since you can roughly grasp what I mean, right?" (Wendelin)

"Well, it's nothing that complicated anyway. But, the drawings are really bad." (Erwin)

Even though I think that it's none of his business, let's overlook it since Erw is doing well at completing the eel grilling stand.

"Ina, Luise, how's the rice?" (Wendelin)

"It's fine, but is it really alright to cook this much?" (Ina)

"I wonder about that as well. Isn't it a little bit too much?" (Luise)

"Everyone might want to have a second serving, that's why." (Wendelin)

"I see that you are brimming with confidence." (Ina)

A short time later the special cooking space is done, and Wilma accordingly brings a big bucket full of eels that had been pickled in spring water.

"Owner! Slice it down its back!" (Wendelin)

"Please leave it to me."

He places an eel on top of the chopping board, perforates it in the same way as the catfish and then opens it from the back in order to not damage the intestines.

If it had been me, it would certainly end in failure, but as expected of a professional who prepared things such as catfish for many years.

He handled the eel really skilfully.

After taking out the intestines, he cut off the head and the spine. Then, after stabbing a wooden skewer through the eel, all that's left was grilling it without seasoning. It's a wooden skewer since bamboo doesn't grow in the Kingdom.

"Elise, please make the sauce." (Wendelin)

"Okay." (Elise)

Elise cooks the sauce in a pot with soy sauce, mirin and sake as ingredients.

Next we put the head and bones of the nicely-grilled eel inside, cook them together for a while, and that's it for the sauce.

"So you get a soup stock by using the head and bones of eel, huh?"

"This sauce is important." (Wendelin)

The owner makes grilled eel while carefully spending time on it. Meanwhile Erw manufactured a steaming basket to steam eel.

"Erw, make sure it's sturdy." (Wendelin)

"Somehow I feel like that's not the job of an adventurer, but with the prospect of eating delicious eel dishes, I guess I will do my best." (Erwin)

Erw's handmade steamer, which is placed on a cauldron, has been finished, and using that, we steam the grilled eel.

With this the excess oil will be thoroughly removed.

It's a cooking method in the Kanto style, but the natural eels seem to have tougher bodies than those from aquacultures. And since I heard that this method is better, we go with that.

"And then at last put sauce on the steamed eel and grill it again."

"Ooh! So there's such way of cooking as well. I will be cautious to not get singed."

The owner does the last grilling, finishing the eel kabayaki without problems.

Lastly he covers the cooked rice with sauce and once he puts the eel, which was taken off the skewer, on top of it, the dish is done.

"Katharina, the pepper is needed, so how far are you?" (Wendelin)

"Yes, yes. I grated it properly." (Katharina)

Japanese pepper – indispensable for kabayaki – existed in this world as well. I had Katharina grate it, then added it as garnish, and now we just have to eat.

"First I will sample the dish..."

At once I put a bite into my mouth, but the eel, which I'm eating for the first time in a long while, had a flavor that brought me close to ascending to heaven.

Even though he's a professional, the owner doesn't have any experience in cooking eel kabayaki, so it might be inferior to a Japanese restaurant, but he would just need to improve his skill.

As long as he makes it over and over again, the big difference to the Japanese version will gradually fade away. Once that happens, I will be able to eat tasty eel kabayaki whenever I feel like it.

"So there's such way of eating it as well, huh...?"

Next even the owner was deeply moved by the taste while sampling.

"It's overwhelmingly more delicious than stewing it in round slices."

Stewing it like that is the local cuisine, but that likely won't please anyone but an English person. I don't think that it's something I want to eat.

"This is extremely delicious!"

"I want to eat more!"

"Luise, how sly. You eat too much."

"I couldn't endure the aroma any longer when it was grilled while soaked with the sauce. Wendelin-san, it looks like there's not enough..." (Katharina)

The unadon, which was made first, is eaten up completely without a single serving remaining by Ina and the others.

"I didn't get even a single bite of it!" (Erwin)

Erw complained as he couldn't eat it due to getting a late start. In addition to him, Elise couldn't eat it either, but as expected of her, she didn't complain about it. That difference in behavior might be owed to their upbringing.

"Owner, today we will devote to preparing eel and making kabayaki."

"For the sake of training, right?"

"There's that as well, but the biggest reason is the sauce!"

I point at the huge jar with the sauce made by Elise.

"Grill and steam the eel, add the sauce to it and then grill it again, right? On that occasion the eel's oil and flavor will melt into the sauce." (Wendelin)

"In other words, you are saying the eel's flavor will gradually condense into the sauce?"

"If it decreases, you have to replenish it with new sauce. As you do, this sauce's taste will steadily get better." (Wendelin)

"It will turn into an outrageous asset, won't it?"

"Even if the restaurant burns down or is engulfed in a war, as long as you have this sauce, it will be easy to rebuild this restaurant." (Wendelin)

"I see. The sauce is a treasure. Alriiiiight. I will grill plenty and improve my skill!"

The owner called his wife and children in a hurry, and began to grill a huge amount of eel. Since he also has three sons that are already adults, they do the preparing, skewering, steaming and grilling in turns with the four of them. Meanwhile his wife begins to cook rice and prepares it in bowls.

And like that they finish another 30 unadon.

"Erw, eat without reservations."

"What a nice scent. A combination of eel and rice, huh?" (Erwin)

Having already finished making one set of eel grilling stand + steamer, Erw begins to eat the delicious-looking unadon.

"The eel with its mellowness and tenderness is tasty. The rice soaked with sauce is the best." (Erwin)

"Deep-fried eel bones and fried liver is great as well."

I give instructions to the owner's sons and have them make things like eel-liver soup, fried liver and eel bone crackers. I enjoyed the nostalgic taste of eel while eating those dishes.

"Another serving!"

"For me too!"

Since it's so delicious, I ended up getting another servings against my better judgment, but even for me three bowls was the limit.

Afterwards I watched the owner's family while slurping eel-liver soup and eating the fried liver and the eel bone crackers. Their performance in making kabayaki is gradually becoming better.

"Another serving."

However, every single one they completed ended up in Wilma's stomach.

"Wilma, do you like it?"

"Delicious. I think the restaurant will be safe with this." (Wilma)

"Indeed. My advice ends here. Owner-san and his family have to come up with further ways of business." (Wendelin)

"Another serving."

Even though I had intended to look cool in front of her, Wilma holds out her empty bowl to the owner's wife without care.

I feel slightly as if I had wasted my effort.

"Wilma, how many bowls did you have already?"

"60. But, I will stop soon. I hear it's good for one's health to eat moderately."

"Yeah, that's true..." (Wendelin)

The owner and his family still continued to grill eel, but this is within my forecast. Once they grill the eel with sauce on the other prepared grilling stand, the great aroma gradually spreads into the vicinity.

This was a suburb, but since it's next to the road leading to the central part of the capital, many people are coming and going. Lured in by the smell, people started to gather slowly.

"『River』-san, is this a new menu? What an extremely nice fragrance."

"Yes, it's a new eel dish."

"I still haven't had lunch. How much does it cost?"

"Umm, today..."

"Alright. one unadon for 15 cents. Half a bowl for 8 cents. The soup, fried liver and bone crackers go for 5 cents each." (Wendelin)

"Then one unadon or whatever it's called, and add a soup and crackers to it."

"Thanks for your purchase. I will guide you, dear customer."

I decide a price highhandedly and guide the customer to a seat inside the restaurant.

"Earl Baumeister-sama?"

"You get the reason why I had you grill the eel outside, right?"

"It's the smell."

"Since you are going out of your way to practice by grilling a large amount, you might as well sell them while you are at it. Owner, you have to grill a lot." (Wendelin)

Eel can tease one with its fragrance.

Since we continued to grill the eel outside, a fixed percentage of the people traveling along the road visits to check it out and eat unadon.

With today's customers going back to the capital and advertising its deliciousness, it's my plan to have plenty of customers crowd the restaurant starting from tomorrow.

It's also a forethought to not let the precious ingredients go to waste.

"A new eel dish, huh? I'm eating it for the first time, but it's great."

"I hate eel broth, but this is truly delicious!"

"It was spot on to come here after being attracted by the scent."

Even after lunchtime had already passed, the stream of customers didn't stop. Before I realized it, the restaurant has become fully occupied and we helped out by taking orders and washing dishes.

"Occasionally things like this are fun as well." (Wendelin)

"That's true, Wendelin-sama." (Elise)

I recall having worked as part-timer in ramen shops and family restaurants during my student days. Elise was taking the orders while looking happy.

"But, what an amazing number of customers."

"Wendelin-san, you have a superb talent for things like this." (Katharina)

Erw and Katharina admire the big number of guests while washing dishes. Though it's a mistake to think that I have talent for business. In reality it's just a type of janken where I wait to see the opponent's move before doing anything. 9 I just knew by chance about eel kabayaki that didn't exist in this world so far. Calling me a pioneer in being able to earn the most with business wasn't wrong though.

"What a nice aroma. For me, unadon without cooked rice, fried liver, bone crackers and wine." (Burkhart)

"Burkhart-san?" (Wendelin)

"Earl-sama, what are you doing in such a place?" (Burkhart)

Lately Burkhart-san was acting independently upon Margrave Breithilde's orders. He ordered eel with a nonchalant look.

"Just a small, advisor-like job." (Wendelin)

"Is that the job of an adventurer?" (Burkhart)

"Occasionally things like this are interesting as well, aren't they? Burkhart-san, did you have a job in the suburbs?" (Wendelin)

"An errand for my lord. However, another new dish, huh? Let's see... It goes well with alcohol." (Burkhart)

Burkhart-san seems satisfied as he eats the eel kabayaki and bone crackers while drinking liquor.

"The fried liver is also great. This place is an adult restaurant where I can enjoy booze and good side dishes. Next time I will invite Arterio... And yeah, yeah, I won't allow him to get involved with this place." (Burkhart)

"The ingredients are special, and there won't be any healthy competition if I entrust too much to Arterio-san, right?" (Wendelin)

"I guess that's true as well. Which remind me, this place was an old river fish restaurant, wasn't it? So it also has deep connections with the fishermen." (Burkhart)

"If it's Arterio-san, the procurement of eel and the negotiations will likely be difficult."

"Yeah, the price will be a lot higher than for this place."

The fishermen don't have an official guild, but with their unity being strong, it's almost no different from a guild.

If River, who is a veteran, succeeds with eel and other river fish, it will contribute to an improvement in the fishermen's lives.

They are sure to prefer River, an old acquaintance of theirs, over a new customer like Arterio, and will supply River with good ingredients at a low price.

"I guess it's better to exclude Arterio from the eel..."



"The smell of a new business...wait, Earl Baumeister-sama!? Even though I'm your purveyor, Earl-sama!" (Arterio)

It seems he was today in the capital and moreover swiftly sniffed out the scent of eel. Arterio, the subject of our talk, was lost for words when he saw the delicious-looking eel kabayaki and me helping in the restaurant.

"Please allow me to join in on it as well—" (Arterio)

"The stocking of eel; are you going to be alright with that?" (Wendelin)

"Uuh...I won't be able to sell it as cheap as this restaurant..." (Arterio)

Anticipating troublesome negotiations with the fishermen, Arterio-san started to flinch back.

"Aren't you almost completely monopolizing soy sauce and mirin, which are ingredients for the sauce, Arterio-san? You should congratulate this place for its thriving business."

Besides, when we open an eel restaurant in the Baumeister Earldom, the owner here will surely help us without sparing any effort.

It's 『The good you do for others is the good you do for yourself』.

"This savory fragrance; a sauce based on soy sauce?"

"In addition the orders have increased because I recommended a recipe that used plenty of miso with the obsolete river fish cuisine."

"Miso as well!?"

"It's possible to use this for other dishes. Such as steamed chicken meat, grilled with the sauce applied on it. If you grill eggplant and tofu with the sauce, people who are bad with meat and fish will be able to eat it as well."

"I see. What a great type of sauce. How do you do? I'm someone from the Arterio Company."

Arterio-san cheers up right away and after greeting the owner, he started to happily eat the unadon and the fried liver.

That quickness of him changing gears; you might say it's just as expected of him.

"If it's like this, I will be able to sell a great amount of soy sauce!"

With the restaurant still being full, we temporarily place tables and chairs in the front yard and guide the customers to those.

And then, at last that person shows up.

"A wonderful aroma entered my nose! Alley-op!" (Armstrong)

The object, which suddenly landed or rather crashed at high speed in front of the restaurant, was Doushi who flew over from the capital's central area.

Since he caused a thunderous roar alongside his landing, there were a few among the guests who came outside the restaurant while holding their bowls, wondering what was going on.

"Earl Baumeister, why didn't you invite me to such an interesting event!?" (Armstrong)

"Well... As expected, for you, Doushi, this kind of work..."

There's no way that I can make Doushi, the Royal Head Magician, help out in a restaurant. That's the official reason, and my true opinion is that I didn't expect him to be of any use.

"Can't I contribute by sampling food!?"

"(That's, because Wilma is here...) I will invite you next time."

"You absolutely have to do so next time! Now then, I guess I will try the new eel dish right away. 20 unadon with a big serving of rice, 10 servings of eel-liver soup, 20 servings of bone crackers and 30 servings of fried liver for me."

"Are you really going to eat this much?"

"Of course!"

Doushi confidently places an order for a large amount of food. He started to eat the served food as if devouring it.

"It's very delicious! The sauce induces the appetite!"

"I'm getting a sour stomach by just watching..."

"That's light eating for Doushi-sama."

"Doesn't that only apply if compared to you, Wilma...?"

Erw reveals a wary expression due to Doushi's eating style. Everyone besides Wilma turned looks of approval at him.

"There's many amazing people among your acquaintances, Earl Baumeister-sama."

"They are amazing, but there won't be any problems if you just serve delicious dishes."

Given that Burkhart-san, Arterio-san and Doushi, three people whose names had spread in the capital, came one after other, the owner seems to be nervous. And yet he continues to grill eel without lowering his speed. That's because otherwise the number of customers won't decrease no matter how much time passes.

"Are you going to be alright from tomorrow onward?"

"The stock and manpower is fine."

As might be expected of a long-standing restaurant, on top of the restaurant's scale, they seem to be flexible in various ways.

The owner declares that he will be alright even without us and that he will build a management system as quickly as possible.

"After having been taught by you, I will do my best so that River continues for the next thousand years with river fish cuisine and eel dishes as core."



In the end, all of the eels were sold out until evening. At night of the same day, we were served various dishes at a dinner party in a tatami room.

There were many of the dishes I had taught him, but as he apparently piled up experience in this one week, he had polished the taste and the food had become very tasty.

"Delicious. It's great with booze."

"Please ask the Arterio Company for fried food sauce and ketchup made out of sweet-sour red beans, in addition to soy sauce and miso."

"Earl Baumeister, all the dishes served here are wonderful! Definitely call me the next time as well!"

The unrelated people obtained free food for three people, but from now on River would build branch stores as standard-bearer of river fish cuisine, resulting in the owner being later on referred to as 『Eel King』 who doesn't allow others to follow his steps especially in regards to eel kabayaki.

* * *

"I see, this is the sauce that came up in the story, huh...?"

"I thought that it would exist in the Earl Mizuho Country, but..."

"In our territory grilled eel with a wasabi-soy sauce is the standard."

As we were preparing to grill the eel, High Earl Mizuho, who seemed likewise bored, visited our encampment while bringing his retainers along. It looks like he's very interested in eel kabayaki.

"Did you buy the eel in a state of being skewered on bamboo skewers?"

"In case of an amateur, the processing will be quite bad after all."

It's not like an amateur won't be able to handle it well either, but buying the goods processed by a professional is probably safer.

Even an amateur should be capable of grilling it somehow or other.

"Sweet! It's sweeter than the sugar applied to a manjuu! Earl Baumeister!"

"That's certainly sweet."

Ina is the only one showing an understanding expression towards the weird allegory of High Earl Mizuho.

"A proficient skill is necessary to grill eel. I see, there are the methods of grilling it smeared in sauce after steaming it once, and grilling it soaked in sauce without steaming it? I better leave this to my family's cooks. They grill it without seasonings, but they are fairly skilled at it."

We were visited by High Earl Mizuho all of a sudden, but he says that he will lend one of his cooks skilled in processing and grilling eel, and supply us with additional eels. This is sure welcome. We prepare the eel with both styles, Kanto and Kansai. Former is an eel with fluffy, soft texture, latter is a tougher eel with a crisply burned skin. We were able to enjoy both, and the kabayaki kept being made one after the other.

Even so, I was still surprised that there's no kabayaki in Earl Mizuho Country.

However, even in Japan kabayaki didn't appear until the middle of the Edo period, so it's not such a weird story either.

"Shall we taste and compare as we made both?"

"You had eel on hand as well, hadn't you High Earl Mizuho?"

"It's not the season for eel right now, but eel is an ingredient full of power after all. I have it preserved in a magic bag."

It looks like he's storing them while the eel is stabbed on skewers. Once he takes them out, it's prepared according to my instructions, and then placed on top of piping hot, served rice.

One side of the bowl has Kanto-styled eel, the other has Kansai-styled eel.
Since I had River's owner share some of the sauce with us, I offer it to High Earl Mizuho.
If the sauce runs out, I just have to replenish it by making new sauce.

"What an absurdly appetizing fragrance. The taste is the best as well, isn't it!? Today we are going to make a large amount of kabayaki!"

Upon High Earl Mizuho's order, the eel stock is released in large quantities. With that as ingredient, unadon is made and distributed to many Mizuho people.

"It's a terribly nice aroma. This comes from you, Earl Baumeister-sama?"

"That's correct, Haruka-san." (Erwin)

"It's a smell that lures one in."

Being attracted by the smell, Haruka shows up and Erw, who helped out with the work, ran up to her and gave her an explanation.

"How can Earl Baumeister-sama come up with this kind of new dishes all the time?"

"Who knows? Maybe he was a cook in his previous life? Let's eat, Haruka-san." (Erwin)

"Okay."

At that point Alfons turns up after being lured by the novel scent.

"New Duke Philip-sama, how it's going?"

"We can't help much with the former Nürnberg Dukedom's governing. If we stay influential, it will become tricky for Peter-dono in the future."

Saying that the Duke Philip household's feudal army doesn't have much to do, Alfons looked enviously at the unadon.

"Eel, eh? If it's the Empire, it's served as fried dish." (Alfons)

Apparently it's stir-fried together with vegetables after boiling the cut round slices.
It's uncertain whether that's tasty.

"There's little amusement on the battlefield, so enjoying this kind of cooking is great."

"Indeed. Eat this and then do thy best, Duke Philip-dono." (Therese)

"You have nicely gotten used to your easygoing social status, haven't you Therese...? I want to retire as well, but..."

"Isn't that impossible for at least 30 more years?"

"I know that..."

"Don't cry, Alfons. I will give you an especially large serving of unadon, okay?"

I held out a bigger portion to Alfons.

"Those are tears of happiness..."

Various people gather and everyone eats the delicious eel.
In this way the eel kabayaki explosively spread among not only the Mizuho people, but also imperial citizens.



"Earl Baumeister, please sell the sauce for 1,000 ryo!"

"I won't sell it at such price. After all this is a sauce soaked with a large amount of eel in the greatly flourishing restaurant River."

"Hearing that, I want it all the more! Didn't I provide the eel today?"

"Hasn't it been you yourself, who said that you want to allow everyone to eat it? I contributed by sharing the sauce."

"Can't you think of it like this: your sauce improved the taste even further by absorbing the deliciousness of the eel provided by me? It has contributed to the good flavor of the current sauce. In that case it won't be a problem, as long as you sell at least half of it to me?"

"No, no! This kind of sauce recipe isn't new to you, right High Earl Mizuho? You just have to start from a new sauce by making it yourself."

"Won't our sauce fall behind yours then, Earl Baumeister?"

"It will be fine. Eel is a specialty in the Earl Mizuho Country, so your sauce will immediately overtake mine."

"Please sell it. I want that sauce! Even half of it will be fine!"

"If half of it is gone, its deliciousness will weaken."

"The eel provided today by me accounted for half the good taste, so isn't that the same in the end!?"

"There's no way that it was half, is there!? I was given this precious sauce soaked in the flavor of eel after a restaurant famous for its eel grilled eel everyday because it's me!"

"I will do with a fourth of it!"

Chapter 2 – The Turmoil over the Illegitimate Child of a Certain Noble

"A Healing Tour?" (Wendelin)

"Yes, a Healing Tour. The villages in the circumference of the imperial capital have been troubled by the civil war, right? Accordingly it means that we are going to perform healing for free instead of paying them for their troubles. The people of the church are participating, but we are still short on hands. Foremost I'd like to request Elise-dono's assistance." (Peter)



We returned to the imperial capital together with the Imperial Army's main force that had entrusted the former Nürnberg Dukedom to the army force staying behind.

When I believed that we would simply go home after receiving our reward, I was given yet another task by Peter.

The details are for me to offer healing for free to the citizens since the civil war caused them a lot of troubles.

Peter, who's going to become the new Emperor, eagerly tries to strengthen the support by his imperial subjects, even going as far as pulling such obvious publicity stunt.

"I don't mind, but..." (Elise)

"I'm not that good at healing magic, but it's no problem." (Wendelin)

Elise answers while worrying about my side, but even I'm not that small a man to reject occasionally doing some volunteer work.

Without thinking too deeply about it, I agreed to participate in the Healing Tour.

"I will join as well. Sometimes even nobles carry out charity after all." (Katharina)

She can't heal anything but minor injuries, but Katharina announced her participation in the Healing Tour arguing that it's the duty of nobility to regularly participate in such volunteer work.

"Then you will be again treated as auntie by the children." (Wilma)

"Wilma-san, something like that won't happen all the time. After all I'm still in my teens."
(Katharina)

A while ago Katharina felt down because she had been called auntie by the children whose injuries she had treated.

Wilman pointed out that this might happen again.

"But, Katharina, children are especially cruel." (Ina)

As Ina says, children calmly refer to a person around the age of 20 as uncle.

I remember feeling depressed after children called me uncle during my time at the university in my previous life.

"Accordingly, as it's not like we will head into battle today, I should aim for an image change once in a while." (Katharina)

No sooner than saying that, Katharina swiftly changed into a white one-piece dress with a neat and trim image instead of her usual attire.
But...

"It's somehow weird." (Ina)

"True, somehow it feels really unnatural, doesn't it...?" (Luise)

"It doesn't suit you." (Wilma)

Katharina planned to do an image change with all her might, but the evaluations of Ina, Luise and Wilma were harsh.

"Elise-san, what do you think?" (Katharina)

"Umm...it suits you..." (Elise)

Being a good girl to the core, Elise couldn't honestly tell Katharina that her attire doesn't fit her. I confirmed that her eyes are wavering.

"Do you really believe that?" (Katharina)

"Yes..." (Elise)

It's no good.
Elise is bad at lying.

"Wendelin-san, what do you think?" (Katharina)

I guess there's no point in lying here...

"I'm not well-acquainted with fashion, but it looks unbalanced." (Wendelin)

It was nice for Katharina to wear a simple attire, but her hairstyle is still the same. If it's her usual flashy attire, it suits her since the balance works out, but right now just the hairstyle oddly stands out...if I'm forced to phrase it out, she looks like a kokeshi doll with long hair. I don't know whether kokeshi dolls exist in this world, but...maybe they can be found in Mizuho? I will look for them next time.

"What if you straighten your hair instead of the usual ringlets? If you do that, the balance will improve." (Wendelin)

Katharina is a beauty, so it should suit her normally once she fixes that part.

"Change my hairstyle?" (Katharina)

"Yes." (Wendelin)

"Wendelin-san, that's impossible." (Katharina)

"Is it a fixed family rule of the Waigel household or something?" (Wendelin)

She's also a noble, so I can't really force her if I'm told that it's been decided by the household for generations.

There are many people possessing strange obsessions among nobles.

"No. Since my hair crimps, I can't straighten my hair. As result of various trials and errors since my childhood, I confirmed this hairstyle to be the most suitable while at the same time possessing dignity as the hairstyle of a noble. Something like changing my hairstyle is simply not possible." (Katharina)

Katharina declared boldly.

"Then that attire of yours won't work." (Wendelin)

"...How regrettable." (Katharina)

In the end Katharina returned to her usual clothes.



"Elise, Katharina and me. I guess it'll be fine if there are three healing magicians..." (Wendelin)

Everyone else plans to accompany us as guards or to waste some time. Burkhart-san has some circumstances, so he's going to stay behind.

Since it looks like all we have to do is to make a Healing Tour to a single village, it will likely be plenty with three healers.

When I thought that, Doushi stated that he will participate as well for some reason.

"I will go too!" (Armstrong)

"There won't be any combat." (Wendelin)

"It's necessary for me to practice the healing magic I learned!" (Armstrong)

I understand his sentiments, but Doushi's healing magic won't activate unless he hugs his target.

If it's a child, they might suffocate. In case of a woman...I think I'd like him to especially hold back on women who haven't been married yet.

Even men...I definitely wouldn't want to experience that.

"Uncle-sama." (Elise)

"What is it, Elise?" (Armstrong)

"Uncle-sama, I'd like you to handle the healing of the imperial soldiers." (Elise)

I see. Since it would likely turn into a trauma for any innocent villager with no background knowledge if they were to be hugged by Doushi, he will be left in charge of the Imperial Army's soldiers here, whose healing hasn't finished yet.

Because of the Healing Tours, they are probably lacking healers.

They should be able to at least endure being hugged by an old muscled man as long as their injuries get treated...

"There's still many injured among the soldiers. I believe they are in need of your abilities, Uncle-sama." (Elise)

"It's just as you say, Elise! Leave it to me!" (Armstrong)

Thanks to him being skillfully persuaded by Elise, the innocent villagers living in the Empire avoided falling prey to Doushi.

Their injuries will be healed, so at least enduring him is the job of a soldier, I think.



The splitting of personnel has finished with this. We headed to a village located in the outskirts of the capital.

That village is around half a day away on horse. We plan to lodge there today.

"I'm certain it was pushed on us, who are free, since it's far away."

Luise, although it's probably the truth, you must not say that.

"There's, you came along as well, eh?" (Wendelin)

"I can't use magic, but I will at least help with the odd tasks. Even if I had stayed behind in the capital, there's nothing decent I can do there anyway." (Therese)

It's the best plan for her to not come in contact with nobles that think she's trying to stand in Peter's way.

I guess that means she won't leave my side until we leave the imperial capital.

"Dear, we will arrive in the scheduled village soon." (Elise)

"There's certainly no people that are so injured that they are about to die, right?" (Wendelin)

My healing magic is at intermediate level. I will feel pressured, if I were to be approached by severely wounded people as if I'm a certain, famous, unlicensed doctor.

I will feel somewhat bad to leave everything up to just Elise as well though.

"As expected, it should be rare to run into such people, but..." (Elise)



"It looks like we will be able to get healed with magic today. You have my utmost gratitude for that."

Once we arrived at the village, an elderly with white hair that appears to be the village chief and goes beyond 70 in age extended his greetings as representative of the villagers.

"There is no healing magician in this village..."

Even if there's a priest in the church, it's not like he can use healing magic for everyone.

There are many priests who can't use magic. They independently study pharmacy, mix medicinal plants and administer those.

For a church in a rural village it's not enough to just preach from the pulpit to gain support.

But, medicine is expensive and the village has become poor due to the recent civil war.

Even though they are located in the capital's outskirts, the number of people coming and going has dwindled, resulting in their income disappearing.

The Healing Tours are carried out to gain support for the new administration and help the Empire's subjects.

"Well then, I suppose we are going to begin right away."

At such times it's the most efficient to entrust matters to Elise, who excels at healing magic.

Since she gained a lot of experience in the Kingdom with this kind of healing work, Elise went to work briskly.

Following Elise's instructions, Katharina and I heal the slightly-injured people.

"I think I got the hang of it." (Wendelin)

"Dear, please don't use too much mana." (Elise)

"There's not that many injured in this village, right? Is there any need to focus on economizing to that extent?" (Wendelin)

I regard it as unnecessary to bother with saving mana here, but...

"Excuse me...we have heard in advance about you coming here today. A great number of patients have also come from the surrounding villages."

"I see. For me to not notice something so obvious..." (Wendelin)

Since there's no way for us to visit each and every single village, the villagers of the surrounding villages were likely instructed to gather at this village as much as possible.

Elise, who's experienced in this, probably realized that a big number of patients would come.

"In order to lower the burden on Elise, I will also take over the patients ranging from minor to serious injuries. I guess we will entrust the slightly-injured people to you, Katharina. Err, Katharina..." (Wendelin)

Once I look at Katharina healing the slightly-injured people, she seemed to feel slightly depressed for some reason.

"Is something wrong, Katharina?" (Wendelin)

"Uuh...I'm just an auntie..." (Katharina)

She seems to be down after being again called auntie by the children.

"That's how small children are. They are certainly calling me uncle or something like that, too." (Wendelin)

"Is that true?" (Katharina)

"Yea, sure is. I'm the same as you, Katharina." (Wendelin)

Since I was handling a three-years old child with a bone fracture right then, I tried to observe how it calls me during the healing.

Since small children are cruel, I'm certain it will call me uncle.

"Onii-chan, thank you."

"...You're welcome." (Wendelin)

"..." (Katharina)

I didn't expect this.

Even though it's small, it's a good child who discerned the truth.

Nevertheless, Katharina's look is painful.



"I have become considerably accustomed to this." (Wendelin)

"Umm...is it alright now?"

Having safely finished healing several hundred people, it was finally the last patient, but I knew that this person is going to be unmanageable for me and Katharina.

The patient was a young woman. She didn't particularly look like an injured or sick person, but quite conspicuous burn marks were extending all over her face.

She said that he face got burned in a fire several months ago.

She's not so severely wounded that it would affect her daily life, but it's impossible for an inexperienced healer to erase these kinds of scars.

"It's not like it influences her life, but this girl is scheduled to marry next month..."

"In that case it's definitely better for her face to be beautiful."

As fellow woman, Elise was enthusiastic about healing her.

"I approve as well, but how are you going to heal her?" (Wendelin)

As a matter of fact, these burn scars had been apparently healed once with healing magic.

The burn had been healed, but terrible scars were left behind.

It seems there are many such cases, but even if additional healing magic is cast here, it's unlikely for the burn scars to disappear.

Even if you cast healing magic on a person, who has already been healed, it won't improve anything at all.

As I'm troubled, Elise teaches me the healing method.

"There's something we have to do first. Please hand me a knife with a sharp blade." (Elise)

Once I hand Elise a knife, she speaks to the woman with the scars.

"Please endure as I'm going to shave off the burn marks." (Elise)

Elise doesn't go as far as administering an anesthesia, but she smears a medicine on the burn marks to soften the pain and then she begins to cut off the burn mark's keloids with the knife.

Occasionally the woman's body twitches due to the pain, but ignoring that, Elise cuts out all of the scars.

The affected parts and Elise's hands were stained with blood.

"Dear. Please use powerful healing magic." (Elise)

"Got it." (Wendelin)

As way of thinking, cutting out the scars will probably allow to restore the skin with healing magic from scratch.

It consumed a somewhat larger amount of mana, but gradually the skin restores to its previous beauty.

After the healing, Elise wiped the affected parts that were covered with blood with a wet cloth. The burn marks had completely disappeared.

"Ooh! Amazing!" (Wendelin)

"Isn't it your magic what's amazing, Wendelin-san?" (Katharina)

Katharina says, but if Elise didn't know the method of cutting out the scars first, the healing would have failed, I think.

"But, it sure healed beautifully..."

It's not like you can completely heal all illnesses and injuries if you only cast healing magic.

The accumulation of such know-how is probably the strong point of the church.

"With this you will be able to marry without any worries."

"Thank you very much."

Having completely recovered from her burns, the young woman thanked Elise and me.

"Your husband will probably feel relieved as well."

"Thank you very much for healing Heidi. Because of the burn marks on her face, she refrained from going outside and started to talk about canceling the marriage with me. As she suffered..."

A man, who seems to be the fiancé that accompanied her, revealed a relieved expression and gave us his thanks.

With this the first day of the Healing Tour came safely to an end.

And since it has become dark, it's been arranged for us to lodge in the village.

Since there was fortunately a vacant house, we decided to rent it after receiving the village chief's permission.



"I feel very sorry for it to be a vacant house with nothing in it..."

"Please don't mind as we have brought the necessary furniture." (Wendelin)

The beds, chairs and cookware, all of it has been stored in my magic bag, so I consider us to be low-maintenance guests.

"Though I think it would be great if you could provide us with a meal." (Luise)

"Being close to the capital and the civil war, this village is barely scraping by. For Peter-dono to have nominated thou, Wendelin, is because thou won't be any unnecessary burden on the village due to the need to provide hospitality." (Therese)

Luise seemed to be bothered by the village chief not even offering a meal.

However, as the economical state of this area, including this village, is dire due to the civil war, it will bare any meaning to demand excessive hospitality, no matter how much healing magic we might have cast.

"I'm sorry. Even though you healed us for free, I can't even provide any meaningful thanks..."

"It's the special product of our village. If you don't mind, please eat it."

However, as they seemed to feel sorry unless they did something for us, the villagers, who received out healing, provided us with their own vegetables and such.

"Thank you very much for the fresh vegetables." (Elise)

Elise, who's also a person of character, thanked them and decided to make dinner with those vegetables as ingredients.

『Miso Stew』 in a big pot cooked on a portable magic cooking stove. This dish is one of Elise's originals.

It was a dish looking like a multicolored brew to me as a former Japanese, but it's actually delicious. It's a mysterious stew that goes well with either bread or rice.

"There are also ingredients for a salad."

In addition to making a salad, we roasted the monster meat that had been stored in my magic bag and prepared ready-made desserts, resulting in dinner being ready.

"Therese became more of a help than I expected." (Ina)

Due to Therese skilfully cutting the vegetables, Ina praised her for having improved her handling of a kitchen knife in a short period of time.

"Fufun, my free time increased significantly. Since I noticed that Wendelin likes women who are good at cooking, it's only natural for me to train myself in that direction." (Therese)

To me it looks like there's unexpectedly no consistency in regards to my preferences in women, but it's correct that I have no wife that's altogether bad at cooking.

Even in my previous life it was the same. There were situations where the mood got bad with women, who prepared bad food, because the conversation got dampened and it immediately showed on my face.

As result of that it might have developed into me having a perception that allows me to avoid such women.

"Therese, your cooking repertoire is lacking."

"I'm learning that right now, too. It's a nice thing to have time for such things, isn't it?" (Therese)

In exchange it looks really difficult for Alfons who became the new Duke Philip though.

"Today you were admirable or should I rather say, fulfilling all expectations as usual, Elise-san. Especially the healing of the burn scars at the end was magnificent."

"It's something I was taught in the church." (Elise)

Erasing only terribly burn scars with healing magic should require an extraordinary amount of mana. I can't believe that all healing magicians are capable of that. If a healer uses a lot of mana to erase burn scars of a single patient, whose life isn't in any danger due to those scars, it will influence the healing of other patients, who are on the brink of death.

Accordingly know-how like the one about first cutting out the burn scars is probably something that the church has been accumulating.

By doing that, even my healing magic, which is only at intermediate level, becomes capable of dealing with such situations.

It's also being said that the church has become corrupt in the recent years, but since they possess medical knowledge, it's an useful organization with a strong support.

"Elise, you don't feel disturbed even if you see blood, do you?"

"I've been performing medical treatment for a long time now. But I did feel shaken when I saw blood for the first time." (Elise)

"That makes sense... I was truly frightened when I was told to drain the blood of a rabbit that I had killed for the first time in my childhood." (Erwin)

I guess Erw experienced something like that as well.

It was the same for me, but nowadays I stopped feeling sick even when looking at the aftermath of a battlefield.

Humans are creatures that can get used to anything, aren't they?

"It's great that we finished the healing within today. It allows us to go back to the imperial capital early in the morning tomorrow."

"We might get asked by His Highness to do various things, if we stay too long in the Empire."

Certainly, Wilma's comment is probably correct. Let's get our reward and return to the Baumeister Earldom as soon as possible.

"I guess we will buy some souvenirs and then go home."

"Souvenirs are important."

It's not like souvenirs are just for other people. They also exist to buy what one likes and to enjoy the feeling of having traveled for a while even after returning home.

"That's true, isn't it. There are the souvenirs of the Empire, but we also must not forget souvenirs of Mizuho."

Because Haruka resembles a Japanese she seems to have a nature of fussing over souvenirs. Since we finished Peter's request in one day, our after meal chat naturally inclined towards returning home.

Very soon we will be able to return.

I wonder what kind of souvenirs should I get?

Probably because we talked about something like returning, we ended up getting dragged into yet another troublesome matter...or am I reading too much into it?

"Excuse me for visiting you so late in the night."

When there was a sudden knocking at the door, Erw opened it while staying on guard just in case. On the other side of the door were the village chief and a young girl that looked to be around 12~13 years old.

"Village Chief-san, do you have any further business with us?" (Erwin)

"As a matter of fact, I have something private to discuss with you...it's about this child here."

"Unnecessary. Such kind of behavior will only kill Wendelin's mood." (Therese)

I couldn't understand the intention behind the words Therese directed at the village chief while getting slightly angry.

"(What's this about?)" (Wendelin)

"(Although it's because of the civil war, they are unable to decently entertain us who provided medical treatment for them. That's why he brought this girl.)" (Therese)

Does the village chief mean to say: "We prepared the most beautiful girl of this village. So please enjoy her for this night"?

"(I don't need her...)" (Wendelin)

Moreover, this child is much too young.
Aren't usually a lot elder women used for such a task?

"(The one who did the most in today's healing session was Elise. Is there a custom to offer up a good-looking man, if the other party is a woman?)" (Wendelin)

"(Wendelin, sometimes thou say things that make me want to open up that head of thee to check its contents...)" (Therese)

Having heard my remark, Therese looked at me with a completely fed-up expression.

"Village chief, including myself, there's this many women here. That kind of consideration is uncalled for." (Therese)

"(Therese, you are shrewd.)" (Wilma)

"(Be quiet. That's just a figure of speech.)" (Therese)

Because she implicitly mentioned that she's also my woman, obviously using the occasion, she got a retort from Wilma.

"No, that's not my intention. This child is the illegitimate child of a certain noble-sama..."

"What? It has started already?" (Therese)

"Therese, what do you mean?" (Wendelin)

"That child's father probably wants to possess a connection to thou, Wendelin." (Therese)

Ah, that kind of meaning, huh?

I guess that means they are trying to form a relationship with the Earl Baumeister household by forcibly placing that child, which is an illegitimate child, at my side since a marriage all of a sudden

is difficult.

Even though the civil war finally came to an end, something troublesome came visiting once again.

"Umm...that's not what I mean. This child is the illegitimate child of a noble from the Helmut Kingdom. All I'm asking is whether I could have you take her back with you, if possible."

"What? Thee say she's the daughter of a Kingdom noble?" (Therese)

As expected, even Therese didn't expect this child to be an illegitimate offspring of a noble from the Kingdom.

She was surprised for a change.

"Village Chief-san, can you tell us about the details...?"

It seems the village chief wanted to somehow entrust this child to me after having learned that I'm a noble from the Helmut Kingdom.

We let in the village chief and the young girl inside the house in order to listen to the full story.

"I'm called Philine. Please take care of me."

Once urged on by the village chief, the girl introduced herself.

"Philine-san, right? How about some cake?"

"...Umm..." (Philine)

"Philine, accept it."

"Yes!" (Philine)

There's no way for a still young child to explain her own complicated history. For the time until the village chief finished the explanation, Elise put out cake and tea, and had her silently eat some of it. At first Philine held back, but once she received the village chief's permission, she began to delightfully eat the cake.

"Actually the mother of this child was a woman known for her beauty. At the time of the last Friendship Group's visit, she was selected as maid to take care of a noble-sama from the Kingdom."

Back then she got pregnant with the child of that noble.

"...And then she gave birth to Philine in this village, her own birthplace..."

After that mother and child lived in this village for a while, but her mother died to sickness when Philine was still very young. After that the village chief, a distant relative of hers, apparently took care of her

"At this rate, rather than living in this village, it's better for her to rely on you, Earl Baumeister-sama. As soon as I believed that returning this child to her father would open up her future..."

In such a rural village a girl descending from a foreign noble is probably difficult to handle. Since I, a Kingdom noble, luckily came here, he believed this to be fate and decided to try entrusting Philine to me.

"Huh? Did Peter actually know about this?"

Is that the reason for us having been in charge of this village?

"Earl Bameister-sama, no one except Philine, her deceased mother and me knows about Philine's descent though..."

Coincidence...? If that's true, this girl must be very lucky?
Though I might have a predisposition to get dragged into things.

"Say, I'm sorry to doubt you, but isn't it slightly weird? That child is too big."

The visit of the last Friendship Group is approximately ten years ago. And yet Philine's big body looks like that of a 12~13 years old girl.

Just as pointed out by Luise, it doesn't really match up with her age?

"Young madam, Philine is 10 years old right now, so the calculation is correct."

"Eeeeh! This child is still ten?" (Luise)

We were a bit surprised as well, but Luise, who heard Philine's age, apparently felt so all the more.

"Haha! It's because that girl is bigger than Luise and doesn't look like she's much younger than her either." (Erwin)

Erw laughed while pointing out that Luise looks younger than her actual age and Philine looks older than her actual age.

"It would be a turn-around if she was one year older! If Luise was around 30 years older, she would be, suitable for her age...ugh!" (Erwin)

His mouth is his own downfall.

Erw was silenced with a vicious elbow strike from Luise.

"That clears up the matter with Philine's age. So, about the evidence..." (Elise)

At this point Elise skilfully changed the topic.



Stories about illegitimate children of high-ranking nobles actually aren't all that rare. There are quite a few real examples of that, but since it looks like there are manifold more fakes out there, it's not like we can take her back while accepting it so easily.

"Evidence, you say? It's here."

The village chief showed us the evidence he brought along...



Since it was proven with the evidence that Philine is really an illegitimate child, we returned to the capital early in the morning of the next day.

"Huh? That child is your new wife, Wendelin?" (Peter)

"No way!" (Wendelin)

Peter, who came to greet us, said something foolish after seeing Philine, so I denied it with all my mind.

"Right! Now's not the time to keep you company, Peter!" (Wendelin)

"Eeeeh! Isn't that way of phrasing it way too cruel?" (Peter)



Ignoring Peter's objection, we hurry to Burkhart-san, who didn't participate in this time's Healing Tour. He was teaching young magicians who are going to support the Empire in the future. Given that he himself can't use healing magic either, he stayed behind.

"Burkhart-san, there's a little something to discuss..." (Wendelin)

When I called out to him, he was just talking about something with Doushi.

"Even though I'm telling them that I will heal them, there are many who decline that!" (Armstrong)

"The civil war came to an end, so it's alright to not hurry, don't you think?" (Burkhart)

Doushi was supposed to stay back in order to heal the injured imperial soldiers, but there was apparently a lot less work for him than expected.

Well, it can't be helped if it's an injury where the patient will die if they aren't treated right away, but being hugged by Doushi to cure a wound that will heal itself soon is something they hate. If one is suspected of homosexual love by the priests healing together with Doushi, it will also have various inconveniences in this world.

"Isn't it great that you have free time? Oh, Earl-sama, you came back? Huh? Who's that child? Your new wife?" (Burkhart)

No way, for Burkhart-san to say the same thing as Peter...

"No. I'd like to consult with you in regards to this child." (Wendelin)

"To persuade Elise-dono? I don't want to. Do it yourself." (Burkhart)

"I told you she's not my wife, so please give it a rest. As a matter of fact this child is..." (Wendelin)

I explained to Burkhart-san that Philine, who we brought with us upon the village chief's request, is Margrave Breithilde's daughter.

"This girl? Certainly, the color of her hair is the same as master's...her face is similar as well, bah I guess she resembles him..." (Burkhart)

"That's why I said that she's the real deal. Look, here's the evidence." (Wendelin)

Among the items the village chief entrusted to us, there was a diary written by Philine's deceased mother.

We read the content as well. Philine's mother was apparently in charge of assisting Margrave Breithilde at the visit of the previous Friendship Group.

"Last time? I didn't see any of that." (Burkhart)

"Burkhart-dono and I were busy with entertaining Therese-sama!" (Armstrong)

Come to think of it, Therese said something along those lines, didn't she?

Burkhart-san and Doushi visited various places for fun in the capital together with Therese who was still young back then.

"It's no wonder that master didn't say anything about me leaving everyday. Rather, I considered it weird that he joyfully sent me off..." (Burkhart)

That's because he repeatedly had trysts with Philine's mother, using the good opportunity that his annoying watchdog was gone.

"Dense." (Wilma)

"Ugh! I can't deny that..." (Burkhart)

Burkhart-san didn't possess any counterarguments to Wilma's merciless comment.

"There's still more evidence."

Not just the diary, but also love letters Margrave Breithilde gave to Philine's mother, a letter that proves that it's his child if a child is born, and a luxurious knife with the family crest of the Margrave Breithilde family were part of the evidence.

"The handwriting is definitely that of Margrave Breithilde-sama. Same for the crest on the knife. If I remember correctly, this knife can only be made by the shop of the Margrave Breithilde household's purveyor, right?"

"I guess Margrave Breithilde enjoyed himself at the destination of his trip?"

"Master really can't be helped..." (Burkhart)

With even Ina and Luise, who are the daughters of Margrave Breithilde's retainers, giving statements that remove all objections, Burkhart-san surrenders completely.

"I really don't want to say it, but he's the worst!" (Katharina)

Katharina, who's a famous magician and also a noble, quite bluntly criticized Margrave Breithilde's deed.

They don't voice it out, but it looks like Elise and the others clearly agree with her.

That was the moment when the reputation of Margrave Breithilde, who seems to be an educated, good young man, crashed to the bottom.

"Love letters...even at such times Margrave Breithilde shows his affinity to the liberal arts, doesn't he...?"

When we checked the contents albeit feeling sorry, phrases, which were embarrassing to even look at, such as 『The you who is as beautiful as the sun』 or 『How shall I convey this throbbing in my chest to you?』 were written in there.

Seeing the contents, Doushi and Erw started to laugh while rolling around due to the overly embarrassing lines.

Margrave Breithilde might have been serious, but seen by an outsider, it's kind of ridiculous and a public execution for the person himself.

The difference between the women's scornful laughter and the men's mocking laughter was surreal.

"『A love poem sent to the dear you by Amadeus Freitag von Breithilde』...he's totally blowing it out of proportions..."

An embarrassing poem, which seems to have been written by Margrave Breithilde, was pasted on a page of the diary.

It appears that he's good at writing traveler's journals and similar, but he has absolutely no talent for love letters and poems.

To me it simply looks like Margrave Breithilde's dark past.

If something like that was written by me and had been leaked to society, I would certainly consider suicide.

That's how embarrassing this poem was.

"Margrave Breithilde-sama has really zero talent as poet."

"He might have talent as comedian though." (Luise)

"Luise, you know..." (Ina)

Ina chided Luise, but Doushi and Erw laughed out even louder. Even Elise seemed had to struggle hard to resist laughing.

"Burkhart-san, please inform Margrave Breithilde at once." (Wendelin)

With that device destroyed, the restriction on communication and movement magic was lifted. I ask Burkhart-san to immediately inform Margrave Breithilde through a Magic Handheld Communication Device (MHCD).

"I will tell him. But, who's going to look after this child until she meets with master?" (Burkhart)

"Isn't it fine to take her along right away?" (Erwin)

"Don't say something so absurd, Erw lad." (Burkhart)

"In this world, where dispute over the illegitimate children of nobles is an everyday occurrence, it's impossible for her to immediately meet her parent, no matter how much evidence she has." Burkhart-san states.

"Indeed. First you must inform Margrave Breithilde-sama alongside handing over the evidence. Then Margrave Breithilde household's side will judge its authenticity." (Haruka)

Unexpectedly Haruka was the most composed among the women. I wonder, did such disputes also take place in the Fubayashi household in the past?

"No!" (Takeomi)

Takeomi-san instantly denied that.

"To have this much evidence...somehow it's an unpleasant story."

"He has to talk with his wife and gain her approval. And it's necessary to inform all his major retainers."

"That's how it is. With this child entering the Margrave Breithilde household, people, whose situation will change drastically, might appear. If it's only about master giving his okay, then there's no problem, but it's essential for him to negotiate with those below in advance. Besides, you know..." (Burkhart)

"Even if she were to be allowed to meet with Margrave Breithilde-sama, a minimum of manners is necessary." (Elise)

Manners, huh...? As expected of Elise to notice something like that.

If you consider Philine's education, it might be best to regard her as unfamiliar with the manners of a noble's daughter.

If it was the Knight Baumeister household, it would be no issue at all, but the Margrave Breithilde household is upper nobility amongst high-ranking nobles.

"Burkhart-san, you will teach her that?" (Wilma)

"No...I can't teach a little girl about manners." (Burkhart)

Burkhart-san completely denied it upon Wilma's question.

"Even if you were to entrust me with a little girl...look..." (Burkhart)

Once Burkhart-san tried to get close to Philine, she hid behind Doushi.

"This mister is scary..." (Philine)

"It looks like I'm being disliked." (Burkhart)

"How regrettable, Burkhart-dono." (Armstrong)

"For a change you're liked by a child..." (Burkhart)

Even so, Philine is weird.

She's afraid of Burkhart-san, whose popularity among women and children isn't really bad, and instead she's emotionally attached to Doushi, whose popularity among women and children is bad... She stayed hidden behind Doushi.

"I don't know the manners of women either." (Armstrong)

One wouldn't be able to imagine from his appearance, but since Doushi had been born into high-ranking nobility, he received proper education in his childhood. In that point he wasn't criticized by other nobles.

Though it's really unexpected...

"How about asking some free-looking noble or their family?" (Armstrong)

"That's no good."

"I guess so."

It would be best to not leak the information about Margrave Breithilde's illegitimate child to others. It can't be helped that Doushi will...leak the information to His Majesty, but it's best to not tell Earl Schultz and his group, who are doing many things together with us.

"Elise-dono, can I leave it to you?" (Burkhart)

"Dear?" (Elise)

"Philine is a girl, so it might be a good idea for Elise and the others to look after her. Can I ask that of you?" (Wendelin)

"That's a matter of course. Please leave it to me." (Elise)

Elise willingly took over the task of taking care of Philine.

"Since I only have elder brothers, I'm happy that I was able to gain a little sister."

"Ina-chan and I also have only elder and younger brothers." (Luise)

"Though it's Luise that looks younger than Philine...uguh!" (Erwin)

Luise once again delivers an elbow strike against Erw who blurted out something unnecessary.

"I request it of you since I will try to make her meet with master as soon as possible! And, please keep it a secret from Earl Schultz and the others by all means..." (Burkhart)

"That's fine, but..."

I don't have the hobby of deliberately spreading rumors all over, but with Doushi having heard about it, it has the same meaning as it having been leaked to His Majesty...
Does he believe that to be inevitable?

"Philine, since the capital's gelato shop has reopened, I will go buy some for you! Are you going to eat that?" (Armstrong)

"I will hold back on it as I just ate cake." (Philine)

"How levelheaded! We will eat it together after dinner!" (Armstrong)

"Thank you very much, Doushi-sama." (Philine)

At any rate, Philine is an odd one.
Normal children will cry or be scared if they see Doushi...

"Wend-sama, is it something that can be hidden?" (Wilma)

"That's where the problem lies..." (Katharina)

I was told by Wilma and Katharina.
If we suddenly start taking care of Philine, Earl Schultz and his group, Philip and Christoph are bound to consider it weird.

"Let's have her usually wear this." (Wendelin)

"Maid clothes."

"Wendelin-san, you are going to pretend that you have hired a new maid, aren't you?" (Katharina)

Fortunately Philine looks older than Luise.
She may be regarded as new maid apprentice...right?

"It might be better than not doing it."

"But, won't it be considered in the manner of you having ushered in a new wife, Wendelin-san?"

(Katharina)

"..."

Even though it's for the sake of a reunion of parent and child, the risk to me is...
However, that worry faded away during the evening of that day.



"Earl Baumeister, is that the rumored daughter of Margrave Breithilde?"

"It was exposed right away, eh...?" (Wendelin)

"It's because my father also participated in the previous Friendship Group. There was no definite proof, but rumors were circulating."

It also means that Earl Schultz is a high-ranking noble with a history albeit an appointed one. The fact of Philine being Margrave Breithilde's illegitimate child was exposed in one go.

"Is possessing such a characteristic silver-colored hair limited to people of the Margrave Breithilde household?"

"Yeah...he will be scolded by his wife later..."

Burkhart-san held his head between his hands due to the all too sudden exposure.

"Wend-sama, court service is difficult." (Wilma)

"That's true." (Wendelin)

Only at this time I thought of the bottom of my heart that it was good for me to be a noble.

Chapter 3 – End of the Empire's Civil War

"Report? Sure."

As usual Peter accepted it casually.

The settlement of the Empire's civil war hasn't come to an end yet and thus our reward hasn't been decided.

Since it's pointless to wait for just that now that I can use 『Teleportation』, I decided to go to the royal castle to give a temporary progress report.

At least that's what I had intended...



"Say, Elise. Is there any need to put this on?" (Wendelin)

"Not necessarily, but since you will be triumphantly returning to the royal capital with many big achievements under your belt, I think it's necessary for you to wear an attire that suits the occasion, dear." (Elise)

While listening to that explanation from Elise, I had my personal appearance put in order.

"Wendelin-san, I will fix your hair up to look appropriate for a noble." (Katharina)

Katharina combs my hair. After all she's used to tending to her own terrible bed hair everyday.

"Wend-sama, you look handsome." (Wilma)

"Thanks, Wilma." (Wendelin)

"The final touch is attaching this, I think?" (Elise)

"Yes, it's perfect with this."

Because I'm a high-ranking noble, it's usually exclusive maids that take care of my appearance. However, thanks to having been dragged into the civil war for this last year, I let that practice slide. That's not an issue during a civil war, but since the war has ended, I was surrounded by Elise and the others with the words, "It's no good to keep letting your looks slide," and was forced to dress up.

"You will be ridiculed by the nobles in the royal castle anyway." (Katharina)

"True. It's about them at least not being able to criticize you for being dressed badly, Wend."

Since I'm rising in power within the Kingdom, I guess there are nobles that want to criticize me no matter what means they have to use.

It's a pain in the backside. I don't even want to rise in power in the first place.

"Dear, you are done with this." (Elise)

As finishing touch Elise placed the circlet used by master on my forehead.

"...Clothes truly make the man." (Erwin)

"Typical of you to say that." (Wendelin)

That Erw...I don't need you to tell me that!

...Even so, I guess such a proverb exists in this world as well.

"Rather, that circlet is also a magic tool, isn't it? Why didn't you wear it until now? It might have given you a bit of an advantage in the battle against your master." (Erwin)

"Nah, it's nothing that special." (Wendelin)

Burkhart-san, who had also put his own appearance in order for the sake of having an audience with His Majesty, replied to Erw's answer in my stead.

"Erw lad, tell me, what do you think is the effect of this circlet?" (Burkhart)

"It remarkably increases the power of spells or it widens the range of usable magic?" (Erwin)

"It's not an effect that goes that far. It does have a gem, which has a magic crest boosting concentration carved in it, but it's not an effect to that level. Alf had no issues even without it. You know, normally we store leftover mana into magic gems, right? It's the same as that." (Burkhart)

Burkhart-san, Doushi and I have put magic gems with spare mana into our magic bags to use those when something happens.

Master used the circlet to take mana out of the embedded magic gems as necessary.

It's no more than a difference in style.

"It's the same as with my Alice band and Elise's ring." (Katharina)

"That's how it is." (Burkhart)

"Huh? Then why didn't Wend's master wear the circlet when he was summoned via the 『Heroic Spirit Summoning』? It surely would have been more advantageous for him to fight while wearing the circlet, no?" (Erwin)

It's certainly as Erw says. The battle should have proceeded better for him if he had the leeway from wearing the circlet with its spare magic gems.

"This is only my own guess, but Alf had given all his assets to Earl-sama. Since the circlet wasn't perceived as being one of his own belongings, it didn't materialize during the summoning. Besides, Talrand shouldn't have been able to prepare Alf's equipment and attire down to the last detail. He likely was limited by depending on the memories of the dead. You know, it's also possible that

Talrand probably didn't consider it necessary since Alf possessed the mana supply device that made use of the huge magic gems of magic airships." (Burkhart)

I think that's a perceptive conjecture, but I guess we won't ever know the whole truth since only master knows it.

I didn't have the spare time to ask him at the end either.

However, Talrand's 『Heroic Spirit Summoning』 is sure a mysterious spell. It summons the dead in the state when they were still alive, yet it reproduces even the dead's favorite weapons, clothes and ornaments.

"A spirit body is a being that's close to a cluster of mana, so even the robe worn by your master is an object close to a magic tool which was created with mana as base material. But then again, even if they can be reproduced in the 『Heroic Spirit Summoning』, since they are items used by the dead, we cannot use them at all." (Elise)

Elise gave a detailed explanation, but magic is definitely something strange.

"Though it would be handy if you could create your preferred magic tools through mana." (Wilma)

"Wilma-jou-chan, at least I have never seen or heard about someone who can use such magic." (Burkhart)

It might be convenient if such magic existed, but I think the hurdle for that is a bit high. Since even Burkhart-san, who has the most knowledge among us, says that he doesn't know such a magic, it probably doesn't exist at present.

"You can consider it as your master having resisted the 『Heroic Spirit Summoning』, dear. He made sure that you wouldn't lose by fighting without equipping the circlet." (Elise)

"That might also be the case. It wouldn't be weird for Alf to come up with at least this much on the spot." (Burkhart)

Elise's answer might be the one closest to the truth. Just as Burkhart-san says, master should have had at least that much leeway.

"It might be best to regard this as the truth."

"That's all fine, but let me ask instead, why didn't you use the circlet, Wend? Wouldn't you have a slight edge in battle, if you used it before?"

That Erw, he sure has a keen mind today, hasn't he?
Though it makes sense now that it's been pointed out to me.

"I guess I had enough spare magic gems?" (Wendelin)

"Isn't having to put your hands in your magic bag during battle a handicap?" (Erwin)

"..."

A sharp observation befitting a swordsman.

Certainly, the more time it takes to get them out, the more of a disadvantage it will be.

"Well, fighting while wearing this...I wonder about that?" (Wendelin)

Come to think of it, is a circlet something a man would actually wear?

There were no men wearing circlets around me in my previous life. I'm not accustomed to wearing accessories either. I would hate being told that it doesn't suit me by those around me.

Ah, well I guess there are no people who will tell the current me straight to my face that it doesn't suit me.

But, I would hate having rumors about it spread behind my back.

"...That's the reason." (Wendelin)

"There's no one paying attention to each and every such detail! Gosh, just wear it as a safety measure!" (Erwin)

Due to my honest answer, Erw's way of speaking becomes quite harsh.

"Wend, you cared about something like that?"

"Wouldn't you!? Master was an ikemen, so it was alright for him to wear it though." (Wendelin)

I mean, everything an ikemen wears suits them.

Master wearing the circlet made him good-looking...

But in my case it makes others think that I'm worn by the circlet.

"Being worn by a circlet, what kind of tale is that supposed to be..." (Ina)

I remember that there was such a fantasy story in my previous life.

"That's what you say, Ina. But, have a look at this!" (Wendelin)

I swiftly put the circlet on Burkhart-san's forehead.

"How about that?"

Doesn't he completely look like an upstart? But even before that, a circlet really doesn't suit a middle-aged man.

"...It feels off..." (Ina)

"I'm well aware of that myself, but at least be a bit more indirect about this." (Burkhart)

Burkhart-san complained due to Ina's honest statement.

"Right? The next one is...!" (Wendelin)

I placed the circlet on Doushi's forehead who came back after finishing his business in order to head

to the royal castle together with us.
As expected, it doesn't suit him at all.
Everyone thinking that was clearly visible on their faces.
Doushi's compatibility with accessories is the worst. Thick, golden bracelets and rings with
meaninglessly big jewels might match him though.
Kind of like a yakuza boss.

"It's Alfred's memento? Earl Baumeister can surely wear this! Now then, time to go to His
Majesty!" (Armstrong)

Given that Doushi is someone who doesn't care about a circlet matching or not, he casually put the
circlet back on my forehead.

"Rather than that, let's hurry up and move to the royal castle with 『Teleportation』," he said.

"Understood." (Wendelin)

That's how it resulted in me wearing master's circlet, but I'm sure I won't be able to get rid of this
feeling of discomfort until I get used to it...

At such times it's troublesome to be a former Japanese.



"What a thick report."

"Indeed. After all it roughly covers a full year..."

We leaped to the royal capital and I handed the report, which Christoph and Earl Schultz wrote
together, to his Majesty.

I helped out with it as well, but since I haven't written such a huge report since my university
graduation thesis, Christoph and Earl Schultz did the main work.

Because I still contributed a reasonable amount, I was praised by Earl Schultz with 『You handled it
better than I thought. So you can make a living even as a civil official, eh?』.

Furthermore, as expected Doushi, who should be a celebrity even among the members of the
Friendship Group, didn't help out at all.

Though it might have been reckless to ask that man to add to a written report.

Even Elise helped out...they are blood-related but their abilities might be lacking any resemblance.

"A peace treaty with the Empire? We have to tie it..."

This time the Kingdom also suffered damage from the civil war in the Empire, but it's not like that
justifies a war as retribution.

A part of the military authorities and nobles acted rashly, but if one judges it comprehensively,
reconciliation while abstaining from demanding restitution and an apology might bring about the
biggest benefits.

"An ancient weapon used in the era of the Ancient Magic Civilization...that must have been
troublesome."

"Yes, moreover the huge amount of other ancient weapons that appeared in the civil war was astounding."

Presently the Kingdom is in the middle of increasing its national power through a development rush while the Empire is exhausted from the civil war.

There should be many people that believe the Kingdom would have an advantage if it comes to war. But, if the Kingdom were to attack the Empire, the imperial army, which is armed with huge amounts of excavated weapons, would focus on a defensive battle.

Even if the Kingdom has an advantage in the number of magicians and air force capabilities, it probably wouldn't turn into such an easy victory.

"It will take time for the ruined Empire to recover its strength, but it strengthened the authority of the central government compared to before. There are also many officers and soldiers who gained combat experience in the civil war. I wouldn't go as far as calling a war reckless, but it's not pertinent."

As before, the Kingdom will press forward with the augmentation of the national forces, and aim towards copying and making the various excavated weapons of the Ancient Magic Civilization's era, which we also seized, usable before the Empire recovers its economy.

"If you look at the long term, it might turn into a plus for the country to have bolstered the central government's authority, but they won't be able to avoid chaos for some time."

It's very likely that the remnants of the Duke Nürnberg household, who lost their peerage, and the nobles who are unhappy having a decrease in nobility rank as well as a reduction of their territory forced upon them, will join up together, causing the outbreak of small rebellions. His Majesty believes that they will likely not plan any war with the Kingdom for a good while.

"Several decades later, when the Empire has fixed its order, their difference in national power with the Kingdom will have grown even further. Having many options at such time will be a desirable situation for the Kingdom." (Helmut)

It's not like the Kingdom is particularly afraid of using force.

Having said that, the Kingdom doesn't follow a doctrine of extreme pacifism either. They have a tendency to make long term strategies, assuming the decision is about the Empire.

If the difference in national power becomes even more prominent, it will also become possible to make the Empire yield with little effort.

"It will give us the option to carry out various measures during such time. By the way, Earl Baumeister, it's about the Empire's new weapon, but..." (Helmut)

"It's over here." (Wendelin)

Although it took the shape of me getting dragged into it, I have done various things in the Empire. Since it has brought results that also benefit the Empire, I have to balance things out a bit.

It's not enough to get along with just Chief ○○. It's also important to properly communicate with President ○○.

It was a guideline for not getting excluded from an organization I, a humble salaryman, set up.

"Unfortunately the military forces belonging to the Kingdom were few and the amount of plundered items is less than what the imperial army got." (Wendelin)

The Kingdom's forces were no more than 5,000 soldiers, but since there was no need for them to unreasonably clash with Duke Nürnberg's army, Philip and Christoph focused on getting their hands on plundered items inside the underground ruin.

Because of the difference in numbers, they couldn't secure as much as the imperial army though.

"Nothing can be done about that. There are fools who send out soldiers in high spirits and then get annihilated. Compared to that, since you didn't lose, there's no particular reason to get nitpicky with you and your group, Earl Baumeister." (Helmut)

His Majesty glares at the nobles that have assembled in a corner of the audience hall that are whispering amongst each other.

It seems they are nobles who were under the patronage of Marquis Läger.

It feels like the rest of the group consists of advocates for a troop dispatch against the Empire and people that want to call my responsibility into question, I suppose?

Although it would be fine for them to confront me directly rather than gossiping back there, they probably can't do so in front of His Majesty.

"You have seized a dragon golem breath emission device alongside a dragon golem, Earl Baumeister. Due to the research of the Magic Tool Guild it has become possible to mass produce these. I think they are usable for defending a military position. Also, the magic cannon, huh...?" (Helmut)

Magic cannons existed in the era of the Ancient Magic Civilization, too. They were clearly superior in performance compared to the ones of Earl Mizuho Country.

The one, which was equipped on the back of the huge golem operated by Duke Nürnberg at the end, was lopped off with magic by Katharina and remained almost undamaged. In addition we also plundered several dozen spare cannons.

For some reason there were no magic guns, but I suppose those are probably an original invention by the Earl Mizuho Country.

I have heard that there were a large number of magicians the past, so the firepower for close combat might have been supplemented by them.

"Magic katana, magic guns, magic cannons, suicide-bombing golems and in addition a great number of other new weapons have actually been put to use in the civil war. The methods of battle in war changed. Until we can deal with those, it's absolutely meaningless to start a war with the Empire. After all, I wouldn't stand for being called an incompetent king that suffered a crushing defeat, despite having the advantage in military power, after suffering a counterattack by the opponent." (Helmut)

"But, even the Empire is only capable of using them."

Even their repairs are probably limited to simple, small damages.

Naturally a production of these weapons is impossible. And the demon who's capable of performing extensive repairs as he understands the structure of the items, is in our hands.

If it's the Earl Mizuho Country, they might reach a level allowing them to produce items at the same level, but they aren't imperial nobility in the truest sense.

"A territory and ethnic group that possesses a peculiar culture and sophisticated technology since ancient times..."

"Yes. I think the aspect of being autonomous from the Empire on top of having a policy that guarantees their safety plays a big role for them. The Empire's prime minister plans to turn them into one of the prince elector households if he succeeds in getting on the same page with them, but even so they will probably keep the Empire at a delicate distance." (Wendelin)

"I see. There will be various benefits if our Kingdom and the Earl Mizuho Country form friendly relations." (Helmut)

"Yes. For them the point of us having no territorial ambitions is an advantageous aspect for building friendly relations." (Wendelin)

For the time when the Empire plans to do something bad using the excavated weapons, or when the Kingdom's national power has increased so much that it becomes possible to attack the Empire in the future, it's possible the Earl Mizuho Country could become a decisively beneficial ally for the Kingdom.

"You are saying there's merit in creating a friendly relationship through trading, cultural exchange and marriages, if possible, Earl Baumeister?" (Helmut)

"Yes." (Wendelin)

"Let's push that matter after skillfully negotiating with the Empire."

Next I will talk about the cases with the Extreme Limit Steel and the demon.

But before that, I'll have the king remove everyone except for a part of the ministers and several of the tight-lipped royal guards under Warren-san from this place.

Complaints could be heard from the nobles who were sent outside the hall, but once His Majesty heard my report, he revealed an expression showing he understood why they had to be sent out.

"Those are explosive matters. Well, as for the metal called Extreme Limit Steel, I guess it's possible to control the amount circulating as long as no one but you can make it, Earl Baumeister. You will report the amount you use in your own territory and sell all the rest to the Kingdom's government. The government will send out a notification that direct sale to other nobles or other countries is strictly forbidden by the Kingdom. As we are inexperienced in the technologies to process it, the orders shouldn't go beyond research and experiments for a while, but..." (Helmut)

"It can be used as a weapon."

In case the Extreme Limit Steel was used as a material for magic guns and cannons, which the Kingdom's Magic Tool Guild hasn't even started to research yet, it would become possible to hasten their implementation thanks to its wonderful durability.

"And then the demon, huh...?" (Helmut)

The demon Arnest whom we have arrested and are sheltering now. It should have been a genuine civil war of the Empire, but there was still a possibility that the demon country was pulling strings

in the back.

It's the appearance of a demon, who hadn't been seen by anyone for close to ten thousand years. According to the legends, they possess enormous mana and overwhelming technological strength. Minister Edgar's and Earl Armstrong's faces twist due to the existence of a new hypothetical enemy. It's because they had to completely overhaul the defense and invasion plans they had drawn up so far, focusing on a battle against the Empire and a rebellion of high-ranking nobility within the Kingdom, for caution's sake.

Due to this, they have to develop new weaponry, study new tactics using those weapons, reorganize the forces, and review the training and supply schedules.

Seeing as they hold the position of Minister of Military Affairs and Military Commander, it's impossible for them to escape this.

"I see, that means it becomes necessary to gather information about the demon country." (Helmut)

"Yes, we have obtained some information, but..." (Wendelin)

I have heard the broad outline of the demons' culture, social system, population and location from Arnest and noted it down in the report.

"Even though it's crucial information about his own country; what a weird demon." (Helmut)

In the eyes of His Majesty, Arnest, who leaks intelligence about his comrades so easily, doesn't seem very trustworthy.

Or maybe he's doubting it as being false information.

"That's because he's a civilian."

"Civilian, you say?"

"He appears to be an archaeologist, not a person that serves the nation or the army." (Wendelin)

He has an interest in the underground ruins on the Lingaia Continent, but since the demon country has prohibited, by law, anyone from leaving the country, he smuggled himself outside the country and arrived in the Nürnberg Dukedom. In order to freely work on his excavation there, he cooperated by operating and repairing the excavated weapons. I tell all of this to His Majesty.

"Is he a research junkie?" (Helmut)

"Yes. He has no interest in anything besides his beloved research. That's why he handed over a large number of weapons to Duke Nürnberg. He's a man that can calmly say that the way how those weapons were used depended solely on Duke Nürnberg." (Wendelin)

Anyone would suspect Arnest to be a spy sent in by the demon country in order to cause chaos on the continent, but in reality there's absolutely no evidence of him having contacted his fellow countrymen after coming to this country.

He enjoys researching and has no family either. All he did in these last few years was researching and excavation.

"On the contrary, he's a really dangerous man. These types tend to do crazy things." (Helmut)

"Your Majesty, will he be restrained by the Kingdom?"

I believe that would be fine as well.

Since he's a guy that would be troublesome to deal with, the best option would be if I could hand him over to the Kingdom.

"Hmmm, Earl Baumeister, can you keep that demon in check?" (Helmut)

"It will be difficult for me alone." (Wendelin)

After all he has a lot of mana.

It's also possible that he will be able to run away if he's not on continuous watch by me, Doushi, Katharina and Burkhart-san, who at least hold an advanced mana pool.

"That's too inefficient. Warren, can we use the prison for magicians?" (Helmut)

"No. It's a 『Mana Prison』 that cost a large amount of money to build, but if we use it, it will cost a huge amount of money to maintain it, and it's limited to intermediate level, so..." (Warren)

It seems to be a prison capable of continuously deploying a strong 『Magic Barrier』 that defends against the magic of magicians, but it costs more than a million cents per day to operate it, therefore it doesn't seem like you can just simply lock up "bad magicians" in there.

"If a magician commits a minor crime, we send in high-ranking magicians and take a fine after knocking the offender down. In the case of a serious crime, assassinating them is the most cost-efficient. There's rarely any people committing serious crimes among the intermediate-ranked and advanced-ranked magicians, but as a matter of fact Burkhart, Klimt and Alfred have eliminated several such magicians as top-secret missions."

I see. So that's why Burkhart-san and Doushi didn't feel shaken when killing people in the civil war.

"So it means it will become necessary to have him continuously watched by a great number of magicians when it comes to imprisoning and restraining him in the Kingdom... So, what does this demon desire?" (Helmut)

"Since the Baumeister Earldom was a backward region to begin with, it seems to be full of undiscovered underground ruins. He wants to explore and research those." (Wendelin)

"What a carefree demon. Seeing as it's possible for him to escape if we lock him up against his will, I guess catching or killing him when he escaped the surveillance would take time and labor... The kingdom has been damaged because of that demon. I suppose we will have him excavate the underground ruins to make up for the damage he caused." (Helmut)

"I can't come up with any better option."

That means we will let him live and make use of him, albeit him being dangerous.

But then again, I don't regard Arnest as overly dangerous anyway.

To him the feelings of acting for his companions, serving for the sake of his country and nostalgia are weak. That's because he will be satisfied as long as he can indulge in his own research.

"We will bind him to the Baumeister Earldom with unknown underground ruins as bait. The Kingdom will only gain from that as well. We will also secretly dispatch surveillance personnel."

His Majesty avoided the risk of taking charge of Arnest.

He probably judged that it would be better to leave him in our care rather than having him run away when trying to restrain him unskillfully.

Though you might also say that he fully pushed the burden on us.

"Since the Empire isn't stupid either, they will sooner or later notice the existence of the demon. It might be best to place him under you, Earl Baumeister..."

He might be considered a war criminal coming right after Duke Nürnberg, but we are the ones who captured this demon.

How to treat the prisoner is something I get to decide as the one who captured him. No one else has the right to interfere. That's the rule for royalty and nobility, His Majesty explains.

"Earl Baumeister, you apparently played a big role in this time's civil war, but at the same time you have burdened yourself with hardships. As Burkhart says, it might be true, you have a lot of bad luck." (Helmut)

Being told so even by His Majesty, I feel slightly down.

Certainly I can think of too many occasions that prove it.

"For a while the Empire won't have the leeway to dispatch soldiers outside its country. Our country was able to gain time to increase its national power and to deploy newly developed devices. We lost once, but compared to the Empire, the losses on our side are still negligible. I will take your opinion on this, Earl Baumeister. It will take some time to analyze the report of your group and to decide on the policy from now on. Since we will send a diplomatic negotiation delegation to the Empire, Earl Baumeister and Earl Schultz, go and continue to gather information on the Empire." (Helmut)

"As you command."

Since it's politically stable, we came back and gave our report, but still it doesn't look like the peace negotiations will succeed so easily.

We were ordered to stay back in the Empire, but there are other things I have to do, too.

"Since it's been a while, I'd like to return to my territory though..." (Wendelin)

"If movement magic has been restored, I won't mind you doing that as you please. It seems that the Baumeister Earldom has completely changed in this last year." (Helmut)



Receiving His Majesty's permission after being given a report and a top-secret order, I teleport to the Baumeister Earldom while taking Elise and the others along.

Upon our arrival, the townscape centered around the feudal lord's mansion had extended several times in size compared to last year and the city was crowded with many people.

"Dear, it's amazing." (Elise)

"Just like Urashima Tarou." (Wendelin)

"Urashimatarou? Who might that be?"

"Merely a person from the past." (Wendelin)

"It sounds like a name that you would find in Mizuho."

"Oh, yes! He was a person appearing in a folklore of Mizuho." (Wendelin)

As there's no way that I can say that it's an old Japanese fairy-tale, I deceived them by saying that it's the name of a Mizuho person.

While watching the streets of Baulburg we head towards the mansion. No different from a year ago, Roderich jumped out of the front gate with a frightening force.

Due to the sudden event, the two sentries deployed at the gate stare in wonder, unable to react.

"Looord—! Unable to see your countenance in this one year and a bit, I was terribly worried, my Looord—!" (Roderich)

"Agaain—!? I'm going to break—!" (Wendelin)

I once again receive a merciless knock down from Roderich who was overcome with emotions. It's a choking move that knows no limit, just as usual...

"Hmm!" (Wendelin)

But, since it's the second time, I somehow manage to escape his hold by myself.

"Roderich-san's signature move has appeared."

"Erw-san, that gentleman is the main retainer, right?" (Haruka)

"Yeah. Sometimes his emotions run amok, but that's how he is." (Erwin)

"He's an terrifying person..." (Haruka)

It might be true that he's overcome with emotions, but he's a retainer using a sumo move against his lord.

In a certain sense that might be amazing.

"He's a very capable person, but..." (Erwin)

"Sorry, but to me it still doesn't seem so..." (Haruka)

"You're sure right about that." (Erwin)

As Erw and Haruka calmly talk about Roderich, another person, someone whose face I immediately

recognize, shows up.

"Erich-nii-san!" (Wendelin)

"It's been a while, Wend. I heard that you played an active role in the Empire's civil war." (Erich)

Meeting him after a year, Erich-nii-san was still an ikemen after all.

"Though there were many worrisome events, too. Anyway, why are you in the Baumeister Earldom, Erich-nii-san?" (Wendelin)

"To help out." (Erich)

As for the development of the southern Baumeister Earldom, which is supported by the Kingdom, it was a situation where the feudal lord got dragged into a civil war and went missing for a while. I don't know whether they aimed for that opportunity, but it seems strange nobles started maneuvering in various ways. Hence His Majesty ordered Erich-nii-san to help out. Apparently he acted as Roderich's assistant while touring the Baumeister Earldom this last year.

"At first it was quite hectic, you know? But once we received the report that you were in good health and striving in the civil war, Wend, the strange lot became obedient. They apparently thought that they would suffer your retribution if their meddling were to be found out once you came back." (Erich)

In the Kingdom, which hadn't had anything but disputes for a long time now, we, who defeated a great number of enemy soldiers in a real war, have apparently turned into an object of fear. In the eyes of those who use any opportunity to thrust their hands into the wallets of others, I must look like a scary being going beyond Minister Edgar and Earl Armstrong.

"Even so, I was very, very worried!" (Roderich)

"Sorry for leaving it all to you, Roderich." (Wendelin)

"No, if I consider that you will finally come back with this, lord..." (Roderich)

I told him that I will leave it to him for a little bit longer as I still have work left to do in the Empire, but since the MHCD is also usable again, I can talk with Roderich at any time. I can also receive reports regarding the territory. Since Erich-nii-san is here too, I feel relieved.

"I'm sorry, but is it fine to entrust things to you for a little while longer?" (Wendelin)

"I have no problem with that. After all, it's a job I'm doing after having been officially ordered by His Majesty." (Erich)

"So there's still work related to the Empire remaining for you, my Lord. I'm looking forward to your return alongside your madams." (Roderich)

Once I entrusted the Baumeister Earldom to the two of them, we teleported to the Empire once again.



"Good grief Wendelin, even you give me troubles." (Peter)

"Really?" (Wendelin)

"I just wanted to try saying it. But, the criticism towards you is unexpectedly big." (Peter)

Once I returned to the imperial capital after having finished my business in the royal castle, I was summoned by Peter, who was busy working.

According to him, it appears that me not having publicly displayed the severed head of Duke Nürnberg at the time when I forced the soldiers of the rebel army to surrender has turned into a problem.

"I believe there are far more important problems than that though..." (Wendelin)

There's the matter with the Extreme Limit Steel. Apart from that, there's also the matter that it had been us who defeated Duke Nürnberg, even though I thought that his head wouldn't be necessary. Because of us foreigners ending up becoming the ones with the biggest achievements, there's also the lateral of us getting attacked to drag us down out of jealousy.

As for the matter with Arnest, I believe that we can still continue to conceal it.

Though it will probably get exposed soon anyway.

"It's exactly because you treated the corpse of Duke Nürnberg courteously, that the rebel army surrendered obediently. If you had held up his head, they might have gone ballistic. But, there's many nobles saying that this treatment was lenient. The throne is really a cluster of troubles." (Peter)

Because Duke Nürnberg was a good lord for the rebel army, they immediately surrendered to the imperial army when they saw his remains being treated politely.

Even the lot criticizing us should be aware of that.

However, in their eyes it would be better for the retainers of Duke Nürnberg to go on a rampage.

If they are defeated, it will turn into meritorious deeds. Moreover, if the surrendered rebel army is absorbed into the imperial army, it's also a reality that their posts will decrease.

The current imperial army's organization is quite a mess.

That's why the former soldiers of Duke Nürnberg's feudal army, which has a lot of excellent staff members, are necessary for the reconstruction.

"You desired the throne yourself, right?" (Wendelin)

"Well, yes. So, I want to talk about your reward." (Peter)

The empire's financial circumstances seem to be worse than expected.

"We confiscated the territories and assets of the nobles who actively supported Duke Nürnberg and the rebel army. We were also able to secure the majority of the goods and properties which were taken away from the capital." (Peter)

At the time when he had Therese retire forcefully, Peter confiscated the assets and territories of the incompetent nobles who tried to side with the previous empress and her followers. It seems they were able to secure a reward that can be paid to me due to those aforementioned reasons.

"However, it will be split into installments for 20 years." (Peter)

Since he's going to implement a post-war reconstruction and a new economic policy, the safe establishment of a budget is indispensable.

"I expected that." (Wendelin)

"If I felt like it, I could pay you all of it in one go, but then the Empire's government would become unable to do anything. I'm sorry." (Peter)

"It's fine as long as you pay me." (Wendelin)

"I will. After all, it looks like you will attack while leading the royal army if I don't." (Peter)

"I'm not that much of a brute." (Wendelin)

I will at least state my demands properly before departing.

"Even if that's what you think, Wendelin, there are many cases where it turns out like that as the retainers can't forgive it. Also, it would turn into a reason for the Kingdom to invade. I will also arrange a proper place for peace negotiations with the Kingdom." (Peter)

"How conscientious." (Wendelin)

"Superficial sincerity is necessary in negotiations between fellow nobles and countries. Of course it will become a mud fight behind the scenes though. I have to quickly form a peace treaty with the Helmut Kingdom and expand the scale of commerce for the post-war recovery. I will somehow manage to secure the budget. The Empire increased the central government's power by growing the number of territories under its direct control. Unexpectedly, the political measures of Duke Nürnberg could come true with his defeat." (Peter)

Peter and I believe that to be quite the twist of fate.

"I heard from Therese-dono about the story mentioned by Duke Nürnberg at the end. Something about that role model-like noble Duke Nürnberg not wanting to become a noble. Such overly capable people are a puzzle. They are too skilled at pretending."

"You might say that this absurdity led him to start a rebellion without any chance of winning."

"A desire for ruin stemming out of the subconscious, huh...? Humans are truly complex, aren't they? By the way..."

As there is no point in continuing to talk about Duke Nürnberg any further, Peter swaps to another topic.

"Does it look as if you will be able to take care of Therese-dono?" (Peter)

"I will, or rather, I simply accepted her own wish to immigrate. But, is that fine with you?"
(Wendelin)

"For me that's welcome." (Peter)

Well, I guess that makes sense.

Currently Therese is the biggest political rival for Peter.

Until she was demoted by him, Therese fought against Duke Nürnberg without any particular big mistakes as the top of the liberation army.

Even the liberation of the imperial capital is actually Therese's achievement.

"She herself has absolutely no attachment to the position of Empress, but it's possible that for people who will try to use her as figurehead to appear. To make matters worse, she isn't married either." (Peter)

Important nobles might try to place their own sons as Therese's husband.

If this comes to be, Peter, a statesman, will likely be forced to make a heartless decision.

"Personally I don't want to make such a decision as Therese-dono is also a young woman." (Peter)

"Wouldn't it be settled with her becoming your wife, Peter?" (Wendelin)

As a matter of fact that's the fastest and most thorough solution.

Some story like the need of love between both parties is completely unnecessary for nobility or royalty.

"Are you telling us to spend everyday competing politically as a married couple? For me it will be enough to have my Emera at my side." (Peter)

"Your Highness, I'm not your belonging." (Emera)

"Once again, don't be so shy, Emera." (Peter)

"I only stated the truth." (Emera)

Emera is as blunt as usual, but as she's always at Peter's side, it's not like she hates him either.

She is a tsundere after all.

Though she likely won't allow herself to show her dere side in front of me.

"Ah, right. There were several other matters, too." (Peter)

Peter continued to talk, addressing first my traveling within the Empire.

"Wendelin, you are an honorary Earl. There's no reason to place any restrictions on you. As long as it is your family and guards, there's no issue. But if you travel around while taking an army along, it will be a problem." (Peter)

It's a peerage called honorary Earl, but the official stance is that it's a reward for my distinguished services.

In reality, it means that I'm not regarded with hostility because Peter successfully won over the Empire as he was able to obtain great achievements thanks to me, a foreign noble.

The honorary title lasts for one generation and there's no disadvantage as I will get an annuity, but it's also a two-edged sword since the Kingdom's nobles will suspect whether I'm siding with the Empire from now on.

However, there's no reason to decline the reward and I was also able to form new bonds.

There's also the advantage of me being allowed to freely travel within the Empire.

"It's impossible to move an army with 『Teleportation』." (Wendelin)

"Then it's fine. As for trade, excluding contraband goods, you can buy anything according to imperial law, if it's in an area under the direct control of the Empire, or according to the local rules established by the noble family, if it's a noble's territory. There are also noble territories where you need to pay tariffs." (Peter)

Given that noble territories are a kind of self-governing domains within both countries, the feudal lord decides whether tariffs have to be paid or not.

It depends on each noble as some want income and thus you have to pay it normally, and others put importance on the circulation of goods gaining in quantity and thus you don't have to pay.

"It's the same in the Kingdom, too." (Wendelin)

"Also, I'd like you to deliver a draft of the peace plan with the Helmut Kingdom to His Majesty Helmut the 37th. Right now I am having our specialists write it up. It will likely be a reconciliation of the original terms." (Peter)

"Got it." (Wendelin)

"I'm feeling dizzy due to the great amount of work connected to dealing with the postwar period. It's no good if we don't carry out the emperor election as soon as possible either." (Peter)

"You are going to hold an election?" (Wendelin)

"Since there are no other candidates, it will be a simple vote of confidence." (Peter)

The number of prince elector households that survived this time's civil war are merely two. The Earl Mizuho Country will be added to that as well, but they have declared that they will never run for Emperor.

"The meaning in holding an election is probably no more than a formality." (Peter)

"There are many people honoring formality in this society though." (Wendelin)

"That's how it is. What are you going to do later today, Wendelin?" (Peter)

"I plan to go to Therese's mansion. It will be a meeting in regards to the immigration matter." (Wendelin)

"I see. It's better to handle such things quickly." (Peter)



Excusing myself from Peter, I headed straight to Therese's mansion.

"I'm having my fill of peaceful spare time. As for the immigration, I'm already done packing."
(Therese)

When I arrived at her mansion, she was sitting in a chair in the garden while carefreely drinking tea.

"You already done? That's really fast." (Wendelin)

"It's not a moonlight flit and I don't need to take so much with me either. I returned all the items, which had the crest of the Duke Philip household to Alfons. If there's something I need, I will simply buy it over there. That way it will benefit thy territory, Wendelin." (Therese)

In order to declare to the surroundings that she's no longer someone of the Duke Philip household, Therese removed all the items indicating that by herself.

"What about those secret magic tools of the Duke Philip family?" (Wendelin)

The items were inside a magic bag that can only be owned by the family head, but I heard from Therese she still has various others.

I believe it's wrong to not return them to Alfons after all.

"Of course I returned them. I even told Peter-dono 『The secret magic tools of the Duke Philip household were very helpful in defeating Duke Nürnberg.』" (Therese)

Therese ended up using them on her own accord, but since those were magic tools of the Duke Philip household, sacrificing them connected to a huge meritorious deed of the Duke Philip household.

Like that she skillfully passed her achievements in the Duke Nürnberg subjugation to the Duke Philip household.

For the current Therese achievements are an obstacle, thus she yielded them to Alfons, the new family head.

"Thanks to that, I have little luggage to take with me." (Therese)

One big trunk and a bag.

And only one single young maid is going to accompany her, Therese says.

"Originally I planned to go by myself, but since this maid has no family, she apparently doesn't mind going to a foreign country. It looks like she doesn't know whether she will find a new job, so I will take care of this girl. I have to look for a husband for her over there." (Therese)

Therese says while sending a sidelong glance at the maid standing next to her.

"That kind of thinking is really that of a noble." (Wendelin)

"I won't get rid of my usual habits so easily. By the way, can I have thee accompany me for a little shopping trip? I can't say that I'm completely prepared either." (Therese)

"Sure."

Therese and I leave the mansion and go shopping.

"How about this? Does it suit me?" (Therese)

"It looks good." (Wendelin)

Therese changed into an attire often worn by young commoner women and I also changed into clothes matching hers.

On a first glance we look like a pair of young commoners going on a date as lovers.

"The streets are already crowded with people." (Therese)

The fact that the civil war has come to an end has been officially announced in the capital. Even now the postwar efforts are continuing, but many people were already enjoying going shopping in the capital while looking cheerful.

"Once I see this spectacle here, I also think that the few hardships were worthwhile." (Therese)

"You really achieved a lot in the first half of the civil war after all." (Wendelin)

"I was outwitted by Peter-dono in the second half though." (Therese)

"I can only apologize in regards to that." (Wendelin)

"I don't particularly mind. Justice or any such pointless morals don't exist among influential people. Those that lose are in the wrong. Besides, I'm still alive." (Therese)

Therese links arms with me while voicing out her thoughts.

"Max skillfully hid his real thoughts deep in his heart until the last moment. I failed. I couldn't completely hide my feelings that I want to avoid becoming the most influential person in the Empire." (Therese)

That part created a gap which led to her being defeated, Therese explains.

And she doesn't consider her current situation as bad either.

Rather, she enjoys the carefreeness.

"Alfons, who took over out of necessity, is going through hardships about now. That man didn't have much motivation until now, even though he has the ability. However, now he doesn't show that openly." (Therese)

That might be the reason why I haven't often met with Alfons recently.

Becoming a powerful person is that much of a burden.

"In that aspect thou have it easy since thou have magic, Wendelin" (Therese)

Being in the top position, whether I have motivation or not, I can rule as I please if I entrust matters to my retainers.

And yet the probability of my authority being stolen is low.

Therese says that those are very enviable circumstances.

"That's because I'm just an unimportant figurehead." (Wendelin)

"However, it's not like thou are really unimportant either. It's a very enviable position." (Therese)

Stopping that topic at this point, we wander along the shopping street.

"What does thou think? Does it look good on me?" (Therese)

"Wouldn't a slightly brighter color be better?" (Wendelin)

"Now that thou say that, I guess thou might be right?" (Therese)

Therese tries on clothes and I give her my honest opinion.

"I guess I will go with this color." (Therese)

"True. A bright color like this suits you well." (Wendelin)

In addition she also bought accessories and similar items.

It's the same with the clothes, but Therese doesn't buy high-class items befitting for a Duchess Philip, but a larger portion of items catered towards commoners and low-ranking nobles.

"There's no need for me to stand out any longer. I can freely wear these kinds of clothes. And it's a bargain when I can buy a lot of different types, too." (Therese)

Even though she says that, Therese is a former high-ranking noble after all.



She has that aura of nobility and her style as a beauty is exceptionally great, too. Different to me, whose contents are those of a commoner, it was enviable that everything she put on looked good on her.

"Elise and the others also wear various clothes on rest days. It will be a bit of a competition."
(Therese)

"Nah, it's suiting you at the same level." (Wendelin)

"Wow, isn't that a very gentle assessment? Even though thou put your wives first while being cold to me before." (Therese)

"Ah, that was..." (Wendelin)

The current Therese is a noble in name only who doesn't hold any real authority. It's not like she's saying anything unreasonable either. I can keep her company with a peace of mind as it's like having a chat with an elder onee-san.

"I'm no trouble for thou?" (Therese)

"Duchess Philip was trouble, but you as Therese are not. I'm kind to beautiful women after all."
(Wendelin)

"Pfft. Thou are quite cheeky for being the younger one here. I see, so I don't cause thee any trouble, huh? I will treat thou to cake as thanks for having praised me then." (Therese)

"I suppose the younger one will obediently let himself be treated by the onee-san here." (Wendelin)

"Thou can eat without reservations." (Therese)

Having finished shopping, we head towards a coffeehouse located on the same shopping street.

"According to what I have heard, the new cake here appears to be delicious." (Therese)

"I look forward to that." (Wendelin)

We ordered two pieces of the new cake together with coffee for me and mate tea for Therese. Once I ate the served cake, it was very tasty.

"This no-bake cheesecake with the apple sauce on top is really superb." (Wendelin)

"Apple is a special product from the northern area after all." (Therese)

Even in this world apples were special products of cold regions. This is also something I want to import by all means.

"However, you truly have no regrets?" (Wendelin)

"Mmh? Thou mean the position of Empress?" (Therese)

"That too." (Wendelin)

As I ended up thwarting that possibility for her, I wondered whether she isn't actually resenting me for it.

"The first Empress of the Holy Urquhart Empire! Yes, that sounds sweet for those despairing over this world's politics and historians." (Therese)

No matter the political system, a young leader or the first female Empress appears to always be heavily burdened with the hopes and concerns of society.

"I think the people's despair would have become really tragic when the results they hoped for couldn't be achieved albeit them having placed so many expectations. It would probably get worse the higher their expectations in the beginning. Not once did I think that I want to become Empress." (Therese)

"It couldn't be helped since you were close to the position as a candidate for the next emperor?" (Wendelin)

"Frankly said, that's the feeling I had. I had no other option but to do it. Peter-dono, who stole the march on me, is in the same generation as thou, Wendelin. Being highly praised as reformer of a new Empire will only happen at the beginning. People trying to sabotage him will increase immediately. The path of that person will be a thorny one." (Therese)

Even on Earth, a new government has a high approval rating in the beginning due to the expectations placed into it.

"I think that Peter wishes to become emperor himself..." (Wendelin)

In my case, I would have absolutely no interest in that.

"That's his own aspiration then. Besides, isn't that slightly unsociable magician-dono with Peter-dono?" (Therese)

"Yeah, Emera." (Wendelin)

That girl is beautiful, but basically she's devoted to her professional duties and doesn't laugh normally.

There are many nobles you can call unsociable.

Though Peter and Earl Lanzberg always declare that they want her to be their wife.

"I think that's because she's usually not that cold to Peter..." (Wendelin)

"On the surface that's true, but that magician-dono is frantic in ensuring Peter-dono's safety. She has become the Head Magician, but she leaves most of the work to her subordinates and focuses on bodyguarding Peter-dono. As she doesn't reveal any unhappiness with that either, those two probably have that kind of relationship." (Therese)

As expected of a fellow woman.

Therese seems to understand Emera's emotions well.

"I just thought of it, but Wendelin, thou are resembling Peter-dono." (Therese)

"At what part?" (Wendelin)

"Thou are popular with older women." (Therese)

"Hahaha..." (Wendelin)

It's quite difficult to reply to that.

Which reminds me, I wonder whether Amalie-san is doing fine?

I truly want to meet her as soon as possible.

"At the same time of thou leaving the Empire, I will become a free woman. I'm looking forward to that." (Therese)

"How are you going to spend your time in the Baumeister Earldom?" (Wendelin)

"I haven't decided on anything yet. I will fully enjoy my freedom for a while." (Therese)

After we left the coffeehouse, we went shopping in several other stores before it became evening.

"Wendelin, are thou going to return to the mansion and have dinner?" (Therese)

"Elise and the others should have prepared something." (Wendelin)

"I want to practice cooking a lot more. It's unnecessary for a noble lady, but for the current me it's interesting to learn it." (Therese)

"So you couldn't prepare it after all...?" (Wendelin)

Previously she efficiently cut up the vegetables, but cooking doesn't finish with cutting the ingredients.

"No, I can make something. It's just that my repertoire is extremely small. There was the traditional menu of the Duke Philip household served in the liberation army, right?" (Therese)

"True. Though I got fed up with it as it was everyday the same menu." (Wendelin)

Since Erw and the girls said that they are tired of it, that became the reason for us to prepare our own meals.

"Being told that it's better for me to be able to make at least this much, it was a duty imposed on me as woman of the Duke Philip household. That's why I can prepare those dishes." (Therese)

"I see." (Wendelin)

Even if the number of dishes she can prepare is low, it won't be that difficult to learn cooking as

long as she's capable of the basics such as handling a kitchen knife, I think?

"If I can prepare as many dishes as Elise-dono, it might enrich my life. I have time, so I guess I will try to get taught in cooking." (Therese)

"That might be a good idea. Ah, right, I can teach you this evening the recipe during dinner, too." (Wendelin)

"Whoa, Wendelin, thou have learned well how to smoothly invite a lady. Thy onee-san feels relieved." (Therese)

"Smooth invitation, eh...?" (Wendelin)

Therese and I walk towards the mansion.

Honestly speaking, I still don't know how our relationship will develop from now on.

But, it was definitely no mistake that I felt attracted to Therese who was abandoned by the majority as noble of the Empire.

* * *

"We will now hold the peace ceremony between the Holy Urquhart Empire and the Helmut Kingdom."

One week after the date with Therese, the peace ceremony between both countries was finally held in the imperial palace.

Peter himself is attending for the Empire, and for the Kingdom it's not the Minister of Foreign Affairs, but His Highness the Crown Prince in order to make the statuses match.

It feels like the minister has been excluded, but it's not like he has spare time either.

It's unnecessary for him to be at the crown prince's side. Beforehand those in charge of foreign affairs in both countries had negotiated and reconciled the terms.

"Finally it's over."

"True."

Earl Schultz and I, who had been busy because we entered the picture as high-ranking nobles, who have practical abilities after getting dragged into the civil war, sighed in relief at last.

Doushi, who should actually do the work at such times, hasn't done anything because he had no motivation, let alone any abilities befitting that kind of work.

That's why he unnecessarily increased the burden on us.

"Going by the forecast, I expected that the detailed terms would become complicated."

Since both countries opened hostilities at one point, I wondered whether the Kingdom would negotiate assertively, given the imagination that the Empire has weakened due to the civil war and

the amount of reparations.

However, if I actually look at the result, it looks to me as if the Kingdom wanted to quickly tie a peace treaty.

"It's probably because the royal army was weaker than expected."

No matter how incompetent the command of Marquis Läger might have been, an advance unit of 8,000 soldiers had been crushed one-sidedly.

Thanks to Philip's and Christophe's efforts it somehow didn't turn into a disgrace, but if it actually came to a war, the Kingdom might get destroyed by the elite imperial army which is experienced in actual combat. Those worries spread within the Kingdom.

Of course they won't admit such weakness publicly.

But, it's a truth that the number of nobles, who considered such possibility in their minds, grew.

"All that's left is Duke Nürnberg's inheritance?"

There are the magic guns and cannons used in combat by the Mizuho army and the various types of magic tools that were excavated from the underground ruin.

Especially on the side of the magic tools, a considerable number has been seized in the last battle. If these are used in actual combat, it will very likely turn into a disadvantage for the royal army.

Therefore they reached the decision that it's better to expand the commerce and obediently stick to peace until they finish developing countermeasures against that new weaponry.

"(Earl Baumeister, you probably picked up quite a few of them as well, but the imperial army should have secured a considerable number since they had a lot soldiers on-site.)"

Earl Schultz whispers next to me.

They just have to make the surrendered soldiers of the Duke Nürnberg household teach them the way how to use them.

Training shouldn't take that much time either.

"The royal army has no choice but to tread carefully. After all it's not unlikely for a snake to appear if they poke the thicket." (Wendelin)

"After having experienced actual combat, they are strong, too." (Schultz)

If the Empire gives permission to the former Duke Nürnberg feudal army and those below them to cut off the royal army's territory with the military forces of the nobles, who became ruined or lost their peerage, it's very likely that the Kingdom will lose territory.

In that case I would rather accept the apology and reparations from the other side, and obediently stay peaceful.

"A part of the nobles, who don't understand anything, are voicing their wish for a new invasion into the Empire though."

"I think something like that is impossible, however..."

"Since they don't understand that, they are treated as nuisance by His Majesty."

Since the terms had been decided in advance after repeated negotiations, both countries entered the peace treaty.

The obstruction of 『Movement』 and 『Communication』 that reached the Kingdom's north was determined to have been an arbitrary act by the traitor Duke Nürnberg and the current government of the Empire has agreed to compensate and apologize for his crimes.

It's a fact, but he has been turned into a complete villain with no room for objection once he lost in the war and died.

『You are in the right as long as you win』 is something that's said often.

In addition they also settled the negotiations in regards to trade.

It's for the sake of expanding the economies of both countries and the Empire wants to use this as source of funds for the reconstruction.

"People, who gained permission in both countries, can freely enter and leave the territories under the direct control of the respective governments. I guess you have to obtain a special permission for noble territories."

"After all it will be troublesome if they assist in a rebellion."

Even Duke Nürnberg kept a strange demon around.

Even putting the demons aside, I suppose you can't really say that it's impossible for outsider to instigate nobles to make them rise in rebellion.

It's not that the demon moved on order of his country, but he's someone feeling no guilt with helping rebels as long as it's for the sake of satisfying his thirst for knowledge.

This is just my intuition, but even the demon country should have been troubled how to handle him.

I mean, it seems that his mana is at a top-level even among demons.

However, just like Elise's hard battle with her 『Over-Heal』, his main occupation is archaeologist and it's not like he excels at battle.

Since he's smart, he contributed to Duke Nürnberg by maintaining and repairing the excavated items.

"If you expand commerce, the economy will thrive, but things like smuggling and illegal immigration will increase. Besides, although the imperial army has become powerful, they will likely dragged into small rebellions and disturbances for some time."

After the civil war, Peter forcibly pressed forward with measure such as forced reduction of territory, forced relocation of territory and change in peerage rank. Thanks to those, people opposing those measures will appear from now on.

While he works on the Empire's reconstruction and development, he has to skillfully suppress those people.

"I think it will be difficult with his youth. He's the same age as you, Earl Baumeister, isn't he?"

"Yes."

"That's grave. He will have to endure the hardships."

The treaty is signed by Peter and His Highness in front of Earl Schultz and me.

With this the civil war lasting for more than a year and the dispute between both countries triggered by that has finally come to an end.

Chapter 4 – Being Able to Help with the Reunion between Parent and Child

"After a long time I can finally return to my life as adventurer and noble." (Wendelin)

"Wend, you should change that to a life as noble and adventurer."



Two weeks after both countries signed the peace treaty.

After officially receiving our reward from Peter, giving a final report to His Majesty and finishing the victory party while being surrounded by many nobles, we finally returned to the Baumeister Earldom.

"But, why did the royal army hold a victory party? I mean, the royal army..." (Erwin)

"Erw, stop there." (Wendelin)

The fact that the advance unit of the royal army unsightly lost to Duke Nürnberg mustn't be spoken of any longer.

That's because it's a matter of honor for the nation.

You can't say that it's in exchange, but the Kingdom's and the royal army's dignity was preserved by us playing a very active part in the civil war, and Christophe and Philip also putting in great efforts after joining up with us later on.

That fact is important.

"Everyone has been awaiting us."

Once we arrived in front of the mansion, we were greeted by Roderich and many of the retainers below him. It's been decided that I will carry out just a little work as noble, such as public works within the territory and investigations of the 『Demon Forest』 after today.

However, in this one year and a bit the Baumeister Earldom has greatly grown as well.

Baulburg has expanded, too. Several guild branches and cities, where adventurers gather, have been built within the vicinity of the Demon Forest. With those as bases, many adventurers gather and collect plenty of materials through hunting and harvesting.

And, selling those to the outside benefits the Baumeister Earldom.

The profit is invested into the development again.

The development of large-scaled farmland, farm villages for the farmers, and the roads also proceeded at a quick pace.

All of these events are completely managed by Roderich, the household manager of the Earl Baumeister family.

Erich-nii-san helped out in protecting the fief against the strange nobles, but even Roderich by himself should have been able to somehow work around it.

In other words...

"I suddenly came up with it, but it doesn't really matter even if Roderich acts as the feudal lord, does it?" (Wendelin)

"Wend...you have no right to say that..." (Erwin)

I certainly didn't expect to be chided by Erw.



"...Wend, that won't work." (Erich)

I tried to bring up the previous topic with Erich-nii-san, but his answer was "no" as well. Even Roderich, who's standing next to him, nods.

"Why, Erich-nii-san?" (Wendelin)

"The development of the Baumeister Earldom is quick, but that's owed to the foundation works you did in advance, Wend." (Erich)

After those finished, Roderich was able to develop the territory with good efficiency. That means the construction works in Baulburg advanced as planned, even while I was away from home.

"It's just as Erich-sama says. Once it comes to starting on new reclamation, we will have to rely on you, Milord, as public works adventurer once again. Besides, to the bitter end the current me is only trusted as household manager who was entrusted full authority by you, Milord. Even if I were to declare 『Do as you're told since I'm your new feudal lord!』, I would probably be ignored by everyone." (Roderich)

"I see." (Wendelin)

I guess that means I have to once again begin with construction work to create temporary protections against wild animals, to build roads, to set up flood-control-works and to level wasteland.

"Please accept it obediently, in contrast to before." (Roderich)

"It's because I was really worked to the bone during the civil war. Or rather, I never refused your requests, Roderich." (Wendelin)

Although I might have openly shown my displeasure when he requested my help. If it's just helping in the construction of an encampment or the development of a city for the sake of pacifying it, I have already gotten used to it.

"I see. Milord, you are excellent even as combat engineer." (Roderich)

"He might simply be scared of making enemies." (Erich)

Erich-nii-san, I'm not a human that likes to increase his enemies, but...

"Besides, the accomplishments of your group have already spread widely, Wend. You are probably the most dignified, or rather the most feared noble in the Kingdom at the moment." (Erich)

Although it had been a civil war in a neighboring country, we played a very active part by participating in a real war, different from the disputes over here, where deaths are normally avoided as much as possible.

That fact has become the biggest reason for me being regarded with respect by the Kingdom's nobles.

"It's because nobles fear and honor those who win in war."

"On the other hand you will run into various hardships if you lose though."

I guess the one whose reputation hit rock bottom after losing is the former Margrave Breithilde who caused his feudal army to be annihilated in the Demon Forest.

However, the present family head regained that reputation with the large-scaled dispute against the Margrave Browig household.

"It seems possible that the Marquis Läger household, which got crushingly defeated in such unsightly manner, will lose its hereditary government position."

After stubbornly advocating a troop dispatch, the royal army has suffered heavy losses. In the end it looks like the whole household is a culmination of chaos due to the family head having died in action. At this rate it seems also possible that they will lose their turn at holding the post of Minister of Military and Naval Affairs.

"Conversely, the Browig brothers, who unified the remnants of the defeated army and played a big role in the civil war, have a good reputation in the royal palace."

Not only did they skillfully compensate for the disgrace caused by Marquis Läger, but they were also highly estimated as great commanders by the upper echelon of the imperial army.

It seems almost set in stone that they will be given hereditary positions and a rise in peerage, albeit limited to appointed nobility.

I thought that he was awfully well-informed about the happenings in the royal palace, but now that I think of it, Erich-nii-san belongs to the faction of Finance Minister Rückner.

It's probably information he has obtained from there.

"So the reputation fluctuates extremely depending on the outcome of a single battle...?"

"That's owed to the nobles' way of thinking that it's significant to be strong in battle. For that reason there are no nobles who openly meddle with the Baumeister Earldom. That also made it very easy for me." (Erich)

"Erich-sama, let me express my deepest gratitude for you helping out in various ways." (Roderich)

"Roderich, you are truly an excellent household, you know? Even my house would gladly welcome you, but with the scale of my household, there's not as much work." (Erich)

Given that Erich-nii-san is an appointed noble, there's less work to do in his household than in that of landed nobility.

Or rather, the professional duties are mostly carried out by the nobles themselves. Since the retainers distribute the roles as assistants, there's little work to entrust to a household manager.

"I think I will return to the capital in a bit. But you were burdened with several troublesome matters, weren't you?" (Erich)

"I really can't hide anything from you, Erich-nii-san..." (Wendelin)

The things I was burdened with in this civil war. First off, I guess it's taking care of Therese. However, I think that Peter and others are relieved that I'm going to look after her. The Kingdom hasn't said anything either.

As she has only brought along a single maid and since she's not in contact with the Duke Philip household either, it looks like they regard her as 『Person who's already finished』.

In addition, the fact of her being a woman plays yet another big role in this.

The royal palace seems to harbor the idea, 『She's a clever person, who displayed her abilities as prince elector, but after all's said and done, she's a woman』. It appears as if they regard her as spoils of war that I have received.

It's an opinion that would trigger a feminist to go on the barricades.

However, there are basically no such people in this world.

"I guess she was a remarkable character as Duchess. I can certainly sense such an aura from her. She's quite the beauty." (Erich)

Since Erich-nii-san's judgment of women is rather strict, even if he looks like this, I believe there's no mistake in Therese being a beauty.

It looks like my assessment of her isn't wrong.

"A mansion close to Milord's residence has been bought. She will live there in peace. For caution's sake we will attach personnel to guard and monitor her, but mostly it will be for guarding." (Roderich)

Since it will be the responsibility of the Earl Baumeister household if something happens to her, Roderich apparently moved smartly in advance. After all there's also no guarantee that there won't be any nobles that attack her in order to harass me.

With his splendid foresight, I believe that it's great for me to have him made my household manager.

"Therese-sama isn't that much of a burden. On the other hand, Philine-sama sure is." (Roderich)

"Uuhh..." (Wendelin)

Currently she lives in the mansion, too.

That's because it's impossible to allow her to immediately meet with her father, Margrave Breithilde.

It often happens that illegitimate children of high-ranking nobles cause a big uproar. There's also a lot of swindling going on.

First our retainer will explain the situation to the Margrave Breithilde household while at the same

time showing the evidence. Even if the other side acknowledged that, it's not like a reunion will be that easy to accomplish.

Since the other party is a high-ranking noble, it's a must to decide the place and time, as well as to add a program to the meeting.

Philine has to prepare, too.

Since Philine was brought up as the daughter of a commoner, it's necessary for her to learn manners and the appropriate preparation of attires as noble lady.

The main parts will be taken care of by the Margrave Breithilde household, but to avoid her acting unsightly during the reunion, Elise and the others educated her in the basics.

"Milord, what about Philine-sama's manners as noble?" (Roderich)

"I entrusted that part to Elise, so I think it will be alright." (Wendelin)

Since Elise is a real noble lady, her manners are perfect. It should be fine to leave this matter to her.

"I guess there's no need for worry if she's being educated by Elise-sama." (Roderich)

"Rather, Wend's side might be more questionable." (Erwin)

"Do you really have the leeway to talk about others, Erw?" (Wendelin)

Alongside being the unwanted child of a Knight household, his home is an insignificant household in the countryside. Something like education in manners was virtually nonexistent.

"It's just as Erwin says. Milord, I expect that you will become an increasingly important person for the Kingdom from now on. Since the opportunities for you to make a public appearance will probably increase as well, you have to receive a genuine education in manners. I shall arrange a teacher at once." (Roderich)

"Ugh..." (Wendelin)

Roderic decided that on his own accord, but come to think of it, I'm an Earl. I guess I cannot afford to not know formal manners.

That Erw, to spout unnecessary stuff...

"What a disaster. Wend, do your best." (Erwin)

Thinking that it's somebody else's problem, aren't you encouraging me here quite casually?

"I also live in the capital while being an insignificant, appointed noble. I was taught manners with my father-in-law as intermediary. Wend, you will be fine once you get used to it." (Erich)

"Right, right, it will be all fine as long as you get accustomed to it." (Erwin)

"Erwin-kun, do your best as well." (Erich)

"Eh? Me?" (Erwin)

Being suddenly told 『You do your best as well』 by Erich-nii-san, Erw looked dumbfounded.

"That's only natural. Since you are Wend's guard, there will be many occasions where you will encounter people in high positions, Erwin-kun. The frequency of you attending official ceremonies will grow, too. After all you're the chief retainer of a high-ranking noble." (Erich)

"Haa..."

Erw couldn't retort with anything against Erich-nii-san's sound arguments.

"Isn't that great, Erw? After all it will be fine once you get used to it." (Wendelin)

"You, it's quite obvious that you're happy for me having been dragged into it as well, you know...?" (Erwin)

"What are you saying, Erw!? I'm not such an intolerant man. Let's learn the appropriate manners for our social positions together?" (Wendelin)

If I can't get out of it, I won't hesitate to drag others down with me.

"Weren't we talking about Philine's manners...?"

Erw felt depressed, probably wondering 『Why me too?』

"Milord, Erwin, I will prepare the best lecturer for you." (Roderich)

"Hahaha...how delightful..." (Wendelin)



For a while after that, manner education was added to mine and Erw's schedule, but as it unfortunately was different from magic and swordsmanship, it turned into quite a chore as it was fairly difficult to remember.



"The reunion ceremony was tomorrow, wasn't it?"

"Ceremony, you say...?"

"After all high-ranking nobles exaggerate everything. Even calling it a ceremony might be permissible."

I think it was a way of speaking befitting Erich-nii-san, who always watches Finance Minister Rückner.

Treating the deeply emotional reunion with his daughter as a ceremony; I thought life was hard for a high-ranking noble.

"The preparatory meetings with the Margrave Breithilde household about the matter of Philine-sama were laborious, but it has taken less time and effort compared to the personage we have to take care of from now on." (Roderich)

As for the personage, who's more troublesome than Philine, it's about a certain demon.



"This me is currently busy with sorting my data." (Arnest)

Since he can't appear publicly, Arnest had become an inhabitant of the deepest room in the mansion.

As Roderich prepared the room, it's probably no issue since it's furnished as high-class guest room appropriate for entertaining a guest of honor. The meals are satisfactorily dishes according to the policy of the Earl Baumeister household. He has also been told to speak up if there's anything he requires.

He's unable to go outside as he's under surveillance, but the person himself doesn't seem all that disturbed about it while being surrounded by huge amounts of books and documents inside his room.

"What a typical scholar. You often run into such people at the academy."

Erich-nii-san categorized Arnest as the same kind of person as the scholars hanging out at the academy.

"We can't be careless, it's not like he's going to escape all of a sudden, is he?"

"Mmh? Are you an acquaintance of Earl Baumeister?"

Noticing our presence, Arnest addressed Erich-nii-san whom he's meeting for the first time.

"The elder brother who's said to capitalize on the fame of his younger brother, that's who I am." (Erich)

"You...it looks like you could come far if you become a scholar." (Arnest)

"If I had been born into a rich family, I might have become one." (Erich)

"Certainly, humans and demons need money for studying." (Arnest)

Arnest seems to like Erich-nii-san. Sure, if it's Erich-nii-san, he would be capable of becoming a scholar.

"Earl Baumeister, do you have some business with me? This me is busy with drawing up a report

about the underground ruins located in the Nürnberg Dukedom. Because I put priority on the tasks requested by Duke Nürnberg before coming here, I had little time to spend on the report." (Arnest)

"..."

Roderich became speechless due to Arnest's overbearing way of speaking. After all he talks as if he feels no guilt, which is unbelievable for a person who contributed to the Empire's civil war by providing Duke Nürnberg with magic tools.

"If you worry about me escaping, you do not have to. There is a group of almost untouched historic ruins in the Baumeister Earldom. I wonder how much time it will take to investigate all of them. This me will never leave until that is finished." (Arnest)

"Just make sure to stay obedient for a while." (Wendelin)

"Drawing up the report will take time, so I have absolutely no problem with that." (Arnest)

Since he stopped responding to our questions beyond this as he immersed himself in his work, we left the room.



"That's how it is."

"I see. I guess that's the reason why he isn't affiliated with any nation...?"

Roderich grasped the character of the person called Arnest. The only thing that drives him on is his thirst for knowledge. If it's for that goal, there's a danger that he will ignore any common sense and morals.

However, it also means that he's a useful man, as long as you keep the reins tight on him, since he's capable.

"The ruins in the Baumeister Earldom, huh? Most of them are really untouched."

We had to do our very best to develop it up to this point from its original state of being an uninhabited land. Meaning, there was no time to do something like a scientific investigation. One of the few exceptions is probably the underground ruin in the Demon Forest.

"So, is the probability for him to escape from here really low as long as we give him candy?" (Roderich)

"I believe there's no risk of him escaping." (Erich)

Erich-nii-san denied Roderich's suspicions.

"That's because he's very smart. Certainly, as demon he has an amount of mana that surpasses that of Wend. But different from before, when he cooperated with Duke Nürnberg, there's now no one

who would shield him." (Erich)

"The Empire has become his enemy, hasn't it?"

I brought him along in secret, but there's no way that Peter hasn't noticed that. Even the Kingdom can't leave him alone as he's a dangerous element. No matter how powerful the magic he's capable of might be, only death awaits him if he's hunted by several high-ranking magicians.

"He has said that he will stay low, so I think that it should be fine for now."

As he will be granted permission to excavate underground ruins, if he waits for a while, he should become a lot more obedient.

"Good that the Empire hasn't said anything."

"He's my reward after all." (Wendelin)

Even if the Empire guaranteed Arnest's safety, they would have no other choice than executing him since he's a major war criminal.

There would be many people who would feel gratified over his death, but it's not like it would turn into some kind of benefit for the Empire.

They considered it to be more profitable to hand over Arnest to me as reward.

If Arnest discovers something in the Baumeister Earldom, that alone will already be a profit for us.

"So the rewards were a bit lacking...? The Empire's emperor is a stubborn man."

It's just as Roderich says. I can't believe that he's in the same generation as I am.

"There's a great number of unexplored underground ruins in the Baumeister Earldom. Those will allow us to easily recover a little decrease in rewards."

"I grasped the situation. I think it's fine to let the matter with the demon rest for now. Rather than that, we have to take care of the matter with Philine-sama." (Roderich)

That makes sense.

Philine hasn't committed any crimes, but only the reunion with her father is already causing this many problems.

Preparatory meetings for details such as when they are going to meet are necessary. This is owed to the circumstances in the Margrave Breithilde household.

Because an illegitimate child has suddenly appeared, they have to ask the wives of Margrave Breithilde about their opinion. Since there's the concern that it might affect the children's ranking order, it has become necessary to carefully negotiate behind closed doors with influential vassals and distant relatives of the wives and children.

"That's not our job, but we were told by the other side, 『Please wait a bit longer』," Roderich explained the current state of affairs.

"It can't be helped. In any case, it will be hopeless, if we don't teach basic manners to Philine." (Wendelin)

At the moment Elise is in charge of that part. I guess it's no problem even if we are kept waiting for a little while.

"It's quite a bind, isn't it?" (Erich)

"Erich-nii-san, you are going to help...aren't you...?" (Wendelin)

Different from the case with the territorial development, it's actually helping to reunite Margrave Breithilde with his illegitimate child, so...

There's no basis for getting him to help out. I guess it would be wrong to get him involved in this.

"I will simply stick to the stance that I don't know anything about this matter. After all it will become a hassle if it seems as if I know about the circumstances." (Erich)

It looks like it would become troublesome because pointless approaches by nobles, who are on bad terms with Margrave Breithilde, would only increase once Erich-nii-san returned to the capital.

"Hence, you will only hear from me to do your best..." (Erich)

"Makes sense..." (Wendelin)

"Milord, I'm in charge of the negotiations, but..."

Anyway, for now I have to allow Philine to meet with Margrave Breithilde.

For that reason, I...no, Roderich will continue negotiating with the Margrave Breithilde household while suffering.



"Umm, he's a liberal arts person, I think?" (Wendelin)

"Dear, if you put it like that, it will be difficult for Philine-san to understand. It means that he's a gentle person." (Elise)

"(Would a gentle person neglect his own daughter in such a way?)" (Erwin)

"(Those are exactly my thoughts, but you mustn't say that loudly.)" (Wendelin)



With the end of the troublesome negotiations, it has finally reached the stage where Philine and Margrave Breithilde are going to meet today.

I feel like it would have been fine if they had met normally, but just because he's called a high-ranking noble, it has triggered various issues.

Since Philine's side needed preparation too, we are the same in that aspect, but nobles are truly

annoying.

I have to be careful as well.

Elise and the others are dressing up Philine while chatting noisily in front of me, who's harboring such thoughts.



"In order to give your father a good impression, it's wrong for the dress' color to be too flashy. Having said that, a dark color is no good either. How about light blue?" (Elise)

"Elise, what about the accessories?" (Ina)

Ina asked Elise which accessories she should pick from among the many choices.

Following the common sense of nobility, and yet coordinating her appearance in a way that she gives a good impression to the other party.

The one on whom you can rely at such times is Elise who has plenty of experience.

Me?

I'd like you to not expect something like that from me.

"As for the material, I think it would be best to go with silver as main cast. Something gaudy is no good, but cheap items are wrong too." (Elise)

"What about an Alice band or a ribbon?"

"It's not a good idea to hide her hair too much as we want to highlight her silver hair which is the same as her father's." (Elise)

"In that case, I will neatly comb it." (Katharina)

"Please do, Katharina-san." (Elise)

"I have become used to deal with hair as it's a major difficulty every morning." (Katharina)

Katharina begins to comb Philine's hair with her own comb.

Her being so skilled at handling the comb is because her own hair explodes into bed hair every morning, forcing her to fix it herself.

"Elise-sama, what about her shoes?" (Wilma)

"Wilma-san, please polish the shoes so that they shine." (Elise)

"Got it. It's because you will be looked down upon by the other party, if you cut corners at your feet, right?" (Wilma)



"You did well to know about that." (Elise)

Wilma starts to carefully polish the shoes with a cloth.

Elise praised Wilma for her unexpectedly extensive knowledge.

Since she's the adopted daughter of Minister Edgar, it's impossible for her to not know about it, but Wilma doesn't have a strong image of being a noble lady.

"All that's left are the manners, but I think it will be fine since she was taught the basics by Elise."

If Philine's manners were to be unacceptable at the long-awaited reunion, that might turn into a reason for her being rejected.

In order for that to not happen, Elise, a real noble lady, properly instructed Philine up until today.

"Come to think of it, Philine, did you grow again?" (Luise)

"Yes, Luise-sama. I became slightly taller." (Philine)

"How enviable. Also, leave the sama away when talking with me. After all you're going to become a noble lady." (Luise)

Luise is my wife, so there would be almost no difference in social standing between them. That's why she warns her to only add san to her name.

"Okay, I understand, Luise-san." (Philine)

"That's okay. I guess the preparations are completely done then." (Luise)

Like that Philine was dressed up by the female camp and afterwards transferred to the feudal lord's residence of the Margrave Breithilde household through my 『Teleportation』. Since we had arranged it in advance, we were immediately led into the parlor.



"But, I'm slightly anxious." (Erwin)

"Anxious?" (Wendelin)

"No, I mean, if it's Philine, her mother's social standing is low, right?" (Erwin)

As we are waiting for Margrave Breithilde's appearance together with the dolled-up Philine, Erw suddenly starts to speak while looking worried.

"Leaving Margrave Breithilde-sama himself aside, I wonder whether his wives are going to be alright with this?" (Erwin)

"We spent time on negotiation in order for that very reason." (Wendelin)

"You did, Wend?" (Erwin)

"Roderich did." (Wendelin)

"Be that as it may, I still feel anxious..." (Erwin)

Erw is worrying that the wives might harass Philine by sarcastically saying things such as 『Milord has made a daughter at another place; is that really true?』 or 『Well, if the mother is a lowly commoner, it looks like the daughter will be the same』.

"Wend, you aren't worried?" (Erwin)

"If I'm asked like that, it's certainly..." (Wendelin)

It's possible that she will be told by the wives and their children things such as 『Since we have been told so by His Lordship, we have no other choice but to welcome you into the Margrave Breithilde household』 or 『Do you get it? We are just providing for you out of pity!』

Eww!

Once such imaginations start to fester in one's mind, they end up spreading steadily.

"(Being forced to work as servant in the mansion together with the maids, or only being given cold leftovers once everyone finished eating...)" (Wendelin)

If it was an old Japanese drama, she would probably be forced to eat assorted rice with a single daikon leaf, and clean in the cold while getting frostbite on her hands.

"(Uwaah, it's really scary because it's possible.)" (Erwin)

Hearing about my imagination, Erw frowns.

"(Or something like harassing her by showing her dust after tracing a finger along the windows' frames and then telling her that the cleaning isn't finished yet.)" (Wendelin)

"(That sounds probable.)" (Erwin)

Since Philine is next to us, we continue whispering so quietly that she can't hear us.

If she would be put into such circumstances, I would regret it, thinking that it would have been better to not have allowed them to meet.

"(He's a high-ranking nobles, so I want to believe that something like that won't happen, but putting it the other way around, even if Philine is harassed, he can't blame anyone, can he?)" (Wendelin)

"(That might certainly be true...)" (Erwin)

The scenery of Philine being harassed by the wives and children of Margrave Breithilde gradually turned into clear pictures inside my and Erw's head.

"(Uuh...won't Philine be happier if we actually don't allow her to meet with him?)" (Wendelin)

Feelings of regret start to build up within my heart.

What am I going to do if that comes true?

I'm indebted to Margrave Breithilde, but that's no reason for overlooking something like that.

There's also the option of being asked by village headmen, who wish to open up this child's future.

Even Elise and the other girls would take care of her quite affectionately as she's like a little sister to them.

We could also take care of her by ourselves and allow her to freely choose her own life once she becomes an adult.

As I'm pondering about those things, someone tugged my sleeve.

When I checked who it was, I looked into Elise's slightly pale face.

"Umm...dear..." (Elise)

"What's wrong, Elise?" (Wendelin)

"Umm...behind you..." (Elise)

"Behind me?" (Wendelin)

Once I turned around after being told so by Elise, a beautiful, dressed-up woman, who seems to be around 30 and whom I remember, stood there.

She's become slightly older, but she's still a staggering beauty.

"Oh my, Earl Baumeister-sama, you are excelling my husband in literary talent by leaps."

"Ahahahaha...It's been a while." (Wendelin)

Elise should have tried to stop the conversation between me and Erw.

After all that person actually stood there, just as we imagined that Philine will be harassed.

I don't meet her often and since her social standing was higher than mine in the past, I unconsciously fall back into my former way of speaking.

"It's a memory of a story you read in the past?"

"Indeed, we previously read such story in a book. Right, Erw?" (Wendelin)

"Yes, I also read a book for a change." (Erwin)

Erw and I eagerly try to gloss over our previous improper words. We have to somehow patch things up as we treated the first wife of Margrave Breithilde as malicious hag who will harass Philine.

While laughing unnaturally, we continue with our strenuous efforts to cover for our previous words.

"I see, a story from the past, you say? This girl is Philine, right?"

"I am glad to meet you. I'm called Philine."

Philine greeted Margravine Breithilde in accordance with etiquette.

As expected of Elise, I guess she displayed her talent even as a manner teacher.

"Earl Baumeister-sama, we have caused you many troubles."

"No, I just brought her along while returning from the Empire." (Wendelin)

As there's also the previous slip-up, I humbled myself by saying that I haven't done anything outstanding.

"You did bring her back from the Empire that was in the middle of a civil war. I have no words to express my gratitude. It looks like Elise and the others took good care of her as well."

Margravine Breithilde extended her polite thanks to Elise and the others, too. Then she stares into Philine's face, and picked up her hair to check it out.

"Your eyes resemble my husband. There's no doubt about the hair's color either. Including myself, my husband has six wives, but all of the children are only boys. A girl is cute after all."

Margravine Breithilde seems to like Philine. On the surface at least, though.

"Earl Baumeister-sama, please have a peace of mind. Since this girl will become your wife, we won't make her work hard like a servant, have her wear rags or give her food scraps to eat."

"Weeend, she did hear it..." (Erwin)

"(Shut up!) Ahaha, there's the slightest chance that I would consider you, madam, capable of doing something like that." (Wendelin)

Seeing as I decided to go with a cover-up once, it's wrong to not follow up on it until the bitter end.

"That's certainly true, isn't it? So, can I take it as you accepting to take Philine as wife once she becomes an adult?"

"Yes, of course." (Wendelin)

Now that it has come to this, I have no other option but to keep glossing things over while smiling. And, it would be wrong to object to matter of Philine becoming my wife in the future.

Huh? Wait, Philine as my wife?

Why? When did that happen?

.....

Elise and the other girls look at me, who brought calamity upon myself, with fed-up expressions, but I took a defiant attitude that I had expected that to happen anyway. At any rate, as expected of the first wife of a high-ranking noble...I was completely outwitted.

"Umm...madam." (Philine)

"Philine, call me stepmother, okay?"

"Okay, stepmother-sama. So, what about father?" (Philine)

"Since he's currently talking with your other stepmothers for a bit, you will have to wait for a bit longer."

"Okay." (Philine)

Although she calls it talking, I can imagine most of what's going on.

"(Just as you are thinking, Earl Baumeister-sama, they are just roasting him a bit for not seeing any problems with irresponsibly sowing seeds on other fields.)"

Margravine Breithilde spreads the folding fan in her hand, brings her mouth close to my ear and whispers so that it can't be heard by the others.

"(There's no problem with him making children at other places. Especially since it's a long-awaited girl. The problem is the fact that he neglected her without taking care of her in any way. Haven't you heard that it has even been leaked to Earl Schultz-sama and his retinue? It's a terrible disgrace for our house. Even though something like a diary and a talentless, self-written poetry collection can't be exchanged into a single cent...)"

She probably heard about it being leaked to Earl Schultz and his retinue from Burkhart-san. He hasn't shown up today, but I wonder why?

Margrave Breithilde has been harshly criticized, but it's a fact that a noble of his caliber neglected a child he made somewhere else until that child turned 10.

If you consider his reputation in society, that's probably something that makes his wives, who take care of the house, lament.

"(I looked at the collection of poems, but I'm pretty sure that my husband is the only one to write such terrible poems.)"

That's what we thought as well. I have no doubt that even my level of writing is still better than his. Margrave Breithilde has received quite good ratings as a book critic.

Even though he's capable of objectively criticizing the works of others, his own poems are inferior to those of a five-year-old child. That seems to be assessment by his wives and retainers.

Since it's pitiful, they apparently haven't told him that directly though.

"(However, since this time they are really terrible, we gave him the warning, 『Next time we will publicize your poetry collections!』)"

Publicizing those poems...if I were the writer, I would consider suicide.

"Philine, what do you think about your father's poems?"

"I think that he has written them very honestly." (Philine)

Philine's assessment is correct in a certain way. After all that it's a fact that they have been written with a stupid level of honesty.

Since he persists in writing like that, his evaluation as poet seems doubtful.

Maybe that evaluation will be overturned in a few thousand years and he will be regarded as genius poet...I don't believe in that though.
I think a miracle would be necessary for that to happen.

"You are a very gentle child, aren't you? Was your mother's education good?"

Margravine Breithilde apparently has no reservations towards Philine.
Her attitude of accepting her in delight doesn't fall apart.

"(Earl Baumeister-sama, I know that you are worried, but Philine is a girl, so...)"

I forgot...

Philine's existence won't affect the position of the eldest son, who was born by the first wife and who might become the next Margrave Breithilde.

Rather, there's value in taking care of her since she can be used for a political marriage and doesn't even pose any threat as rival.

Those are quite pragmatic reasons, and it's an irony that I can trust in that because of that pragmatism.

It looks like I have completely become part of noble society.

"I suppose it would be pathetic to make you wait any longer for my husband."

It appears that Margrave Breithilde has been forced to delay the meeting with Philine.

Probably that's one of his punishments though.

Upon the signal of his wife, Margrave Breithilde enters the room.

"My daughteer—!" (Amadeus)

Missing his usual calmness, Margrave Breithilde rushes over to Philine in a hurry.

It looks like he wanted to see the face of his daughter quite a bit.

"My husband, it's great that Earl Baumeister-sama brought her back from the Empire, isn't it?"

"Earl Baumeister, you have my utmost gratitude." (Amadeus)

Margrave Breithilde thanks me while shedding tears.

However, he's showing a desperation at a level I couldn't imagine from his usual behavior.

"Philine, I'm your dad." (Amadeus)

"Nice to meet you, father. I'm called Philine."

"What a splendid greeting!" (Amadeus)

Margrave Breithilde got all excited by himself due to Philine's greeting.

It's likely triggered by him being a doting parent.

However, just because of a normal greeting...I wonder, am I going to become like that as well while raising a child?

"Philine, I'm terribly sorry for not having been able to meet you even once until now. I heard that your mother...Lila passed away..." (Amadeus)

"Yes, but I still have you, father." (Philine)

"Yes, please be relieved. I won't allow any inconveniences to trouble you from now on ever again, Philine." (Amadeus)

He seems to dote on his daughter very much. Somehow Margrave Breithilde acts too frantically. Due to his overbearing behavior, even Elise seemed to draw back a bit.

"My husband, this girl will be married into Earl Baumeister-sama's family once she grows into an adult."

It looks like his wife wanted to say that to give him a peace of mind, but for some reason Margrave Breithilde looked as if this world was about to end.

"Eh?" (Amadeus)

"Even if you say 『Eh?』..."

"Philine is still 10 years old. Can't such talks wait for later?" (Amadeus)

"Still 10 years old, you say...didn't you already decide a fiancée for my Siegurd at that age?"

Siegurd is Margrave Breithilde's eldest son.

I have heard that he's still 12 years old, but if it's the eldest son of such a high-ranking noble like Margrave Breithilde, it's not unusual for a fiancée to be decided during his childhood.

"Isn't Siegurd a man...? Philine is a girl, so..." (Amadeus)

"Isn't that the same? You are too overprotective of her just after meeting her for the first time! If you are going to act like this, then take proper responsibility from the very start!"

"I'm sorry!" (Amadeus)

His wife snaps due to Margrave Breithilde's attitude. Since it was too frightening, we retreated quickly.

Philine also leaves the room while being taken along by the other wives.

They probably considered it bad for her education to watch the rest.

"How very scary...once it comes to the wife of a high-ranking noble... I will get some soothing from the gentle Haruka-san once we get back..." (Erwin)

Watching the madam shouting at Margrave Breithilde, Erw escaped reality by himself. Let's get healed by Elise and the others afterwards, too.

"Ina-san, Luise-san, was Margravine Breithilde such a frightening person?"

"Usually she's a gentle person." (Ina)

"That was Margrave Breithilde's fault." (Luise)

Certainly, I think there are few people who can stay calm after hearing 『There's an illegitimate child of your husband and she's already 10 years old.』

"You can say that for sure." (Katharina)

Katharina revealed a consenting expression towards Ina's and Luise's opinion.

"Doesn't the scary part once angered resemble Elise-san?"

"Eh? Am I that scary?" (Elise)

I wonder? I never made her so angry.

"Leaving that aside, it was decided that Philine will be married to Wend-sama." (Wilma)

"Ah!"

I remember now that it was pointed out by Wilma.

I ended up leaving the room without denying the madam's proposal to have her married into my family at all.

"The circumstances might change in five years..."

"Wend-sama, there's almost no chance for that to happen." (Wilma)

"Well, yeah..." (Wendelin)

Even so, I decide to escape reality for now.

After all there were plenty other problems awaiting me.

I returned to my mansion while believing that it's fine for me having helped with the emotional reunion of parent and child for the moment.

Chapter 5 – Creation of a New Industry

"It looks like Philine was accepted without any issues, and the demon is obedient as well. It finally feels like I can go back to my normal life." (Wendelin)

"Dear, how about another serving of tea?" (Elise)

"Thank you, Elise. Can you please pour me some?" (Wendelin)

"Yes, here you go." (Elise)



On an early afternoon of a certain, sunny day we spent our time leisurely inside the mansion. I put a cookie inside my mouth after taking a sip of the tea poured by Elise. The cookies were handmade by Elise, Ina and the others working together.

"I wonder what Erw and Haruka are doing?" (Wendelin)

I casually asked since I couldn't see them anywhere close-by.

"Since today's a day off, he's going to guide her around Baulburg, he said." (Ina)

"A date, in other words?" (Wendelin)

Both of them are officially betrothed to each other and it's just a matter of time until they marry. But since Haruka is from Mizuho, the various preparatory meetings and arrangements take time. Meaning, they are enjoying some time as lovers before that.

"Since Baulburg suddenly grew big in the last year, I think it's fun to make various discoveries."

It's because I prepared the soil for a big expansion, but thanks to Roderich's tenacity and Erich-nii-san's help, Baulburg expanded to twice its previous size during our absence. Stores and sightseeing spots, we don't know well either, have been established. It seems Erw and Haruka went out to see those.

"Huumph, to go on a date with your girlfriend on your day off..." (Wendelin)

I guess it's a habit from my previous life.

I get angry the moment I hear stories about riajuu.

Figuratively speaking, it's like having the bad luck of being asked 『I wonder where I should go tomorrow for my date with my girlfriend?』 by a coworker just when tomorrow's finally a day off. However, right now I'm Earl Baumeister. And thus there's no way for me to vent a worthless feeling of jealousy.

"Wend-sama, I want to explore the city on the next day off." (Wilma)

"That's a great idea."

With that the feeling of jealousy that gnawed at my heart was immediately dispelled.

Right, after all I have five wives right now.

Moreover, I'm the one invited to dates by women.

Once I recall that this would have been impossible in my previous life, I became slightly sad again.

"Wendelin-san, if it's the new urban area, Roderich-san talked about the need of inspecting it soon."
(Katharina)

"A date and an inspection are two different pair of shoes." (Wilma)

"Indeed. After all it won't be possible to go shopping even if there are interesting stores."

It's just as Wilma says. Since it's work, you have to carry out the inspection properly, and that alone won't be any fun, right?

"Katharina, will you be satisfied with it just being an inspection?"

"Satisfied or not, that's not the issue here." (Katharina)

"Katharina is diligent after all. Wend, I will go with you as well. It looks like it will be plenty with Katharina doing the inspection." (Luise)

"T-That's not true!" (Katharina)

Whoa, Luise!

Since Katharina lacks the ability to easily adapt as she's a bit too serious, I'd like you to not tease her too much.

"Then next time it will be a date with everyone in the new urban area, okay? Katharina, you will join as well, won't you?" (Wendelin)

"Yes, well...I will go with you, too." (Katharina)

At such times Wilma or Luise, who are able to honestly say that they want to go on a date with me, are less work.

"Milord, there's a matter I'd like to discuss with you..." (Roderich)

At that point Roderich entered the room, carrying a bundle of documents.
It looks like he wants to consult about work.

"Public works again?" (Wendelin)

"That will follow step by step." (Roderich)

Not 『It's enough already』, but step by step, huh? It looks like my daily public works with magic will begin again after resting up from the civil war for a bit longer.

When I accidentally look sideways, I see Katharina revealing an expression, asking 『Again...?』. As she's a type similar to me, she has skillfully mastered various kinds of spells. Having improved her skills during the civil war, the shrewd Roderich set his aim on her.

Since there's few nobles, who can use a magician and moreover several of those for the development of their territory, there's no way for him overlook her.

"I'd like to hear about your view in advance, Milord. If you have some kind of idea, I would be glad, but..." (Roderich)

"Roderich-san, would you like to have some tea?" (Elise)

"That's very appreciated." (Roderich)

Roderich sat down and accepted the tea poured by Elise.



"Staring up an industry within the territory, eh...?" (Wendelin)

The matter of consultation by Roderich was about what kind of industry to begin within the Baumeister Earldom.

"It's not enough with the loot from the Demon Forest?"

"Luise-sama, I won't say that it's not enough, but looking at just relying on those as future prospect is..." (Roderich)

The development of the Baumeister Earldom is making progress, but if one were to speak of its industry, it's focused on agriculture, fishing, and hunting as well as gathering in the Demon Forest. Because of the development rush, there's a mountain of public and construction works. There's also the business catered towards the gathered people.

But, we have to assign new work to the manpower, once the first stage of the development has been completed.

If we can't do that, the people will lose their work and lead a life in slums. The public order within the territory will naturally deteriorate, too.

In order to guarantee employment and allow the money to circulate within the territory, a new industry is necessary.

I discussed that idea with everyone.

"I see. So what are you going to do?"

"Well I wonder?" (Wendelin)

"It would have been cool if you could cleanly say "Let's do it like this," Wend!"

Sorry, but suddenly creating the territory's industry is impossible.

"Luise-sama, there's no problem since Milord has said that he understands why it's necessary to create an industry." (Roderich)

"Having said that, do you have any idea, Luise?"

"Eeeeh? I'm your wife, Wend, so I have nooooo clue." (Luise)

"What a dimwitted way of talking." (Ina)

"Ina-chan! That's cruel!" (Luise)

Well, I think Ina is right there.

An industry that will provide safe employment to the fief's population, huh? People become rational only when their necessities of life are guaranteed.

If I can't provide everything, I will be lacking as feudal lord. Well, it's inevitable for there to be differences in the things provided to them though.

The food will increase by increasing the farmland at a quick pace. Even the amount of the goods gathered and hunted by adventurers is in the middle of growing. If we simply keep relying on the imports from other fiefs while unable to use anything but magic airships for transportation, we will run into troubles once the population grows in the future.

As it's the same with other goods as well, producing the goods, which we can produce ourselves, within the territory will provide jobs to the residents.

We have to stimulate the economy by spreading money around.

"Among the necessities of life, we are putting great efforts into taking steps for securing food and housing. I suppose the problematic areas are clothes and living ware."

"I see. In the long run there will surely be issues with the transportation expenses."

A long time ago the Margrave Breithilde household sold salt to the Knight Baumeister territory through a merchant group.

That salt was slightly expensive, but if you consider the transportation expenses, the Margrave Breithilde household made a loss. Them dispatching the merchant group despite all that was because of their sense of duty as patron and as high-ranking nobility.

However, there's no one that will make such considerations for a huge territory at the scale of the Baumeister Earldom.

There would be the option of transporting a large amount all at once using the same ship for it, but cheap clothes and living ware wouldn't become quite expensive.

Even so, given that the kingdom and the Margrave Breithilde household mediated to not raise the prices too much as well as thanks to Roderich's skillful negotiations, we have managed to avoid a situation where prices are several times higher than in other fiefs.

"If you consider the distance, it would be best to produce cheap goods that will be used by the residents within the territory."

"We could call people from elsewhere and have them build workshops for clothes. Clothes will be fine if we use cotton, hemp and monster materials such as the thread of the Big Southern Spider."

"I guess expensive clothes with high quality are impossible."

"Tailors, who can produce clothes that can be exported to anywhere, are naturally sheltered by their feudal lords."

I suppose that makes sense.

After all they are valuable, talented people that earn income through export.

If it's a tailor, who sews clothes that can be made in huge amounts at competitive prices, they will try to go for it in the Baumeister Earldom where demand is expected to increase in the future.

Roderich is apparently gathering such talented people.

"Raising the production output of clothes depends on our ability to secure the raw materials within the territory. Also..."

Roderich's eyes shift towards the teapot, which Elise uses to pour tea, the cups, the saucer and the plate with the cookies.

"Tableware?" (Elise)

"Just as you have guessed, Elise-sama." (Roderich)

Given that humans eat everyday, tableware is necessary.

"I guess it means that cheap tableware that can usually be used by the fief's population is lacking as well?"

"That's right. I hear that tableware is difficult to transport as it's heavy."

The prices of clothes can be kept low by transporting a huge amount via magic airships, but soft-paste and hard-paste porcelain is heavy. Since they are breakable, it's also easy for them to be damaged during transport. These aspects lift the expenses.

Having said that, tableware made out of metal is heavier and more expensive.

"Recently tableware made out of wood is in fashion within the territory." (Roderich)

"It's an effective way to recycle unused branches and scraps of the wood used in construction and development." (Elise)

I see, they have solved it ingeniously with a material they can obtain locally.

For having noticed that, Elise is amazing as well.

"In other words, it's possible to make hard-paste and soft-paste porcelain in the fief."

As long as there's clay, the necessary raw material, it's possible to make hard-paste and soft-paste porcelain.

Just like I made jars with magic in the past.

"By the way, is it possible to make expensive porcelain that can be exported?" (Wendelin)

"In a few decades maybe?" (Roderich)

Thought so...

If it was that easy to make, nobles, who own production areas that can create high-class items, wouldn't guard the artisans with eagle eyes, would they?

"The quality of the required clay is lacking. It should be possible to find clay with better quality, if we search the territory, but right now I'm having the gathered craftsmen focus on quantity over quality. In reality, they aren't unskilled either though." (Roderich)

According to Roderich, the production of porcelain is easy and thus various nobles have turned that into their special product. It looks like the competition is intense.

It's fine as long as you can make goods with your brand that sell for a lot or if you become the purveyor of the royal family or a high-ranking noble, but at the moment there are many production areas for earthenware that are fairly unknown.

Since the number of earthenware that can be sold doesn't increase in such production areas, there are craftsmen left over.

Given that the eldest son inherits in most cases in this world, there are many cases where the second or third sons learned the trade while helping out at home and became surplus then.

Such people have come to the Baumeister Earldom, but there seems to be a fixed number of people among them who are fairly skilled.

"How about having those people make high-class porcelain?" (Katharina)

"Katharina-sama, it's not that easy to make goods that have a high popularity." (Roderich)

Makes sense.

If you could make porcelain that can immediately be sold at a high price by leaving it to craftsmen who are slightly skilled, there would be no hardships for anyone.

"Besides, such products have already appeared on the market."

Roderich pointed at the porcelain made by Mizuho I had received from High Earl Mizuho...no, I guess now he's a Duke. They resemble Imari porcelain quite closely.

"The civil war came to an end and thus trade with the Empire has resumed. Even Mizuho has to compensate for the huge war expenses and the maintenance of its new territory. The Mizuho porcelain is popular because of its novel design."

"Yeeeeea."

Following that, I compare the pot with the tea made by Elise and the Empire's porcelain from a famous pottery which I had received as part of the reward from Peter.

Elise's favorite pot is an item she brought with her as dowry.

It's a famous product of a purveyor who serves many of the Kingdom's noble families, not only the Viscount Hohenheim household.

"What do you think, everybody?"

"Well, I don't think that the Empire's porcelain will sell that much in the Kingdom. Don't you think so as well, Wend?" (Ina)

"I do." (Wendelin)

I agreed with Ina's opinion.

There's not much difference in the quality of the porcelain between the Empire and the Kingdom. Bringing it expressly to the Kingdom will only make the transportation expenses high, meaning it will be difficult to sell it.

The quality is the same, but even the designs and paintings resemble each other quite a lot. In Earthen terms, it's close to the design that can be seen on Western white porcelain bowls. It's quite thick and its color feels more grey than white, but that's probably owed to the quality of the clay.

"Wend-sama, it's just a bit, but the Mizuho porcelain is whiter." (Wilma)

"Now that you mention it, that's true."

As Wilma says, the Mizuho porcelain is somewhat whiter than the others.

"Rather than the difference in quality, it looks like it's selling because of its unusual design, dear." (Elise)

Given that Mizuho has a culture resembling Japan, the porcelain adhered to it, too. A small teapot that's not a pot, teacups that are not cups, or things that were pretty similar.

"But, it's difficult to use this." (Elise)

"It doesn't suit me, or rather, it's odd. Aren't there many items that are similar to those used at the tea party held by Duke Mizuho during the civil war?"

It's better to use a Western-styled tea set at times when we are enjoying mate tea and cookies like now.

Made by Mizuho is a brand for rich collectors since it's rare and the number of available items is low, but it's not fit for being used normally.

"Elise, wouldn't it be better if this tea pot and cups were whiter?" (Wendelin)

"No matter what workshop, all of them are researching on a daily basis how to achieve that. Though it seems to be quite difficult." (Elise)

I guess it's because the technology is still in the middle of development. Porcelain that you can buy at a reasonable price in Japan is white and of good quality.

"Understood, I will try coming up with a little something."

"Ooh! As expected of you, Milord!" (Roderich)

"Thinking is no guarantee for success." (Wendelin)

I was struck by a little idea. If I use this method, the quality of the porcelain might improve. Let's run some tests with magic at once.



Having said that, there's no way for me to own the techniques to produce refined porcelain. The jars I made with magic in the past were crude earthenware containers. Thus I decide to use a technique that was invented in Great Britain during the 18th century. It's a porcelain called 『Bone China』, produced by mixing bone ash of cattle into potter's clay as substitute for white clay since that was difficult to procure. Since there are several places in the territory where you can pick up clay, it's been traditionally in use. It should be possible to make beautiful, opal porcelain, if you shape, bake and create clay that had bone ash mixed into it. There's no guarantee that it will succeed by default, but there should be no loss in trying.

"Time for experiments."

Bones, which are the raw material of bone ash, are available in large quantities when a monster, which had been hunted, is dismantled. Bones were used as material for magic tools and magic potions as well as substance to improve the soil in agriculture, but there were also many excessive parts that are discarded as trash.

"(If I remember correctly, bone china should be porcelain containing more than 30% calcium phosphate. Since there are no cow bones, I have to substitute it with monster bone ash.)"

While adjusting the mixture rate with magic, just as I did at the time with the 『Extreme Limit Steel』, I produce plenty of clay with bone ash mixed in and change it into boards. Then I manufacture it into porcelain by reproducing a firing reaction with magic. Since I don't have any techniques for molding it, the shapes were distorted, but I succeeded in creating white porcelain that's whiter than Mizuho porcelain which used to be the whitest.

"(I guess this is the best one. I will remember the detailed mixing ratio.)"

Next I create a great amount of clay with that mixing ratio and decided to give it to craftsmen to have them make tea cups, saucers, tea pots, plates and vases.

"Which reminds me, where is porcelain being produced?"

"There are several places within the territory, but today I will guide you to a pottery that's located in the outskirts of Baulburg."

Once we arrived at the pottery, many craftsmen were in the middle of work.

"Oh, a magic furnace. I expected a normal furnace."

A magic furnace uses mana as fuel instead of firewood. Since it's easier to adjust the required temperature and maintain it, it's easier to produce earthenware

with good quality.

As it's a magic tool, it's very expensive. Using an ordinary furnace was common practice for small potteries.

If you ask why I know something like that, it's because I heard that Mizuho uses magic furnaces except for a few special earthenware products.

"Isn't that expensive? A magic furnace, that is."

"That's the norm." (Roderich)

"Norm...eh...?"

If you were to consider obtaining a magic furnace as prior investment in the high-class porcelain world with its intense competition, you would probably buy it off a noble who ended up deep in the red due to its maintenance costs.

A magic furnace can't be used without mana or magic stones.

For small potteries, which can't employ a magician, that will become a big burden. Therefore it's easier for them to use the wood growing in the vicinity as fuel.

"Oh my, Roderich-sama and...Earl Baumeister-sama!? Welcome! Please come in!"

A middle-aged man, who seems to be the one in charge of this pottery, greeted us half in astonishment.

"How it's going with the earthenware?"

"Right now we are making large amounts of cheap earthenware that can be readily used by the fief's residents."

Ten-odd craftsmen were immersed in their work, but once I look at the produced earthenware, it doesn't look all that bad.

Though it's a layman's judgment at best.

"They don't seem all that different..."

I took out the famous porcelain of the Empire from my magic bag and compare it. The clay's quality is inferior, but I feel like the molding technique is equal.

"Wow, the Empire's Rubel Pottery's products, huh?"

"I received them as reward. I don't really know anything about them though." (Wendelin)

In my case it's a safe bet that I wouldn't realize anything even if I were given porcelain and told that they originate from a pottery in the Kingdom.

"Well, it's my work after all. I worked in the Sohnfahrt Pottery located in the suburb of the royal capital."

If I remember correctly, the favorite tea set of Elise should have been made there.

I suppose they are a purveyor of high-ranking nobles.

"Roderich, isn't he actually a really amazing craftsman?"

"No, I'm not at that point yet. Giving it a fair assessment, I'm halfway to being first-rate."

Once I listen to him a bit more, I hear that this supervisor was born into one of the families managing the Sohnfahrt Pottery.

"Craftsmen are similar to nobles in some points. If you speak of nobility's purveyors, they have a good reputation, but since it's high-class items, it's not like they can sell large amounts. The number of people, who can succeed as craftsmen, is limited. Even I continued training since my childhood, but my elder brothers were given priority, with the result that I would have wasted away if I hadn't left the house. There are also similar circumstances in other potteries... Waiting to be invited by a noble, who wants special porcelain, is the best option."

The competition in the porcelain world seems to be terrible.
Apparently the left-over children of craftsmen are sent out into the world.

"Talks that business with Mizuho porcelain will increase from now on are circulating within the industry. You can't win against the unusual Mizuho porcelain with the porcelain of an amateur after all."

In the end all that's left is to mass produce cheap earthenware catered towards commoners with the resolve to accept small profits.

"In the case of the Baumeister Earldom, imported porcelain will likely lose its standing soon since we can sell it cheaper as we have no transport costs."

Only a few high-quality porcelain items will remain as imported goods?

"In the future only making goods that are so overwhelmingly excellent in quality that even an amateur can see it, or making goods that are different from the other porcelain will be left as viable option."

"I thought so, too, and thus I prepared this." (Wendelin)

I took out the material, which was a mixture of monster bone ash and clay, from my magic bag.

"If you use this, it should be possible to create porcelain that has a far stronger white lustre than the existing ones." (Wendelin)

"Certainly, this will allow us to make porcelain that's white in comparison to before. Even the designs and pictures on the porcelain should become more conspicuous."

Looking at the white clay held out by me, all the craftsmen apparently got motivated. Telling them to show us the finished product once they're done, we left the clay behind and returned to the mansion.



And then, a week later, a message informing about the completion of a prototype arrived. Thus Roderich and I headed to the pottery once again.

"Please look, Earl Baumeister-sama! We completed such a white porcelain!"

The porcelain, which has a feeling of transparency with its milky white color, has been completed safely. The pottery's supervisor seemed to be very happy.

"Ooh! What degree of whiteness!" (Roderich)

"If it's this, it will sell for a lot!"

It's a piece of work that feels more translucent and has a better opal color than the traditional porcelain made in the Empire and the Kingdom, as well as the Mizuho porcelain.

The 『Fake Bone China』 was completed without a hitch.

There are still parts to be improved, but I can leave those parts to the craftsmen who are professionals in this area.

The most wonderful part about this is probably that it can be exported at this quality.

After all we had nothing to export except for goods such as the monster material obtained in the Demon Forest, mushrooms and medical plants used as ingredients for magic potions, unusual fruits and most recently sugar.

"We will focus our workforce on this and also strive to create a much better porcelain."

"I see, please do you best." (Wendelin)

This was the birth of porcelain that used monster bone ash in a world different from Earth.

It's strange that no one attempted this until now, but since it will yield a profit for us, it's a great and fortunate opportunity.

The craftsmen, who received a supply of clay, produced various porcelain goods. The items, which were judged to be for sale among them, were exported to the capital.



"Huh? Did you change the teapot, Elise?" (Erwin)

During tea time Erw noticed that the teapot, which Elise was using to pour tea, had changed.

"I'm a member of the Earl Baumeister family, so I will use this one that I was given as present, starting from today." (Elise)

Now that she mentions it, I remember that the pottery's supervisor gave us this one as gift, saying that it's an excellent piece of work.

"It's the porcelain made with the clay that had been magically combined by Wend, isn't it? It sure is whiter than the previous teapot." (Erwin)

"True. This seems to use clay that's of a higher quality than the one made in Mizuho. Even its shape looks refined as it's not too thick. The picture drawn on the pot with its shining white looks pretty." (Haruka)

Haruka knew a lot more about porcelain than Erw and I.
Everyone agreed that it was a very precise evaluation.

"You're really well-informed."

"Because there were a lot of people, who know plenty about porcelain and handicraft, in the Battou Unit, I learned it naturally after being taught by them..." (Haruka)

Apparently there are many among them with artistic education, who are not mere sword idiots.

"Then it's the same for Takeomi-san as well?"

"Nii-sama is well-informed about swords, but as for other things..." (Haruka)

I see, I suppose that means he's a thorough katana idiot.

"Mixing the ash of monster bones into clay? You did well to come up with such an idea, Wend."

Though I didn't come up with it, but actually knew about it.

Even so, it was difficult to fine tune the components with magic many times over until clay that could be used in top-quality porcelain was completed.

Simply mixing bone ash and dug-out clay will result in a dull white.

Since there's also a difference in whiteness of the fired pottery depending on the type of monster, whose bones are used, I have to get the craftsmen to research this.

"If the cups are beautiful, the tea tastes a lot better as well."

Elise poured mate tea into the teacups and distributed them to everybody.

"If you drink tea from such a cup, it gives you a feeling of extravagance."

"It's weird compared to the tableware back at home, but since a dojo has many disciple, it's wrong to not prepare quite a number."

Ina and Luise also enjoy the tea in the new cups.

"But, it would be nice if it had a higher capacity."

"Wilma-san, that's not the idea behind this cup... This whiteness and the refined design; quite suitable for a noble." (Katharina)

I suppose for Wilma the cup's practical use matters more than its design.

However, Katharina was completely satisfied as she could bask herself in a feeling of nobility.

"Dear, this porcelain has a mysterious luster. It's good that it looks refined, allowing the white to stand out all the more, since it's not emphasized too much." (Elise)

"Ooh! What a spot-on evaluation!" (Erwin)

Erw is surprised, but Elise is a genuine noble lady after all. As she has been living while surrounded by such items since her birth, she has naturally acquired an aesthetic sense in that direction.

"Now that you're saying it, you're correct." (Katharina)

"Katharina, you only noticed it because Elise mentioned it just now, didn't you?" (Wendelin)

"Wendelin-san, that's most certainly not the case." (Katharina)

"Really?" (Wendelin)

"Isn't that obvious?" (Katharina)

Given that it really smelled strongly like a lie, the eyes of everyone besides Elise focused on Katharina.

Elise is an exception as she hasn't the character to doubt people.

"Even I didn't realize it until I was told." (Wendelin)

"Be attentive of that part! After all you were the one to supply the materials."

Even if I'm told that, I don't possess anything like an artistic education.

"Erw, you know...do you think that I acquired an artistic sense at birth or something like that? I leave such things to Elise." (Wendelin)

Even taking my previous life into account, it's impossible for me to possess an artistic talent or an aesthetic sense.

"It's no problem since you have plenty of good parts and other areas where you excel, dear. Compensating for each other's missing parts is what being a married couple is about." (Elise)

As expected of my wife. Elise really says the good stuff when it matters.

"I tried to probe it with magic for a bit just now, but since there's still a faint residue of mana remaining from the monster bones, this seems to be the reason that affects the luster of the porcelain."

"To know this much and yet not having realized it..."

"I know as much that it's white and beautiful, but you won't know the cause unless you investigate it with magic! Did you yourself notice it, Erw!?" (Wendelin)

"No, my birthplace has a longstanding lineage of being rural nobility after all. Do you think that there are goods from purveyors, who work for high-ranking nobles in the capital, back in my home?" (Erwin)

"No, my home didn't have those either, you know?" (Wendelin)



The 『Fake Bone China』 was completed like this, but with it becoming popular due to its whiteness, its luster and the vibrancy of its designs, it turned into a special product of our Baumeister Earldom. At least it should have...



"Milord, it seems there's not enough clay because of the many orders." (Roderich)

"Again?" (Wendelin)

"No matter how many you produce, it doesn't catch up with the demand."

"Damn it! My workload has increased again!" (Wendelin)

The huge amount of public works that had piled up since I returned to my territory for the first time in a year, and in addition the work of adjusting the components of the clay to make these high-quality porcelain goods; for a while any break vanished from my schedule. No need to guess. I became more busy than during my time as salaryman.



"So, Milord, I'd like to borrow more ideas from you." (Roderich)

"Listen here, Roderich. Do you believe that I'm owning some kind of magic pot that spits out business ideas?" (Wendelin)

"I wouldn't go that far, but isn't the porcelain a huge success?" (Roderich)

Roderich approached me with an excited face, expressing 『Quick, the next idea』. The porcelain using monster bone ash had become very popular. Thanks to that it apparently became a gold mine for the Baumeister Earldom, but at the same time the sales of potteries in other territories should have declined. If the sale of the potteries located in their own territories go down, the nobles there will likely blame me. Headhunting craftsmen and espionage activities to find out the raw materials and the manufacturing process are of concern as well.

Roderich turned the craftsmen working in the potteries close to Baulburg and the skilled ones among the craftsmen working in potteries, which are spread across the Baumeister Earldom, into retainers.

The earthenware catered towards commoners has been entrusted to private potteries. The high-class porcelain that uses monster bone ash is directly managed by the Earl Baumeister household and the craftsmen serving me as retainers.

Although the pay is low, it's possible to pass on the title. Depending on the amount of money of the sold porcelain, they will receive bonuses, too.

It's a system that's equal to the daimyo treating potters as samurai during the Edo period.

Since it's for the sake of keep it confidential, it's indispensable to employ them with a proper pay.

Since they independently researched mixing the clay, which was brought in from all over the Baumeister Earldom, with monster bone ash, it will be a full success, once they manage to make high-class porcelain without borrowing my help.

Since it will also decrease my work, it's killing two birds with one stone.



"This is no good, huh?"

"Umm...Philine-sama, why are you wearing a maid uniform?"

As we had actually planned to go out together tomorrow, I brought her with me from Breitburg, but Luise had fun putting the clothes, which I had test manufactured by Baulburg's tailors, on Philine.

"I feel strangely energetic in this maid attire."

"It's the latest uniform invented by me."

The maid uniforms in this world have the skirts reach down to the ankles, use stiff fabric, have almost no ornaments and even the design is old-fashioned in my eyes.

Accordingly Philine is wearing the maid uniform that had been completed as a requested prototype in one of the workshops of the city while using my personal opinion as reference.

In reality I had planned to have Luise wear it, but...

"I will wear it as well. A short skirt, plenty of frills and the color's not black either."

"Maid uniforms are generally black, but I believe that it's just following the rules without thinking for oneself if you only use black. It's the same for the design as well. Won't a woman get more motivated to do her maid work by wearing an exciting maid uniform?" (Wendelin)

"Even though you say that, it's just your personal preference, isn't it Wend?" (Luise)

"Not at all. I'm just properly considering the welfare of my servants." (Wendelin)

I had also the idea that it might turn into a little bit of business once I finish the new maid uniform, but to be honest I just felt like seeing modern maid uniforms after a long time as I'm going to see them everyday.

Since there's many places that use maid uniforms as work uniforms such as the restaurants and shops in the city, and not just the maids of nobility and the wealthy. It will be a big benefit to get some money out of it, if I can sell them due to the expectations of the uniforms attracting customers. If there's one problem, I guess it the fact that they might get copied right away.

"The swimsuits from before were nice, too. Wend, you do have some strange talents."

It's no talent, but me simply remembering what I've seen in my previous life.

What I used as reference was the time when I was taken along to a maid cafe by a senpai who likes such establishments.

"Of course I have your share as well, Ina." (Wendelin)

"I get one as well?" (Ina)

"It's time to try on some clothes, so let's have some fun. I also have maid uniforms for Elise, Wilma, Katharina and Haruka." (Wendelin)

"You are really well prepared, aren't you...? Oh well, it sounds fun either way. What about you?"

"I'd like to wear it. Seeing Dominique's maid clothes in the past, I wanted to try wearing them once as well, but since it seemed that I would get scolded by Grandfather..." (Elise)

Elise is a normal girl as well, so she had interest in fashion.

"Looks interesting." (Wilma)

"Why do I have to wear the clothes of servants...?" (Katharina)

"If you don't like it, you don't have to wear them." (Wilma)

"Since profits will come around to the Earl Baumeister household, if the tailors within the territory flourish due to the new maid uniforms, this is the duty of one who was born into a noble household." (Katharina)

Katharina was curtly told, "If you don't like it, you don't have to wear them," by Wilma, but it looks like she doesn't want to be left-out or maybe it's because of her being a former loner. While using a weird sophism, she agreed to trying on the new maid uniform.

"Come to think of it, it will be the first time for me to wear a skirt." (Haruka)

Given that Haruka is basically a person who is too serious, she agreed with trying on maid clothes as it's an order by her lord.

She says that it's the first time for her to wear a skirt, but if I remember correctly, there were no people wearing skirts in Mizuho to begin with.

Everyone headed to a separate room in order to change clothes and then assembled after finishing in around 10 minutes.

"Yeeeah, what a supreme bliss." (Wendelin)

Philine was blue, Elise green, Ina purple, Luise pink, Wilma yellow, and Katharina orange.

"..."

"..."

"Wendelin-san, Erwin-san, do you have some kind of complaints towards me?" (Katharina)

"Wend, I don't know how to tell her..." (Erwin)

"Isn't it unnatural, if you say it deliberately?" (Wendelin)

Everyone is cute and the clothes suit them well. It turned into a setup of Earl Baumeister and one of his retainers being pleased with the wives and a girl wearing multicolored maid uniforms, but it didn't suit Katharina at all thanks to her haughty attitude even as maid, and her hairstyle.

"I wonder, would another color for the maid uniform be better in your case, Katharina?"

"Wend, I don't think that's the issue here." (Erwin)

Erw declared.

"I see! She just have to straighten that hairstyle!"

After all a maid with ringlet curls is weird.

If she straightens her hairstyle...

Huh?

This turn of events, just recently...

"I shall decline. I'm picky about this hairstyle." (Katharina)

Hmmm, to be so obsessed about ringlet curls...

"Do you possibly have some kind of illness where you will die if you unfasten the ringlet curls, Katharina?" (Wendelin)

"As if some one like that exists!" (Katharina)

I guess such an illness doesn't exist after all...

"Haruka-san, you look great." (Erwin)

Only Haruka wore a traditional, black maid uniform, but Erw still seemed very happy. It has a little less frills and a longer skirt than the maid uniforms of Elise and the others. I changed it with a feeling of holding back on remodeling it too much, but Haruka became pigeon-toed and seemed to be very embarrassed. It looks like the skirt is still too short for her taste. As she didn't wear anything but hakama to begin with, it's probably just because she isn't used to a skirt.

"A bashful Haruka-san, how nice..." (Erwin)

This one is a lost case. Erw is totally ogling her.

"Dear, as expected, I have a problem with using maid uniforms in different colors than black inside the mansion." (Elise)

"I see, I expected as much." (Wendelin)

"So you understand at least that much." (Luise)

"Luise, even I have some common sense, alright?!" (Wendelin)

"That was doubtful at the moment when you reformed them into such maid uniforms." (Luise)

"You!" (Wendelin)

Luise, that's no way how you should talk to your husband.

"Elise, these are for the shops in the city." (Wendelin)

For restaurants that hire young girls as waitresses, these new maid uniforms will be very useful.

"Because plenty of male customers will visit?" (Elise)

Nothing less of Elise. She saw through my intention right away, huh? Though it might only her being perceptive as she's a woman.

"To be blunt, or rather, it looks like many male customers would actually visit..."

Ina, this is the sad nature of men.

"There's no mistake! The number of male customers will increase!"

In that case even the store will be able to recover the expenses for the maid uniforms right away.

"With several women wearing these in a single store, I think it will be necessary to have several spare sets as they have to be washed, too. If they wear different-colored maid uniforms everyday, it might transform fresh customers into regular patrons."

"Wend-sama, is that true?" (Wilma)

"It might be. As long as the managers believe so, we will be able to sell a great number of the new maid uniforms." (Wendelin)

And if the tailor workshops make a profit, the tax revenue for the Earl Baumeister household will increase, too.

"Wend-sama, you're good at business." (Wilma)

Wilma, please praise me more.

I'm a Lord-sama who is prepared to contribute to an improvement of my residents' lives.

"Hence, let's change the maid uniforms worn by Dominique and Lea into these." (Wendelin)

"If you change them this much, it might become too showy instead."

Elise approved of the maid uniform worn by Haruka to be used in the mansion.

"Umm, Wend." (Ina)

"Eh? You against it, Ina?" (Wendelin)

"I'm not, but I think that we should keep the old, traditional maid uniforms." (Ina)

"Maid uniforms with an outdated design? Why...?" (Wendelin)

"For young maids such as Dominique and Lea, it's fine. But, there are maids inside this mansion that are older than our mothers." (Ina)

Now that she mentions it, that's true!

There's no way that only Dominique and Lea can handle such a big mansion. We have also hired a great number of people such as the wives and daughters of my retainers as maids.

I guess wearing these frilly and short-skirted maid uniforms is tough for maids who have become somewhat old...

"I think they will wear them without complaints, if you adopt them, but..." (Ina)

The rest seems to be slightly difficult to say for Ina. She probably wants to say that it will also be hard on our eyes.

"Ina, I will come up with a maid uniform that has a subdued design and uses the same skirt length as the traditional ones." (Wendelin)

Thus the new maid uniforms in various colors were sold by tailor shops within the Baumeister Earldom. They were mainly very popular with restaurants.

But, in this world that has no copyright they were copied right away. I think I will note it down as being not overly profitable.

And then...



『Earl Baumeister, according to what I have heard, you enjoyed making my cute Philine wear indecent clothes...』 (Amadeus)

"I don't remember anything like that happening, though..." (Wendelin)

Later on it was leaked to Margrave Breithilde that I had Philine try on a new maid uniform, and thus I got stuck explaining it to him which was an unnecessary waste of time.

Chapter 6 – Entertainment Trip

Yellowfin goby (haze) are fish inhabiting brackish waters and Neiwan in East Asia, and a species of goby classified as Perciformes goby. In addition it inhabits China, Australia and America. In Japan it can be found south of Hokkaido. Haze, kajika, guzu, dekihaze, hinehaze, ketahaze, kamagotsu, gozu, kusohaze; it's called in various ways, depending on the region and its size.

It's a fish which is a good target for simple fishing. Goby (haze) fishing exists since the Edo period as amusement for the common people.

Even as food it's popular. It's eaten by using it in various dishes such as tempura, fried fish, sashimi, as ingredient for soup, boiled in soy sauce and as sweetened boiled fish.

It's known as the best ingredient for Tokyo-styled tempura. In a certain high-class tempura restaurant in Shitamachi, haze tempura won't be served unless you order a full course costing more than 8.000 yen.

In some regions such as Sendai, dried-and-grilled haze is something indispensable for the dashi of the traditional zouni.

If you ask why I'm explaining all this in such a detail...

"Earl Baumeister, this is the spot where they appear in numbers and proper sizes. During the time right after the first dawn breaks, it's so many that they bite at every cast. It's the private fishing spot of the Earl Mizuho Country, err, Duke Mizuho family."

Just when my life finally calmed down after returning to my territory, we received an invitation to an entertainment trip from High Earl Mizuho, err, Duke Mizuho.

The location was the mouth of a river connected to the ocean, where the Earl Mizuho Country, err, Mizuho Dukedom obtained permission to fish from the Duke Philip household.

There's a high density of fish such as sweetfish, eels, catfish, red mullets, goby, garden eels and whittings visible in the water. Only the family of the Mizuho household, retainers, who were recognized by the Mizuho family head, and their families are allowed to catch fish with casting nets, fishing-rods and other methods, and enjoy cooking what they caught.

In addition it seems to be used as location for receiving and entertaining important guests by the Mizuho household.

"In summer it's dekihaze. In the current season you can fish big haze before they swim into the ocean."

For the Mizuho people, goby (haze) fishing was a popular pastime, which all of them, from the feudal lord to the commoners, enjoyed.

As expected of a ethnic group that resembled the Japanese, they have quite the refined hobbies.

"The Extreme Limit Steel, and that porcelain with its distinctive, shining whiteness. We have repeatedly made our craftsmen research them many times over, but they don't reach that level of perfection. I'd like you to sell the production methods to us by all means." (Mizuho)

We were received by Duke Mizuho for that reason.

It's combined with the reason of bringing congratulatory gifts for Duke Mizuho, who increased his

territory and went up in noble rank.

"You are stating your wish quite openly, aren't you?" (Wendelin)

"It can't be that you haven't noticed that, Earl Baumeister. Also, since the time of the civil war was quite difficult, it likewise serves as an occasion to simply take a breather." (Mizuho)

Given that it was such a strenuous war, even Duke Mizuho probably wanted to relax a bit.
It's the same for me as well.

After all I had my vacation decreased by being forced to develop a special product for some reason.

"Please, have a drink while leisurely letting the line dangle." (Mizuho)

"Oh, thank you very much for the treat." (Wendelin)

I had Duke Mizuho pour me some sake.

Next to the place, where you can often fish haze if you use simple fishing rods, located on the bank of the river's mouth, a genuinely Mizuho-styled house has been erected. Furthermore you can fish haze through an indoor window without having to worry about the cold of winter.

The caught haze are immediately prepared as sashimi, fried fish, tempura, haze boiled in soy sauce and soup by the employed cooks of the Mizuho household, and served alongside sake.

Even the sake is a haze sake that had grilled-and-dried haze put into warmed sake. It turned into an arrangement where you not only enjoyed its deliciousness, but also indulged in a certain elegance.

For me, a former Japanese, it's a very pleasant reception.

"I caught one! I caught one! Ooh! Is this a new record?"

Even in this world, reeling rods exist.

They are also available in the Kingdom, but the ones made in the Mizuho Dukedom resemble those of modern Japan and are easy to use.

Since they are a race that likes fish, they are enthusiastic about researching devices that allow them to fish properly. Things such as balance scales and hooks were fairly similar to the ones in Japan.

"The string is thin and sturdy, too." (Wendelin)

I was able to catch a haze exceeding a length of 20 cm, but even though the fishing line is superfine, there seems to be no need to worry about it snapping.

"It's been manufactured out of a special thread of a spider called Big Madara Spider, which lives in monster domains. Even professional fishers treat it as priceless treasure." (Mizuho)

"It looks like there also demand for it in the Kingdom."

"There have already been inquiries by Kingdom nobles. A true grace of the peace treaty." (Mizuho)

The Duke Mizuho household was listed as nobility of the Empire, but in the end it's no pure Empire nobility.

Peter is trying to somehow produce a sense of unity, but it seems the Kingdom's government and its nobility are showing movements to try forming connections with the independent Duke Mizuho

household.

Though, as for the Kingdom's government, it was me who proposed to do so to his Majesty.

"Our Mizuho household yielding a profit due to trade blossoming is a matter of great joy, but Earl Baumeister, unexpectedly you are quite the schemer." (Mizuho)

"Am I?" (Wendelin)

"The Helmut Kingdom didn't dispatch soldiers to take advantage of the Empire's civil war, but economically you might say that it has started its invasion." (Mizuho)

The current Empire is suffering from the damages to its productivity and circulation of goods and money due to the civil war.

The Kingdom is taking advantage of that, or rather it has reached the point where the Kingdom's products are gradually imported.

However, that's something you might expect from merchants.

Being sensitive to opportunities to make quickly a lot of money, they don't even mind crossing the border if it's for the sake of business.

"Well, since we have a trade surplus, it's going smoothly for us, I dare say. I think it's difficult for the central government, though." (Mizuho)

They seem to be desperate to strengthen the government system, but it looks like small-scaled rebellions have popped up immediately.

"Viscount Betel has apparently started a rebellion together with nobles that were demoted and their retainers. He was dissatisfied over his territory being reduced. The rebellion was rounded up in a mere week and his head was put on a pike, though." (Mizuho)

Gilbert, who became the highest general of the Imperial Army, subjugated the rebels by sending his combat forces right away.

Given that he's a capable soldier, you could call it a natural outcome, as Viscount Betel was no military genius either.

"That means it will take time until the Empire settles down." (Mizuho)

"Peter sure has it tough." (Wendelin)

"I invited him as well since you were going to come, but he turned it down as he appears to be busy. He used words such as 『disappointing, regret』." (Mizuho)

Likewise, Alfons, who's busy as new Duke Philip, didn't come to this reception as things are too hectic for him at the moment.

"I guess Therese-dono hasn't come either." (Mizuho)

"She is refraining from doing so." (Wendelin)

She's no member of the Duke Philip household anymore, thus she harbors no intention to be

politically active in the Empire.

To immediately return into the Empire – even if it's only for fun – despite having left because she announced her intention to society isn't very smart, she told me.

"I'm told that there would be many Empire nobles, who would likely intrude upon you, Duke Mizuho, wanting to turn up at this location, if she had attended. It seems that she doesn't want to cause you any troubles." (Wendelin)

"There's that as well. Therese-dono seems to be in good health in the Baumeister Earldom. It might be the best like that." (Mizuho)

Since it can't be helped that it's only very political topics, or rather, because it will be problematic to get involved too deeply, I decided to focus on fishing.

"Erw, did you catch anything?" (Wendelin)

"Quite a few with a reasonable size. This fried haze is great." (Erwin)

Erw had them make fried haze out of the ones he caught himself, and seems to be very satisfied with that.

"Umm...Erw-san." (Haruka)

"Ah, bait, right? These guys are slippery. Once in a while they also bite." (Erwin)

Haruka seems to be bad with the bait, living eunicids.
She apologetically asked Erw to help her, and had him attach the bait to the hook.

"So even you have things that you dislike, Haruka-san." (Erwin)

I have been bad with this slimy things since my childhood..." (Haruka)

"Certainly, there are probably people who are bad with those." (Erwin)

Erw hooks the bait for Haruka who's bad with live bait, and both of them fish happily together.
The sight of that was the very definition of a rijuu couple.
Still not having completely shed my loner attribute, jealousy gnaws at my heart...
You are throwing my heart out of order!

"Erw-san, I was able to catch one." (Haruka)

"This is quite a big one. Let's have them turn it into tempura right away." (Erwin)

Haruka hands the haze to a female caretaker, and a man, who really emits the aura of being a professional cook, cuts and trims the fish with flawless movements, coats and then deep-fries it.
After intently watching the saucepan for a short while, he pulls out the fried tempura without any hesitation in his movements and then swiftly drains the oil.

I can't take my eyes off his skilled techniques.

And then the haze tempura is set on a plate and presented in front of the two.

"Erw-san, do you eat this with dipping sauce or salt?" (Haruka)

"It's the beginning, so let's go with salt." (Erwin)

"Understood. Here, please open your mouth." (Haruka)

"A—an. Oh, delicious. Being fed by you makes it even more tasty, Haruka-san." (Erwin)

"That's not true." (Haruka)

"No, no, I'm telling you; that's how it is." (Erwin)

Being praised by Erw, Haruka's face becomes red.

Honestly, just watching it, makes me want to scream 『Aaaaaahhh!』.

Or rather, don't you guys harbor any respect or esteem towards the tempura artisan who possesses those highly proficient techniques?

I consider that to be weird.

In no way does it mean that I'm feeling jealous or something like that.

"That's youth for you. Sometimes I also had my wife do that for me in my early days." (Mizuho)

"Is that so?" (Wendelin)

If I'm honest, I haven't experienced anything like that before getting married and surely not in my previous life.

Rather, no matter how young he might have been, I don't think that it suits Duke Mizuho.

Since it would be rude to say that out loud, I don't mention it, though.



"If only Takeomi-san was here for such occasions..." (Wendelin)

If that younger-sister-loving sison samurai was here, he would prevent the indiscreet acts of those two. Even though he would condemn them, he wasn't present today for some reason.

"If it's Takeomi, he's absent today due to receiving harsh criticism by the lot of the Fujibayashi family."

"What did he do?" (Wendelin)

"He's a nuisance to a peaceful relationship with the Earl Baumeister household and the Duke Mizuho household."

The Fujibayashi household had its hereditary stipend go up quite a bit due to the successful accomplishment of guarding us and the distinguished war services in the civil war by Haruka and Takeomi-san. Although it's at the lower end, they did join the group of high-ranking retainers.

"As there's also the marriage between Erwin and Haruka among those achievements, it's probably only natural for him to get scolded, if the next family head himself is an obstacle to the marriage."

It looks he was reprimanded by his father, the current family head, his grandfather, the retired, previous family head, and almost all other family members.

"I hear he was rebuked with 『Even though they have such a great relationship, what's the idea with you acting as nuisance there!?!』, but I think everyone says that."

Therefore he was forced to stay away from this time's fishing trip which he originally should be able to join as he has now become a higher-ranked retainer.

"(Tsk! What an useless older brother. Even so, with Erw's social standing...)" (Wendelin)

The jealousy dwelling in my heart is gradually growing bigger.
I remember my past and end up thinking, 『Riajuu and their likes should just explode and die』.
Moreover, there's also their blasphemy towards the tempura artisan.
Right, this is truly the most important.
I will say it once more; this is definitely no jealousy.

"Dear, I have also learned how to make tempura, and actually tried to make some." (Elise)

Did she perceive the spreading of darkness in my heart? Elise brought her own tempura over after having placed it on a plate.

As expected of my wife.

I had my heart wrapped up in the same kind of darkness as Duke Nürnberg, but she removed what as about to become the reason for purging a loyal retainer.

"Hee, you have really deep-fried them very nicely." (Wendelin)

"Tempura is difficult." (Elise)

Certainly, if you try to perfect tempura, it's difficult.

From the processing of the ingredients, to the making of the coating and finally to the way of deep-frying; if you don't pay meticulous attention to all of them, it won't work.

"Identifying the change in the oil's sizzling in the middle of deep-frying is hard." (Elise)

"That's quite the high level you've going there..." (Wendelin)

Even though she has deep-fried tempura for the first time, Elise is talking about professional-cook-like things.

It added another episode to her perfect superwoman legend.

"It looks like it will take time and proper training to learn how to drain the oil. Well then, let me have a bite at once."

I eat the tempura made by Elise before it gets cold.

Inside it's hot and flaky as it's been deep-fried lightly.

I ended up giving my impressions like in a certain gourmet manga, but honestly, it's very tasty.

After all, I'm convinced that one should eat tempura with salt first.

"Delicious. As expected of you, Elise." (Wendelin)

"Great. With this we can make it at all times in the Baumeister Earldom." (Elise)

Looking at Elise smiling sweetly while saying that, I was confident in my victory.

"Wend, what are you making a face as if you are elated by success for while eating tempura?" (Erwin)

Erw looked curious, but you should thank Elise. Even though you might have been purged by the future me due to your riajuu nature, that flag was broken thanks to her.

"Ah, don't worry about it. By the way, what about Ina and the others?" (Wendelin)

"Yes, they have deep-fried tempura together with me." (Elise)

Ahead of where Elise was looking, Ina and Luise were deep-frying huge amounts of tempura for some reason.

"If we have deep-fry only this many, we won't reach Elise's level, but I did improve." (Ina)

"I was able to receive a passing mark from artisan-san." (Luise)

"Say, why are you two frying tempura so eagerly?" (Wendelin)

I approach Ina and Luise, who are immersed in deep-frying so much tempura that it makes me wonder whether they are going to open a restaurant, and try asking them.

"It's not enough at all."

"Deep-frying, deep-frying, it's endless."

The reason for them going at it so earnestly were Doushi and Wilma.

Two black holes exist in a certain area. Over there all kind of food and beverage ends up vanishing in no time.

"In my opinion this fish called haze is very delicious, but if you could catch one with a length of at least one meter, it would be even more wonderful." (Armstrong)

"Really, the more I eat the hungrier I get." (Wilma)

"No...such big haze doesn't exist..."

At the very least it's impossible for yellowfin goby (mahaze). After all they are already big if they exceed 20 centimeters.

"Then there's no other choice but to go for numbers!" (Armstrong)

"I will fish because I want to eat more." (Wilma)

Doushi and Wilma were disappointed about there being no huge haze, but since both have positive characters, they immediately switched their thinking towards it being alright as long as they catch a great amount of them.

Both hand the haze they catch to Ina and Luise, and then wolf them down after they were processed into tempura.

Sometimes they immersed themselves in fishing with Doushi drinking haze sake and Wilma consuming sweetened boiled haze, haze boiled in soy sauce and tea.

Be that as it may, they sure eat a lot...

"I caught one." (Wilma)

"Wilma, you're quite skilled."

As expected of a girl who has turned hunting and fishing into her hobby and occupation. She's fishing haze at the level of a Meijin. 1 And the caught haze were immediately cooked and landed in her stomach.

"Won't the haze in this area go extinct at this rate?" (Erwin)

"There are no others who fish here, so it should be alright, I think..."

Doushi and Wilma are eating haze with a speed that makes Erw worried that the fish around here might go extinct.

However, this estuary is the exclusive fishing spot of the Duke Mizuho household.

The fish probably won't go extinct that easily.

"I caught one, but it's a fish I have never seen before..."

"Ah, a whiting. If you make tempura out of it, it will be delicious as well."

A young female caretaker taught Wilma about the type of fish.
The point is that she was able to catch a whiting, which she didn't intend to catch, because this is an estuary.

These fish were also popular as ingredient for tempura in the Edo period.
They don't live at the Kingdom's coasts and can only be caught in the Empire's north.
I have never seen them in the Kingdom.

"Wend-sama, sample it." (Wilma)

"This is great, too." (Wendelin)

Since Wilma is taciturn, she won't tell me to open my mouth for mouth-feeding, but she lets me eat the whiting tempura.
Given that this fish is also a tempura ingredient with great taste and a white-fleshed fish for sashimi and sushi, it was delicious, as expected.

"I want to eat one, too." (Armstrong)

Having watched us, Doushi selfishly, like a child, says that he wants to eat a whiting as well.

"It's a fish outside what we are luring, so you can't catch it so easily."

"Unununu—! The most important thing while fishing is the strong wish of wanting to catch something!" (Armstrong)

Doushi says something that seems to contain some truth, but as it was only his gluttony speaking, I can't hear it as anything but him simply wanting to eat a whiting.
However, Doushi seems to not be very skilled at fishing. Putting the small bait on the small hook is difficult for him, and in the end he ends up losing to Wilma in the process.

"The way to gain points is to match the timing when they appear on the surface...Doushi, you suck."
(Wilma)

"I'm bad with prey that I can't see..." (Armstrong)

Thanks to that Doushi didn't even catch a fifth of what Wilma caught.

"Now, pull! I'm sure! This is a big one!" (Armstrong)

The rod in Doushi's hands bends drastically. Once he quickly wound in the reel, the catch was pulled up.
However, the it wasn't a haze.

"A blowfish?"

"I guess that's because it's the mouth of a river?"

On Doushi's fishing-rod, the blowfish had started to puff up.

"Umm, this fish is called 『River Blowfish』..."

A woman, who takes care of us, says apologetically to Doushi.

"It can be eaten, right? I ate blowfish before." (Armstrong)

"It's a different kind... You can often catch them in estuaries, but the parts that can be eaten are full of poison."

"How regrettable..." (Armstrong)

Understanding that he won't be able to eat the blowfish, Doushi feels awfully down.

"I caught one." (Wilma)

"That's fast." (Armstrong)

Even while Doushi is preoccupied with such things, Wilma steadily piles up catches.

"However, there aren't many left anymore. Even though I wanted to bring some grilled-and-dried haze back home with me..." (Wilma)

No matter how many she catches, since Wilma eats up everything, the possibility of her bringing back haze is low.

"Umm, I think it will be fine as long as we return while buying some on the way home." (Wendelin)

"As expected of you, Wend-sama. That's a wonderful solution." (Wilma)

"..."

Is that such an amazing opinion that it has to be praised?
I feel like everyone could have come up with that...

"Now then, Katharina is..." (Wendelin)

Once I lastly looked for Katharina, she was challenging fishing with a serious expression alongside Philine.

Bringing Philine along this time was the idea of Margrave Breithilde's wife. Because she became my fiancée, it's for the sake of making it known inside and outside the country that we are on such good terms that she accompanies me at such times.

『Earl Baumeister...if you make a move on Philine...』 (Amadeus)

『I won't!』 (Wendelin)

『Then it's fine, but...how nice, being able to go on a trip with Philine...』 (Amadeus)

Right before our departure, I heard Margrave Breithilde's envious voice through the MHCD, but

there's no way that I'm going to make a move on a 10 years old child.

Since he's no adventurer or magician, I felt sympathy for him not being able to freely go on a trip with his daughter, though.

As a matter of fact, her coming with us has another objective: she also acts as Margrave Breithilde's representative.

Due to my intermediation, she brought congratulatory gifts for Duke Mizuho with the meaning of getting along with each other by trading from now on and such.

Philine, who handed him those, competed with Katharina at fishing, befitting of a child at her age.

"In order to easily sense the fine bites, I deployed a 『Magic Barrier』 to avoid the surrounding of the line being hit by the outside wind." (Katharina)

"Uwaaaah, as expected of you, Katharina-sama." (Philine)

"With this it's set in stone that I will be able to catch the most." (Katharina)

Even though they are fishing haze as game, only Katharina is doing it so seriously that the others are drawing back from her.

Just Philine, who is with her, admired Katharina's magic.

Because it's plain magic, it's very difficult to confirm it with the naked eye, but in the eyes of Philine, who can't use magic, it seems to be amazing.

"I don't understand why you're so obsessed with winning." (Wendelin)

"Wendelin-san, doing it seriously is the reason why playing is fun." (Katharina)

Katharina brazenly spit out a seemingly fair argument, but even so, the world of competition wasn't that easy-going.

Actually Katharina obviously isn't good at fishing.

There are many magicians who are quick at catching fish with magic.

"Umm...I can't fish as well as I expected, but..." (Katharina)

It looks like there's not much of a difference with the amount of what I caught.

If it's like this, Wilma is overwhelmingly better at fishing.

"...If I catch some big game, it will be my overwhelming victory." (Katharina)

While saying that, Katharina shows the biggest haze among the ones she caught to me.

"Earl Baumeister-sama, the haze caught by Katharina-sama are big." (Philine)

Certainly, as Philine says, the biggest one is around 27 centimeters long.

It was a big catch one won't be able to fish that often.

"Whoa, huge!"

"It's my win with this big catch." (Katharina)

Katharina threw out her chest in the belief of having won, but her doing as she pleased came to an end soon afterwards.

"Wilma-jou, that's a really big one!"

"I think it will be filling if it's made into tempura." (Wilma)

When Wilma pulled in a monster haze with a size close to 30 cm, many people gathered around her. Katharina's three minutes of fame were so short that they even paled in comparison to Akechi Mitsuhide.

"Wilma apparently caught fish since her earliest childhood days..."

I heard that she secured her food expenses by fishing at rivers since she couldn't go hunting when she was small.

She quickly assembles a fishing-rod and her skill is at the level of a Meijin. It goes so far that she has been approved by the caretakers of the Mizuho household who are accompanying us.

"How amazing, Wilma-sama."

"I caught one that was a little smaller 30 years ago, but even then I was envied by the former lord."

The elder caretakers, who teach fishing and take care of the guests, admired the size of the haze caught by Wilma.

As they also fish haze as hobby, they appear to be genuinely jealous of Wilma.

After measuring the length of the caught haze with a ruler, they are getting very excited.

"Even if it's this big, it's not like it's clear whether several of them are caught in a year." (Wendelin)

Since it will be troublesome if Katharina gets angry here, I follow up for her..

It's not like Katharina is particularly reserved towards Wilma, but once it come to a match, she loses sight of everything else.

"..." (Katharina)

"Katharina?" (Wendelin)

"Then I will catch an even bigger haze tomorrow morning right after dawn! Yes, with the resolve to reel in the boss of the haze in this river!" (Katharina)

"Is there actually something like a haze boss in this river?" (Wendelin)

I have never heard anything about that.

"Wendelin-san, isn't there always one in monster domains? I'm sure, there must be one hidden in this river as well!" (Katharina)

"(As if something like that exists...)" (Wendelin)

It's not like this is some fishing manga...this is a normal river, not a monster domain.
I was simply astonished by Katharina's words.



"Dark, cold, there's no sign of the sun rising yet." (Wendelin)

And then, early morning of the next day, right after the first sign of dawn.
Since it's winter, the sun shows no signs of rising yet.
During such a time, me, Doushi, Katharina, Wilma and Philine came to the mouth of the river,
slightly away from the guest house where we had lodged.

"Earl Baumeister-sama, this is the spot."

"Here, huh...?" (Wendelin)

Last night I thought, 『As if there's something like a haze boss!』, but being told by an old man, who usually manages the river, that it actually does exist, I quickly decided to join the boss fishing.
Why, you ask? That's because it would be amusing if there was a fishing manga-like development.

"Haze die in one to two years, however there's a rumor that the boss haze has been alive for several tens or even several hundreds of years. Even my grandfather is saying that he happened to see it."

His family is the one that usually takes care of this river, the exclusive fishing spot of the Duke Mizuho household.
I hear they are patrolling the river everyday as countermeasure against poachers, but he says that he has seen a huge haze with a size of around two meters swimming in the riverbed a few times.

"Two meters is amazing."

Even though haze die once they lay their eggs, it's an individual that has survived and grown by not laying eggs, huh?
The story is gradually getting exciting.

"But, if it's a haze with a length of two meters, yesterday's fishing-rods won't cut it, will they?"

"Expecting that, I prepared new ones." (Wilma)

As expected of the woman with the alias 『Fishergirl Wilma』(T/N: A reference to the fishing manga mentioned at the end of the chapter), who doesn't make any compromises when it comes to fishing.
It seems she asked the elderly caretakers yesterday and prepared the necessary fishing-rods.

"However, why is Wilma the one doing the preparations? The one who talked about catching the boss was Katharina, no?" (Wendelin)

"Until now I have only used magic to catch fish. Accordingly I asked Wilma, who's my rival."

"Oi..." (Wendelin)

It's not what you say, but how you say it, or rather, Katharina is amazing to be able to insist on calling a super-veteran a rival as super-beginner.

"In other words, Katharina-jou. you're aiming for beginner's luck? In that case I have a chance as well!" (Armstrong)

"Doushi-sama, I want to catch a big game, too." (Philine)

Doushi and Philine pick up rods and declare that they will participate in the boss fishing. This time Elise, Ina, Luise, Haruka and Erw won't participate.

『If you catch something, we will prepare it for breakfast.』(Elise)

Elise and the others will prepare breakfast since they wake up a little later. The menu depends on what we catch.

"It's a tough fishing-rod, Wilma-sama." (Philine)

"If it's not at least this sturdy, it won't hold out if you catch the boss." (Wilma)

A tough rod similar to a seashore rod, a huge reel, a fishing line that was given a special treatment after putting together six threads of the Big Madara Spider, a heavy sinker, a large hook; if it's this, there's likely no worry that a somewhat big game will be able to escape.

"What's the bait?" (Wendelin)

"This." (Wilma)

Big earthworms that look like small snakes were inside the bucket held out by Wilma.

"If they aren't at least this big, big game won't bite." (Wilma)

"It was correct to not bring Haruka along."

With her not being able to stomach normal eunicids, she might have fainted, if she saw such monster earthworms.

And Erw nursing her...such riajuu spectacle is unnecessary for the romance of a boss fishing.

"After attaching the bait to the hook so that it's hidden, you toss the line towards the target point." (Wilma)

Wilma, who affixed a huge earthworm to the hook, lightly swings the tough rod and drops the line at the target point.

With her apparently being able to cast it to the place she had aimed for, she is most definitely a sexy fishing girl.

"After waiting for the bait to sink down there, you loosen the fishing line and wait for a bite."

"Luring is not necessary?"

"No, the big earthworm will struggle in the water." (Wilma)

I see. They are such monster earthworms after all. They will surely struggle and attract the fish' interest.

"And then you drink amazake while waiting." (Wilma)

"Wilma-sama, the amazake is delicious." (Philine)

"This is also one of the pleasures of fishing during cold seasons." (Wilma)

I feel like the last part isn't really necessary, but since it's an early winter morning, it's cold right now.

The elderly caretakers heated up some amazake and distributed it to everyone. Warm and sweet amazake is the best against hunger.

"I guess we will also start then."

Following Wilma's example, we also toss our lines after attaching bait to the hooks.

"(There are no women here who are going to say 『Kyaa—earthworms are scary!』...)"

"Wendelin-san, did you say something?" (Katharina)

"No, nothing." (Wendelin)

If there were, they might have gotten angry, but there's not a single one here, or rather, the only one who would say something like that is Erw's fiancée who would likewise get a bit fuzzy at that time. Even Katharina attaches a big earthworm to the hook with a calm expression. The women in this world are strong-willed.

"Throwing the line to the targeted place is hard." (Wendelin)

I can't quite toss the line to the place I had planned as I'm not used to a big rod, but even if it's slightly off, it will probably work out one way or the other.

"As the last one I will toss the line to the perfect spot! Alley-hop!" (Armstrong)

Despite saying something along those lines, Doushi ends up launching the line all the way to the opposite river bank.

That's his usual monstrous strength for you.

Since this is fishing, it's meaningless if you don't toss the hook into water at the very least, though.

"Doushi..." (Wendelin)

"I'm worried, the line might have snapped." (Wilma)

"You are less skilled than I am..." (Katharina)

We looked at him with cold eyes, but there was one exception among us.

"Doushi-sama, you are really amazingly strong." (Philine)

"Right? You do understand it, Philine." (Armstrong)

For some reason only Philine was overjoyed with her eyes sparkling. As even Doushi doesn't seem to be all that unhappy with being praised, these two fit together smoothly like parent and child, despite not being connected by blood.

"Next I will throw it while toning down my strength a bit." (Armstrong)

Fortunately the line didn't get caught in a tree's branch or something like that. Doushi reeled it back in, trying to collect the hook.

As he's in the process of doing that, Doushi is suddenly attacked by a very strong pulling.

"I caught something!" (Armstrong)

"Wow, Doushi-sama." (Philine)

Philine is also delighted by Doushi's fast bite, but something's odd. There's no way that a fish is caught by a hook that slides along the ground.

"That's obviously not a fish, don't you think?" (Katharina)

"Naturally, since it's not in the water." (Wendelin)

"We should see what got caught by reeling it in!" (Armstrong)

It seems to be a tremendous pull, but if it comes to Doushi's power, it's no particular problem. It continues being reeled in without stopping while causing scraping sounds. Finally we could see the prey.

"A wild boar?"

What got caught was a slightly smallish boar.

"Why a wild boar though?"

"These big earthworms are the favorite dish of the boars around here."

The elderly caretaker explained.

"This area, where the big earthworms live, is also the hunting ground of boars. Wild boars often dig up the ground, looking for earthworms."

Hunters, who come here, look for places where these worms dwell. At times when the hunt doesn't

turn out well, they catch those earthworms and go to sell them to fishing shops.

"Even at times when they don't manage to hunt a boar, these will at least help them to some pocket money."

"Hee, really?"

While we are having such a conversation, the boar is dragged from the opposite bank into the river by Doushi. It's gradually getting pulled in our direction.

Once I looked properly, a big hook was stuck in its mouth.

Since the prey is what it is, I wondered whether the hook would come off, but apparently it won't fall out as it's stuck deeper than I expected.

The boar, which was pulled up next to Doushi, was silenced with one of his punches.

The pitiable boar was immediately hung on a nearby tree to drain its blood.

"I was the first to catch something." (Armstrong)

"Doushi-sama, you are amazing." (Philine)

"It's quite obviously not a result from fishing. The original target is the huge haze..."

Causing the miracle of catching a boar after coming to fish is doubtlessly something that only Doushi can pull off.

Katharina, Wilma and I seem to share the same opinion, but for some reason only Philine praised Doushi.

"Finally, a bite!" (Katharina)

Immediately after restarting the fishing, Katharina obtained the first catch in the truest meaning.

"Though I don't think that it's the huge haze..."

Even Katharina struggled for a while to reel it in, but what she pulled up was a fish resembling a sea bass...no, no matter how you look at it, it is a sea bass.

"It's a 『Shiro』 with a great size."

The elderly caretaker scoops up the 80 cm long sea bass with a fishing net.

In this world its official name is shiro and not sea bass.

"I guess its name is shiro as it's a white-fleshed fish that can be prepared in any way such as sashimi, boiled fish, grilled fish or deep-fried fish."

"I learned something new." (Wendelin)

After being told some trivia by the elderly caretaker, we continue fishing.

Meanwhile the old man dismantles the boar, drains the blood from the shiro caught by Katharina after pickling it, and removes the intestines and gills with skilled hand movements.

"Oh! I caught something!" (Wendelin)

"Earl Baumeister-sama, I have a bite, too." (Philine)

"I also caught one." (Armstrong)

Since it's the time right after dawn breaking, there are many bites.
All of them were big shiro, but since we can fish only big game, it's surprisingly fun.
If we catch so many, it will probably be more than sufficient as souvenir for Elise and the others.

"This is a big catch."

Wilma catches shiro exceeding one meter in succession. It was proof of her high skill.
Because they are big, the fish' pulling is also powerful, but Wilma with her superhuman strength uses the power of the fishing line, overcoming all of them.

"With such a big haul, it was really worthwhile to have guided you here."

The caretaker reveals a relieved face while pickling the caught fish.
He was probably told in advance by Duke Mizuho that we are important guests.

"The monster haze isn't biting, but well, I guess it can't be helped."

Precisely because its wariness is high, it hasn't been caught so far.
It's likely a fish one can't catch so easily in two days.

"I think the monster haze is the boss exactly because it stays in this river." (Katharina)

Even though she was the one who first talked about wanting to catch it, Katharina was satisfied with catching big shiro.
I don't really know whether she's a poor loser or finally understood, but she's saying something that local residents, who live near the place where the master of a lake depicted in fishing manga dwells, would say.

"We were able to catch plenty. Let's grill these with salt for breakfast."

"That sounds delicious, doesn't it Doushi-sama?" (Philine)

"Yeah, I'm looking forward to it." (Armstrong)

This side is probably satisfied from catching big fish as well.
Doushi obediently winds up the line and begins to prepare for heading back.
Philine started to clean up the fishing utensils together with Doushi.

"Well, let's stop soon then." (Wendelin)

At the time when even Wilma started to withdraw the line by reeling it in, there's a bite at Katharina's rod, who's the only one that continued fishing, but it doesn't seem to be that much of a big catch.

"It's a shiro with a size of around 30 cm." (Katharina)

As there isn't much resistance, Katharina reeled it in and easily pulled the fish up to the water surface.

"At this size we should rather call it 『shiroko』."

Same as with sea bass, the way of calling it changes depending on the degree of growth. However, it's not separated into many classifications like sea bass. It looks like only a shiro with a size of less than 30 cm is called shiroko.

"If it has only this much of a size, I will release it." (Katharina)

While the fish' mouth appeared atop the water surface, Katharina leisurely reeled it in. At the time when everyone thought that pulling it up once, removing the hook and freeing it was all that's left, a huge shadow abruptly appeared from underwater and completely swallowed the small shiroko caught by Katharina.

"Earl Baumeister-sama, it was eaten by a very huge fish." (Philine)

"Wow, Katharina, who's usually not blessed by luck, caused a miracle." (Wilma)

Philine is is overjoyed whereas Wilma casually says something cruel. The big fish swallows the small one in an instant and swims down towards the river's bottom. Luckily the hook, which got stuck in the shiroko, attaches itself to the big fish. Katharina was assaulted by a pulling that looked as if she might be pulled into the river.

"Wendelin-san! I did it!" (Katharina)

"Although it's a coincidence, you did well!" (Wendelin)

As it was trying to eat the small fish in the middle of catching it, she caught the huge haze, the big winner. It means only for today Katharina's luck pulled ahead.

"Do your best in pulling it in." (Wendelin)

"Eh? You're not going to help?" (Katharina)

"Huh? What's the point if you don't catch it by yourself?" (Wendelin)

To brag that she caught it herself, Katharina has to finish it herself, otherwise it will be meaningless. Besides, Katharina possesses magic. She should be plentifully capable of catching it herself.

"You have 『Body Strengthening』, don't you?" (Wendelin)

"I'm strong at wind-based spells, so I haven't learned any spells except for those boosting my mobility." (Katharina)

"Though I don't think your attribute has anything to do with this..." (Wendelin)

Fire is power, wind is speed, and so on. 『Body Strengthening』 is not related to any attributes. However, Katharina simply couldn't learn it.

Well, since there are many situations where she uses the strategy of firing spells from the rear, there's no need for her to use 『Body Strengthening』 like Doushi.

"Wendelin-san, if you don't hurry, I will be pulled into the river..." (Katharina)

"What amazing power." (Wendelin)

Although it's just the likes of a haze, it seems to have a lot of power once it exceeds two meters in total length.

Katharina is about to be pulled into the river. The fishing line keeps unwinding from the reel. I quickly cast 『Body Strengthening』 on myself and take the fishing-rod from Katharina.

"If you really exists, I will have you allow me to catch you, boss of this river!" (Wendelin)

However, my fishing skills are quite outlandish as amateur.

Using my magic-enforced power, I simply reel in the line forcibly.

Even so, with the hook having seemingly stuck in a good place, I succeeded in pulling up the catch without it being able to escape.

"Huge!"

A haze, which exceeds two meters and is unattainable all over the world, leave alone in Japan, actually existed.

However...

"It's somewhat really gross..."

"That's true..." (Katharina)

Although we caught the big catch at long last, I'm somehow not overly moved by it.

In stories it often happens that the characters finally manage to catch the big one after persevering for many days, but is it because we ended up catching it on the first day, or is it because it has a very frightening face once you look at the caught prey?

No, even a normal mahaze is unexpectedly scary with its jagged mouth, if you look properly at it. If something like that exceeds 2 meters, it's only natural for it to be scary, I guess...

"It looks like it's gonna hurt if you're bitten by that."

The opponent is a fish that completely swallows down another fish with a length close to 30 cm. Its jagged teeth are sharp, too. Just as Wilma says, if you're bitten by it, it might result in a serious injury.

"Doushi-sama, this haze is cute, isn't it?" (Philine)

However, only Philine has an aesthetic sense that's slightly off. She stares at the haze, which has

risen to the river bank, while looking happy. As expected, she's not Doushi's favorite for nothing. I think she likes strange things in various meanings.

"What should we do about this one?"

"Hmm? We're not going to eat it?" (Armstrong)

No one answered Doushi's question.

"No, actually I just wanted to catch it, but...I don't want to eat it?" (Katharina)

"Won't preparing it as dish be a major hassle?"

If it's shiro, it's fine as long as you fillet them...aah, how about filleting this huge haze, too? I feel like that can be done, but for some reason I don't really feel like eating it. As expected, is its appearance the problem?

"I think it will be tasty if you turn it into fried fish or tempura." (Armstrong)

"It looks like it sure will be difficult to cook."

""That's it!""

Katharina, Wilma and I agree with the elderly caretaker's opinion.

"It will be fine as long as you fillet it." (Armstrong)

"It lacks elegance for that." (Wilma)

Right, haze is delicious if you prepare it as tempura after removing the head, slicing it down its back and removing the backbones.

If you fillet it, you won't know what kind of fish it was after making it into tempura. Wilma is a glutton, but in reality she is a person that puts high value on such things. That's the reason why she suits me as wife.

"Since the head and the bones seem to be hard, fried fish is next to impossible."

"Deep-frying it in one go seems complicated..."

It probably won't be as simple to obtain a special-made pot that allows us to deep-fry such a huge haze in one go.

Even if I asked Duke Mizuho, it's more than obvious that it would be an order-made production. Even if we managed to cook it somehow, I'm against eating it as it looks like I will bite into bones.

"If it's white flesh, we have plenty of shiro for filleting."

We have caught more than 20 shiro with five people. All of them have an average size of 80 cm. For a while we should have no troubles making grilled fish with salt, boiled fish or fried fish. That's why there was no need to unreasonably eat this huge haze.

"Wendelin-san, at first I thought that it's eerie, but now that I have looked at it properly, it has a face that's unexpectedly charming." (Katharina)

"Now that you're saying it, you're right." (Wendelin)

Its eyes are perfect circles. Even though it's laying on the river bank after being pulled up, it's looking this way without moving. Its appearance might even be somewhat cute.
We might be gradually getting corrupted by Philine.

"Earl Baumeister-sama, this fish-san has lived in this river for many years, right?" (Philine)

"If it's this big, it should have lived for a fairly long time."

There's absolutely no way that it has grown this big in one year. This place is not a monster domain after all.



"It should have watched over this river for many years as its boss!" (Armstrong)

"Earl Baumeister-sama, Doushi-sama, let's set it free." (Philine)

"Earl Baumeister, I also agree with Philine's opinion." (Armstrong)

Although he usually is all for slaughtering, Doushi advocated to let the huge haze go for a change. For me to be allowed to witness this destroyer show mercy, Philine might actually be a really terrifying girl.

"We managed to confirm its existence. The shiro are more than enough as dish for breakfast."
(Wilma)

"Wendelin-san, it's not bad to sometimes let fish go." (Katharina)

"You're right. I guess we will set it free." (Wendelin)

Being urged on by Wilma and Katharina, it was decided that the lucky, huge haze will be freed. Has it understood our conversation? Even at the time of removing the hook, the haze doesn't resist at all. Being carried by Doushi, it was returned to the river.

"Doushi-sama, look." (Philine)

"Ooh!" (Armstrong)

Once the haze is set free, another huge haze, which is one size bigger than the one we caught, shows up as if greeting the liberated haze.

"There were two of them!?"

"More than sixty years have passed since I started to manage this river, but even I didn't know that there were two huge haze."

The elderly caretaker was also astonished.

"Wendelin-san, those haze are a married couple, aren't they?" (Katharina)

"Maybe." (Wendelin)

It's not unthinkable that they might actually be parent and child, but to me it only looked the bigger haze came looking for his wife out of worry. The haze on Earth don't show such behavior, but no matter what you think about it, I could only consider that assumption to be correct.

"Haze, stay on good terms from now on." (Philine)

"Please watch over the future of this river." (Katharina)

Philine and Katharina call out to the two haze, who are heading to the deeper parts of the river, amidst a beautiful sunrise as backdrop.

While seeing off the two haze that are swimming while obviously nestling close together, we put an end to the morning's fishing.

I pray that those huge haze can live forever in this river.



"Eh? You caught a huge haze, but let it go? You know, somehow..."

Even though it's an especially emotional story, Erw had an expression making it obvious that he considers all of it to be a lie, once we told him the events after returning to the guest house.

"No, I'm telling you, we really caught it! Just as in the rumors, it was longer than two meters!"

"Suuuure." (Erwin)

"What's the problem for you to not believe it?" (Wendelin)

"Well, for Wilma, Wend and Doushi to let a prey, which you caught at great pains, go; I think that would be the act of a saint..." (Erwin)

While catching the fish we can eat, we let the huge haze go as it was too pitiful for that. Erw seems to believe that there's no way for us to do something like that.

"Apart from me interrogating you later about the part where you put me and Doushi in the same category, Philine was with us as well. Don't you think that such act would be necessary for educating her in good taste?" (Wendelin)

"Though I think that if it's you Wend, you would mercilessly kill it while saying 『For the sake of obtaining food, you have to kill living creatures』..." (Erwin)

"Ugh!" (Wendelin)

Because there were some parts among the things Erwin was saying which I could agree with, my objection ends up being blunt.

"Anyway, I mean even Katharina and Philine were present. We managed to catch a huge haze." (Wendelin)

"No, I'm not doubting that since the caretaking grandpa is saying the same as well. I'm simply not fully satisfied with it." (Erwin)

"The one not being fully satisfied here is me!" (Wendelin)

Even though it was a deeply moving scene where we let the boss, who protected the river go after having caught it, like in a certain fishing manga; just why can't the people of this world understand

it?

Although I loved 『Fisherman Sanpei』 which I read after having it recommended by my father...



"Even so, it was sure a fun fishing trip."

We managed to catch a lot of haze and shiro, received many souvenirs and were able to a huge amount of things.

Even Philine, who went on a short excursion for the first time after being engaged to me, was delighted. It was a nice entertainment trip.

Margrave Breithilde's mental state might have been complicated, but his wife's judgment hasn't been wrong...while thinking about such things, I'm performing public works within the Baumeister Earldom today, but suddenly I receive a call on the MHCD.

"Hello?"

"Heeey—! Earl Baumeister!"

All of a sudden I hear an angry voice through the MHCD.
The owner of the voice was Minister Edgar.

"Albeit an in-law, I'm your father, Earl Baumeister! To not invite me on a fun entertainment trip, that's unreasonable, right!?" (Edgar)

I'm shouted at by Minister Edgar, asking why I didn't bring him along on our trip.
This scariness would make even a yakuza shake in their pants.
Even though it's unexpected, I, who am supposed to a weak, ordinary person, was alright.
It seems I obtained a certain degree of guts thanks to having gone through actual combat.

"Eh? You have that much free time?" (Wendelin)

"It's obvious that I would have freed my schedule if you had invited me! If I hadn't received a souvenir from Wilma, I would have been even angrier!" (Edgar)

"Eeh! But..." (Wendelin)

I thought he wouldn't come if I invited him as he was busy with reforming the military administrations and preparing the army after the civil war, but that might have been my blunder.

"Earl Armstrong is angry, too! Even though his younger brother had an all-you-can-eat of haze tempura, our side only got souvenirs!" (Edgar)

"Umm...next time I will definitely invite you." (Wendelin)

"Make it as fast as possible!" (Edgar)

Once I feel relieved after the storm-like Minister Edgar terminated the call, I next receive continuous calls from Finance Minister Rückner and Cardinal Hohenheim.

"To not invite me despite us associating for quite a long while now..." (Rückner)

"I know that you are cherishing Elise, but I believe that it's sometimes necessary to show filial piety towards grandfather-in-law, Son-in-law-dono." (Hohenheim)

Different from Minister Edgar, who complained directly with the temperament of a sports-oriented teacher, the two liberal arts types used indirect expressions, but them blaming me for not being invited to our trip is all the same.

Be that as it may, I wonder, do older people like fishing this much?

Though they might be aiming for the sake and the delicious food at the destination.

"I will definitely invite you next time." (Wendelin)

"Definitely!" (Rückner)

"I ask you to do so as early as possible, Son-in-law-dono." (Hohenheim)

Once I feel relieved about having finished the chain of calls, this time a call from a number I see for the first time comes in.

"Hello?"

"It's me."

No, I mean, even if I'm told it's me, that didn't tell me who it is.

"Umm, who might you be?" (Wendelin)

"Earl Baumeister, are you telling the other nobles the same thing? Certainly, it's said that I'm not standing out compared to my father, His Majesty. For some reason I have only few friends, too. But, some time ago at the peace negotiations in the Empire, I exhibited great efforts to guarantee your rights. I had considered that you would at least invite me for your entertainment trip..."

"Your Highness the Crown Prince?" (Wendelin)

Most certainly I didn't expect to receive a call from such a big-wig.

It's no excuse, but even I didn't consider the crown prince to accompany us to such as minor entertainment trip. And even before that, I doubted that the next king would carelessly go to another country, thus I didn't call out to him.

He wouldn't have received permission from His Majesty anyway.

It's definitely not like I forgot about his existence.

"Indeed. Who else could it be?"

"I'm terribly sorry!" (Wendelin)

I unconsciously end up bowing my head, falling back into my habits from my previous life as salaryman.

Given that we are talking through the MHCD, it's meaningless as he can't see me at all, but nevertheless, old habits are sure scary.

"I will definitely invite you next time, Your Highness." (Wendelin)

"Really? I'm waiting for it with high expectations!"

The crown prince sounded somewhat desperate.

It's not a stance of 『At least invite me, though I won't go as I'm too busy』, but it feels like he would really come if I invited him.

Since he has the social standing of being the crown prince, I have a hunch that he can have as many of such invites as he wants, but...

"I'm waiting for the good news! By all mean, invite me as well!"

"Of course, Your Highness." (Wendelin)

"That's what I wanted to hear."

At the end the crown prince cuts the line with a voice full of satisfaction.

Apparently he was very happy hearing that I would invite him next time.

"A loner despite being royalty, huh...?" (Wendelin)

Come to think of it, even though we met several times so far, I don't remember having ever talked with him.

I didn't quite know what kind of person he is, but now that I know that he has the same loner trait as me, I somehow felt a little bit of affinity with him.

"His Majesty might not give his permission, but I guess I will definitely invite him next time..." (Wendelin)

Oh well, I will cross that bridge when I come to it.

As the invite itself is important, I suppose it won't be treated as rude act as long as I call out to him properly.

Thinking about such things, I might still be unable to escape my previous life's salaryman disposition.

At the same time of judging that, I ended up thinking that even nobility might not be that different from a salaryman in front of royalty.

Chapter 7 – Tunnel Uproar

"There really was one, an unexplored underground ruin."

"For such a ruin to be located in a basement of Baulburg's suburbs, how surprising."



Several days after returning from the entertainment trip, we went on an underground ruin exploration guided by Arnest.

He, who had been confined to a room deep inside my mansion, untiringly worked on the particulars of the underground ruins located in the Baumeister Earldom while we were gone.

『Although it's just a rough outline; how come that you know their exact locations?』 (Wendelin)

『Maps of the Ancient Magic Civilization's era are handed down in the demon country.』 (Arnest)

『Isn't that military information then? Are those maps available to civilian scholars?』 (Wendelin)

『Maps, which were picked up by our ancestors who went on investigations when the Ancient Magic Civilization collapsed more than 10,000 years ago, do exist. However, the maps also have parts that can not be read anymore due to the gradual fading of the printing. As aftereffect of the civilization's collapse, geographic landmarks and such had also vanished, therefore the particulars are limited to a rough estimation of the underground ruins' locations. Additionally, even if an underground ruin is discovered, there is no guarantee that we will find things in there that will please you, Earl Baumeister.』 (Arnest)

According to Arnest, it really sounds as if the Ancient Magic Civilization had collapsed and vanished in an instant.

I wonder, just what did those people do?

『It is always the same old story with those who are arrogant. A vast amount of mana that had been gathered in one place exploded. Although it was for the sake of technological progress, they paid a hefty price for it.』 (Arnest)

And I guess that's why even the demons lost any interest in the Lingaia Continent, which had many things blown away, for more than 10,000 years?

Though I don't know how it'll be from now on.

『That means the underground structures that escaped the destruction are the underground ruins.』

『That is how it is. Most of those in the Baumeister Earldom are unexplored. I suppose that is only natural, though.』 (Arnest)



After having heard of those circumstances, we went out to search for underground ruins that should be located in Baulburg's suburbs today and immediately found one.

Descending into the underground with 『Light』 and starting the search for treasures apparently makes Ina and Luise excited due to it being a work which is the very definition of adventuring. They enter the underground ruin while acting as vanguards, but...

"Wend, it looks like it's a miss." (Luise)

"True. The 『Preservation』 is completely dead, and the dust and mold here is terrible." (Ina)

Luise and Ina reported to me while covering their mouths and noses with a handkerchief.

"Wend, isn't this somehow far too old?" (Erwin)

"Correct answer, Erwin. This place is a historic ruin dating back several thousand years before the Ancient Magic Civilization came into existence. It looks like this place had been once excavated during the era of the Ancient Magic Civilization." (Arnest)

Arnest begins to explain while examining the stones used for the walls and floor.

This is probably another trait of a scholar, but there was not a single one among us who was interested.

It gives me the feeling of listening to a boring lesson at school.

"Oooh! This design was used in underground temples of the heretic 『Bulst Faith』 which perished around 17,000 years ago!" (Arnest)

The patterns carved into the walls and floor had started to disappear due to their very old age, but it seems a specialist like Arnest can still make them out.

Though it's a story where I ask myself just what's gained by knowing about it...

"Wendelin-san, what's so delightful about designs carved into walls and floors?" (Katharina)

"Who knows?" (Wendelin)

I mean, neither Katharina nor I are archaeologists, and thus we don't have any interest in an underground ruin that has no treasures and is only full of dust and mold.

"If you look closely, it resembles the designs used in reliefs by the church." (Elise)

"The Bulst Faith being called heretic is because they were defeated in a dispute with the current Catholic church. But then again, seeing that they originate from the same belief, it is only natural for them to have parts that resemble each other." (Arnest)

"(Even though it's an incredibly boring topic, ain't Elise really a saint to go along with it?)" (Erwin)

Certainly, as Erw says, hearing about something like the history of religion, yeah...

Or rather, is it really okay for Elise, a priestess, to listen to stories about the church rising in power by brushing aside other faiths?

I worried that I might get scolded by Cardinal Hohenheim.

"So, what's so valuable about this underground ruin?" (Luise)

"Ancient ruins that are this old are very rare even in the demon country." (Arnest)

"But, there are no treasures to be found here, right?" (Luise)

"These designs, which were carved into the walls, ceiling and floor, are precious, cultural legacies." (Arnest)

In the eyes of Luise, an adventurer, an underground ruin with no treasures has no value, but for Arnest, an archaeologist, there is value in investigating this underground ruin.

The values of both of them are completely biting each other, or rather, everyone besides Arnest had the same opinion as Luise.

"At the time when demons still lived on this continent, there were many people believing in the Bulst Faith. Fearing religious oppression, they left this continent. However, the current demons do not like religion overly much." (Arnest)

The number of people depending on religion might have decreased, because the demons are leading a modern life nowadays.

As there were many secular people on Earth as well, it's probably the same in this case.

"I see...I guess the demons don't believe in god..." (Elise)

Probably there are many among the demons who don't believe in god.

For Elise this seems to be a sad truth, even if it's about another faith.

As a matter of fact, I'm also almost completely atheistic, though.

"It is not all of them. The number of people believing in new religions owed to the stress in their daily lives is increasing as well." (Arnest)

"Really?" (Elise)

Elise is happy, but I wouldn't be surprised if some shady new religions are mixed in there...

"Wend-sama, nothing here." (Wilma)

"Yeah, it looks like this underground ruin having been excavated in the era of the Ancient Magic Civilization is true. That's why there's nothing here." (Wendelin)

Ina and Wilma, who continued the exploration since there's no monster presence to be found here either, returned, but it seems the underground ruin is completely empty.

"If it's a religious facility, it wouldn't be strange for at least altars and religious tools to have been left behind."

"Probably those were already taken out."

"Most likely."

Katharina also had disappointment over this ruin being a miss written all over her face.

"It is a valuable, cultural legacy! It is a precious evidence of an era where humans and demons believed in the same religion and lived together!" (Arnest)

"I see. In that case you can investigate it as much as you want, afterwards." (Wendelin)

However, while we are not here. I have absolutely no interest in this.

"Wend, let's move to another underground ruin."

Seeing as there are no treasures here, this place has no value to us.

We decide to quickly move to another ruin.

Sometimes things like this can happen after all.

"Arnest, we are going to the next place." (Wendelin)

"Uh huuuuuh. If I compare this pattern with the ones so far..." (Arnest)

"Come on, we are heading out." (Wendelin)

"Earl Baumeister, you are too impatient." (Arnest)

I dragged Arnest, who was confirming a weathered pattern that's carved into the floor with intense concentration, along and had him guide us to the next underground ruin.



"Wend, it's yet another miss." (Ina)

"Wend-sama, nothing here." (Wilma)

"This is a normal basement, isn't it?" (Wendelin)

Ina and Wilma talked to me with voices that lacked any kind of motivation.

As long as time allowed, we had Arnest guide us to places that might be underground ruins.

Although you might call them underground ruins, many were nothing more than very old basements.

Sometimes there will be some winners with treasures, but there will be a lot more misses with nothing of value.

It was only natural that the tension took a nosedive for everyone except Arnest, who was the only one to be in high spirits that we found valuable, cultural legacies, when we drew several misses in a row.

"I really don't get archaeologists."

Actually, as one of the conditions for sheltering Arnest, it was decided that we will report locations of other, unexplored underground ruins in the Kingdom to His Majesty.

It's not clear whether there are treasures to be found in those underground ruins unless you actually excavate them, but that's still overwhelmingly less effort than searching for unexplored underground ruins from the scratch.

Some time ago I was contacted through the MHCD by a big shot of the academy, which is in charge of the investigation when new, unexplored ruins are safely discovered, because of the information I had reported.

『If we investigate this valuable underground ruin from the time before the Ancient Magic Civilization now that you have found it, the mysteries of our ancestors will...』

Be it humans or demons, it seems that archaeologists are the same everywhere.

Although it's not like we discovered treasures, the voice over the MHCD seemed very overjoyed. From our standpoint, understanding what's so delightful about this is difficult though.

"Although there are differences between races, the romanticism of archeology is the same for both sides." (Arnest)

Being of the same kind, Arnest was very happy, too.

"I am really looking forward to the detailed report. Reading the reports of others is one of an archaeologist's guilty pleasures." (Arnest)

Yep, I truly don't understand what so exciting about this.

"Leaving that aside, find an underground ruin that will turn into a bit of money."

Given that we are searching the nearby underground ruins in order, I don't think that Arnest is deliberately guiding us to underground ruins that have no value.

Because it often happens that a ruin has no treasure after finally finding it, it's not like we are extremely unlucky, but the Earl Baumeister household is sheltering Arnest while bearing the risks for doing so.

"Find a ruin that will bring us some profit, based on the ruins around here." (Wendelin)

"Since there are this many candidates, it is only a matter of time." (Arnest)

A great number of symbols is noted on the old map owned by Arnest, and many of those seem to be unexplored ruins.

"Can't you narrow it down to an underground ruin that looks like it could have treasures from all these?" (Luise)

"It is possible to go with the specifics of the location, but unless we investigate, we will not know what is buried there." (Arnest)

Arnest rejected Luise's unreasonable demand.

"This does not mean that the possibility does not exist, but there are many cases where excavations and investigations take a lot of time and manpower." (Arnest)

The majority of the plausible, unexplored underground ruins are located in monster domains. Among them there were even some at the bottom of the sea and high in the mountains. Those are no places where we can somehow manage with just ourselves.

"Earl Baumeister, your support is indispensable. Excavations cost money." (Arnest)

A large-scaled excavation costs money. A patron is necessary. That's the reason why Arnest cooperated with Duke Nürnberg.

"It seems like you often and generously handed various excavated items to Duke Nürnberg, but you are saying that there's nothing for us because Wendelin-san's support is lacking?" (Katharina)

Even though he provided a large amount of items to the rebel Duke Nürnberg, it's been only dusty and smelly basements for us so far.

Katharina apparently wondered whether Arnest is taking us lightly.

She lived as solo adventurer in order to restore her household before she met us.

So far people probably underestimated and despised her because she's a woman.

For this reason she got angry at Arnest's words and deeds up until now.

She thought that being treated with contempt by the likes of a scholar, even if he's a demon, would stain the good name of herself and her husband as nobility.

"Milady, that is a misunderstanding. This me has only been guiding you to unexplored underground ruins close to Baulburg." (Arnest)

As expected of Arnest, seeing Katharina's attitude, he tried to seriously dispel her misgivings.

"Is that the truth?" (Katharina)

"As for Duke Nürnberg: the underground ruin, where we found the big amount of magic tools and that jamming device, was just by chance located in the Kleim Mountain Range close to the mansion. Until we discovered that one, I investigated several miss underground ruins as I was told to do by Duke Nürnberg." (Arnest)

Now that he mentions it, this guy was several years in Duke Nürnberg's care, wasn't he?

"That Kleim Mountain Range gave the impression that it might be a very huge underground ruin, but hadn't there been any other people who tried to excavate it before Duke Nürnberg?" (Wendelin)

"I heard from the deceased Duke Nürnberg that a quite distant family head of the Duke Nürnberg household carried out a small-scale excavation. After that he apparently coined the family rule 『Do not investigate the Kleim Mountain Range's underground! If you do, it will spell the Duke Nürnberg household's doom!』." (Arnest)

Well, makes sense with that many weapons. The former Duke Nürnberg, who left behind that

family rule, probably prohibited any excavation after this, fearing that his descendants might go on a rampage after obtaining all that weaponry.

"It was impossible for that Duke Nürnberg to obey such a family rule." (Wilma)

As Wilma says, Duke Nürnberg didn't follow the rule and ended up destroying the household.

"Prohibitions and rules from the past often have a proper reason to them." (Elise)

"Be that as it may, milady, if we do not push onwards at such points, neither the humans nor the demons will make any progress." (Arnest)

Elise highly evaluated the family head of the old Duke Nürnberg household who left behind a will for his descendants to not excavate the big amount of ancient weapons. However, Arnest believes that although there had been many victims due to the weapons once they were excavated, they also connect to a long-term growth as the technology will advance if these magic tools are researched after being published in the world. On this point it's nothing more than a difference in opinion between religionists and scholars.

"Katharina, I'm grateful for you worrying about me, but it's still the first day of the exploration. Although it's been only misses so far, discovering this many unexplored underground ruins in one day is unusual. I'm sure an amazing one will appear among them, sooner or later." (Wendelin)

I explained to Katharina to make her calm down a bit.

"Well, if you say so, Wendelin-san..." (Katharina)

Besides, there's one more aspect.

There's no place left for Arnest to go to.

If he escapes to the Empire from here, he will fall under Peter's rule. Peter likely won't hesitate to execute Arnest after extracting only the locations of unexplored underground ruins out of him.

If he executes Arnest, explaining to everyone that Arnest was Duke Nürnberg's accomplice, his approval rating will go up as well.

Even in regards to the Kingdom; the unexplored underground ruins have already been reported.

If he runs away, the Kingdom won't hesitate to order Arnest's elimination by several advanced magicians.

That means Arnest won't survive if he's not of any benefit to the Earl Baumeister household.

There's no way that a man as bright as him hasn't realized that. I think he understands very well that he won't be able to continue with his beloved underground ruin excavations and investigations if it doesn't bring any profit to us or if he runs away.

"Having said that, I sure would like information about an underground ruin that might be of benefit to us." (Ina)

Ina sent a strict look in Arnest direction, telling him with her eyes, "Just so you know, sheltering you isn't for free."

Actually because Arnest was told by Roderich, who has worked out how to pay his sheltering, that he'd like to have some kind of results in the early stages, if possible, Arnest accepted Ina's demand.

"You do have a point in that, milady. Even in the world of excavators, sponsors are important. Well then, this me shall inform you of an underground ruin that ought to be capable of satiating mine desires and Earl Baumeister's wish for profit." (Arnest)

Once Arnest said so, he spread out the old map on the ground and started to try specifying a underground ruin that looks like it might contain treasures from among the many recorded underground ruin locations.

"Hmmm. The traits of underground ruins in the Baumeister Earldom and other areas, including the Empire...has a remarkable difference in cultural style, thus, while also using the traits of the ruins, which had been discovered so far, as reference..." (Arnest)

Arnest examines the old map while mumbling to himself.

"Anyway, I wonder, is such overly convenient underground ruin going to pop up?" (Luise)

"Who knows?" (Wendelin)

"Something like the treasures found in the Demon Forest are the result of Wend's bad luck after all." (Ina)

"Ina, isn't calling it bad luck too cruel?" (Wendelin)

"Be it good or bad, too many things happen around you, Wend." (Ina)

"I can't deny that, I fear..." (Wendelin)

"Ina-chan, that's why the probability for a treasure to appear is high, isn't it?" (Luise)

Luise probably imagines that we will excavate an underground ruin, finding lots of golden and silver coins and jewels, but such riches don't show up so readily.
I wonder what Arnest is thinking about that matter?

"If it is this one, Roderich-dono will be pleased, too." (Arnest)

Arnest stared intently at the old map with its many symbols for a while, but finally he showed us a certain place with an X-mark.

"At the foot of the Greater League Mountain Range?"

That was the location Arnest pointed at. Is there really something like an underground ruin even in such a place?

"Here we will find lots of jewels and coins?" (Luise)

"Milady, it is not that kind of treasure. If a statesman uses it wisely, it is going to have a value going beyond jewels and coins. It is a huge tunnel running through the former Carpchiras Mountain Range, combining the best public works techniques of the Ancient Magic Civilization's era." (Arnest)

A tunnel going through those mountains, huh?

Certainly for normal adventurers that's likely beyond their capacities, but for the Earl Baumeister household it can be called a treasure exceeding money and jewels.

However, Luise had a questioning look, asking 『A tunnel as treasure? In what way?』

"Tunnel? Something like that exists? Carpchiras Mountain Range?"

We didn't remember having heard the name Carpchiras Mountain Range.

"Carpchiras Mountain Range is how it was called during the Ancient Magic Civilization's era. Now it is the Greater League Mountain Range. The first excavation project is this huge tunnel." (Arnest)

According to Arnest's suggestion, we decided the next task to be the excavation of the tunnel said to run through the Greater League Mountain Range, and its investigation.



"Eh? There's something like that close to our territory?" (Paul)

"Seems so." (Wendelin)

"Seems so, he says..." (Paul)

Led by Arnest, who disguised himself to hide his ears, we immediately proceed towards the excavation of that huge tunnel.

The location was the base of the Greater League Mountain Range which is not that far away from Paul-niisan's territory.

Once we showed up in Paul-niisan's Associate Baron Baumeister territory, the development of the territory had advanced considerably, and the population had apparently grown as well.

Paul-niisan's former colleagues from the guard unit were together with him, who came to greet us, after having become his retainers.

"Were there any traces of such a tunnel?" (Wendelin)

"Unfortunately not in my territory. It's not like we thoroughly investigated it, so we might simply have not discovered them." (Paul)

Ottmar-san, who had become the Junior Commander of the Associate Baron Baumeister household, and Sieghard, who is Paul-niisan's sword instructor and captain of the guards, were also present to protect Paul-niisan.

"Even if you say that, it is close-by. If the tunnel can be used, it will be a chance for our Associate Baron Baumeister territory to make rapid progress." (Rudi)

Rudi-san, who comes from a mercantile household, seems to take care of the financial affairs and also serves as butler.

Since this place is located in the countryside, he didn't wear a butler attire like Sebastian though.

"Chance?" (Paul)

"Milord, if we can use that tunnel, it will take a bit more time than a magic airship, but it will become possible to move people and goods at a cheap price. Assuming the entrance area is close to us..." (Rudi)

"We will gain profits by running rest and lodging facilities, right?" (Paul)

If they run drive-in-like facilities since they are close to the tunnel, it might yield them a profit. After listening to the suggestions from Rudi-san, Paul-niisan seems to be expecting quite a bit.

"There is still the problem whether we can really find it and if it's usable once found. Huh? What about Gotthard-san?" (Wendelin)

"That guy is currently leading the reclamation work." (Paul)

"That's an unexpected assignment of personnel." (Wendelin)

From my impression when I met him previously, he seemed to be the type who's strong in martial arts. Given that his way of speaking is quite brusque, I felt like he's not suited to command the fief's residents.

"Although that guy looks like that, he's the most intelligent among us."

Given that he had been born into a Viscount family, he has received a sophisticated education. His way of talking isn't broad-minded, but the residents do their work with a good efficiency without being afraid of him for some reason.

"His way to handle people is surprisingly skillful, you know? Going by just what you see, it only looks like he's lazily giving out the least amount of instructions, though." (Paul)

"Rather than people who talk about this and that, the things needed to be done are easy to understand. Something like that?" (Wendelin)

"Maybe. Wend, go meet mother and father before that tunnel excavation." (Paul)

"Okay." (Wendelin)

"Also... Amelie-sister-in-law-san, Karl and the others as well..." (Paul)

For just an instant, Paul-niisan looked at Elise and my other wives, before continuing. As for Amelie, hmm, I guess, I was busy with various matters after returning to my territory, so I didn't go to meet her yet.

"I also have souvenirs which I bought in the Empire." (Wendelin)

"Thanks for going out of your way despite all the difficulties after being dragged into the civil war."
(Paul)

Afterwards we headed to the completed mansion while guided by Paul-niisan.
Thinking of the future, it has quite the large construction.
Father was immersed in training my nephews Karl and Oskar the sword in the front garden of the mansion.
I'm seeing them for the first time in roughly a year, but I must say, children grow up quickly.
My two nephews had become considerably taller compared to the last time we met.

"Father, Karl, Oskar." (Wendelin)

"Wendelin, huh? Great for you to have come visiting." (Arthur)

"Wendelin-ojisan! Please tell us stories about your time in the Empire!"

"Is it really true that you took very actively part in the war? I want to hear the stories, too."

No matter how much I gloss it over, for my two nephews I'm no more than their father's enemy.
Even so, being idolized like this still felt comfortable.
I probably have to thank Amelie for it.

"Karl, Oskar, that has to wait for later. Earl Baumeister-dono is busy." (Arthur)

It looks like father took my circumstances into consideration.
After he interrupted their chatter, we were immediately guided to the parlor.
If it's a war, a noble has to fight by swinging their sword.
However, those two are still children.
Children love hearing about stories of wars that took place in far away places.
In Japan there are many people who don't approve of that, but children consider tanks and fighter planes cool if they are shown on TV. The festivals at JSDF bases are always crowded with parents taking their children along.
After all there are many adults who love stories about wars where they won without incurring any damages to themselves.
As long as they don't see the mountains of corpses, most people behave like that.

"Karl, Oskar, I'm sorry. I bought souvenirs in the Empire, but the stories have to wait for next time, okay?" (Wendelin)

""Thank you very much."" (Karl & Oskar)

After I pass them their presents, father sends them out of the room.
And, at almost the same time Amelie entered while carrying a tea set.

"It's been a while Earl Baumeister-sama." (Amelie)

"Long time no see, Amelie-san1 ." (Wendelin)

It's a barefaced greeting, but it's really true that it's been a while.

It's for the first time in a year, but it looks like she hasn't changed much.

"Elise-sama, Katharina-sama, Ina-sama, Luise-sama, Wilma-sama, it must have been difficult in the Empire, right?" (Amelie)

Amelie chats them up casually while placing tea in front of Elise.

"It was hard, but it's the duty of a wife to share the hardships together with her husband." (Elise)

"I think that it also deepens the bonds with your husband." (Ina)

"There might be that as well."

"I will follow Wend-sama anywhere, so no problem." (Wilma)

"Thanks to that we are happily acting together like this even after coming back." (Katharina)

With Elise's statement at the beginning, Ina and the others also reply to Amelie while smiling.

"It's very enviable for you to be on such good terms." (Amelie)

Due to Amelie likewise answering with a smile, my stomach starts to hurt.

In the eyes of Elise and the others, Amelie is an eyesore who still continues her relationship with me.

But they don't show those emotions. Probably they are thinking that it would be their loss if they did.

Amelie has skilfully warded them off, too. I think women are really strong-minded.

Only I'm on tenterhooks.

No, I guess it's different.

Every member of the male group was on tenterhooks.

"Oh, those tea cakes are delicious." (Erwin)

"Replenishing a moderate amount of sugar before an excavation is indispensable." (Arnest)

Knowing of the circumstances, Erw immerses himself in wolfing down the sweets that had been served since he doesn't want to get dragged into the cat fight.

Even Arnest, who has no interest in anything besides the tunnel which we are going to excavate from now on, ignored me and drank mate tea while eating tea cakes.

"Uhum! Come to think of it, is there some kind of job today?" (Arthur)

As he probably feels uneasy as well, Father, who's the principal offender as he hitched me and Amelie together, changes the topic while looking at Paul-niisan.

"They say it's the excavation of an old tunnel." (Paul)

Paul-niisan explained to father and the others the main reason why we came to this place today.

"A tunnel from long ago, huh? I'm an amateur, so I don't really know, but is such an ancient tunnel something that stays around without collapsing?" (Arthur)

As a matter of fact, I felt doubtful about that, too.
After all, it's a tunnel from roughly 10,000 years ago.

"Even if it's still around, a tunnel, where you don't know when it might collapse, is of no use to anyone, is it?" (Arthur)

Everyone showed consenting expressions on their faces upon father's comment.

"How about it, Arnest?" (Wendelin)

"Wendelin, he is?" (Arthur)

"An archaeologist I got to know in the Empire. From now on we will work on excavation in the Baumeister Earldom, and he will be the one in charge of that." (Wendelin)

"I see. I hear it's lucrative if you draw a winner from among the underground ruins." (Arthur)

If there's something so wonderful within a territory, it's only natural for the lord to excavate it.
Father seemed to harbor that kind of impression.
As Arnest's disguise is perfect, he most definitely doesn't suspect him to be a demon.

"A normal tunnel would have definitely collapsed, but the tunnel we are going to search for from now on is special." (Arnest)

Arnest shows something like an old leaflet to us.

"It's old paper, isn't it? A leaflet?" (Wendelin)

"To be precise, it is the government's public information during the era of the Ancient Magic Civilization." (Arnest)

For an old paper that's said to be older than 10,000 years to still be around is amazing.
I wonder, was it left in the demon country?

"According to this, 『A huge tunnel making it possible to cheaply send a large amount of people and goods through the Carpchiras Mountain Range』. Earl Ischrubak, who was not only renown for the most famous magic tools in the era of the Ancient Magic Civilization but also in other fields, and Republic Akitsushima, which existed in the current Baumeister Earldom and possessed technological strength that was not inferior to the central nation during that era; given that it is a tunnel dug and sponsored with money as well as technology by those two, it will not collapse in a mere 10,000 years. The entrance has been buried, so searching for it will be difficult." (Arnest)

"Earl Ischrubak, that was the owner of that underground ruin which made us terribly suffer during our adventurer debut fight, wasn't he?" (Erwin)

"Yeah." (Wendelin)

"That amusement park's..." (Erwin)

"Yeah..." (Wendelin)

Naturally Erw remembered it.

Even though that underground ruin was a facility from at least 10,000 years ago, it hadn't deteriorated at all.

Even the amusement park, which is still floating in another dimension, is the same. The 『Preservation』 magic, which had been used, was excellent after all.

If that magic had been used for the tunnel as well, it's very likely that the tunnel can be used right away as soon as we clear away the earth and sand once we find it.

"Of course, this me, who provided the information, will be the first to investigate it." (Arnest)

"Don't worry, I know that." (Wendelin)

It's no wonder that Arnest, who doesn't forget to give a reminder even at times like this, could join up with Duke Nürnberg...I wonder whether it's fine to consider it like that?

However, one thing I can say is 『You do have some nerve』.

"As I don't know whether we will find it in a day, can you please let us stay here?" (Wendelin)

"That's okay with me, but you won't find such a huge tunnel in a day?" (Arthur)

"Sir father, the rough location has been recorded on a map from the Ancient Magic Civilization's era, but it is also a fact that 10,000 years have passed since then. It is very possible that the location has largely deviated from my assumption due to the changes in the terrain and such." (Arnest)

"That sure sounds troublesome." (Arthur)

After obtaining the permission from father to stay here for a while, we depart to the actual site.

"These accelerator, break, gear...hand brake; what are they for?" (Erwin)

It's a slight distance away and I can't use 『Teleportation』 since it's a place I haven't visited yet, thus I decided to head to the actual site, using one of the magic four-wheels we excavated before.

As it was a car that runs with mana and not fuel, Erw does a test drive while looking at the manual. Driver's licenses or such bullshit don't exist in this world. This area is a grassland with no one in sight anyway.

It doesn't matter even if he learns driving by making it move all of a sudden.

Fortunately, or should I say it's because Erw has good reflexes; he was able to drive skillfully in no time.

I also possessed a driver's license in my previous life. I was a paper driver as I had a bit of a blank period where I didn't drive a car, but I should be able to drive normally if I practice a bit.

Unexpectedly it's something the body remembers.

If I don't practice a little bit more, I don't believe that I will be allowed to drive on a Japanese street, though.

"I want to learn it, too." (Luise)

"Let's practice in order."

"The people from the past sure created some handy things."

If you want to call it handy, then it might be, but since it's a kind of car its user-friendliness actually becomes unexpectedly bad if the roads aren't maintained properly.

With the apparent premise that they would be used on bad roads, the vehicles that were discovered in the Demon Forest's underground ruin are mostly those resembling jeeps and large trucks.

If that wasn't the case, it might have been impossible for them to be usable on bad roads or roads that are close to it.

"Wend, it's handy, but I kinda feel sick..." (Luise)

Since the base of the Greater League Mountain Range is mostly untouched no-man's-land, the magic four-wheeler shakes terribly if you make it drive across that terrain.

Since it looks like even Luise feels bad due to motion sickness, it goes without saying that it applies for the others as well.

"The passage of 10,000 years is really cruel. A place that achieved a development competing for the first or second rank on the continent turned into wild nature." (Arnest)

As Arnest wasn't afflicted by car sickness, he worked hard at drawing up a report by himself.

"Arnest-san, you haven't gotten sick at all, have you...?" (Katharina)

Suffering the most of car sickness, Katharina was surprised at Arnest being completely fine.

"In my childhood I had terrible motion sickness. Nowadays I am alright with it." (Arnest)

Arnest doesn't talk overly much about his home, but occasionally he drops some fragments of information.

In the demon country magic four-wheelers have apparently become popular as if it's the most natural thing in the world.

"What do those who get sick do?"

"They take anti-motion-sickness medicine. Do you need one?" (Arnest)

"It would have been great if you had handed it out in advance..." (Katharina)

Arnest passes the medicine around to everyone. Once they swallowed it, all of them were promptly released from their motion sickness.

We also pass the medicine to the members that have boarded the other four-wheeler, the one driven by Erw.

At any rate, it's quite the effective medicine, isn't it?

The demon country seems to be fairly advanced in medical technology, too.

"Wendelin-san, it looks like you haven't gotten sick either." (Katharina)

"I guess it's because I'm driving?" (Wendelin)

I remember that I had awful motion sickness in my childhood during my previous life. And yet it's strange because it vanished when I got my driver's license and started to drive a car myself.

"We have arrived." (Arnest)

We have arrived at our planned destination in around 20 minutes, but the local terrain was nothing more than a mountain slope.

It's impossible to imagine that a tunnel from the Ancient Magic Civilization's era is supposed to sleep below this area that's densely overgrown with many trees.

Given that 10,000 years have elapsed, it's probably been completely buried below the mountain.

"I know that it should be roughly around this area, but please do not ask me where exactly."
(Arnest)

"Is there no other option but to dig up the entire area...?"

Just being able to specify the location to some extent makes it already better than for other adventurers and archaeologists.

While thinking that, I begin working.

However, it's not like all will be fine by recklessly blowing away sand and earth with magic.

First I cut down the large amount of trees crowding the slope with 『Wind Cutter』 and collected them into my magic bag.

"I guess they will serve as firewood and lumber..." (Wendelin)

Next I shaved off the rocks, earth and sand, and stored it away as well.

"Wendelin-san, are you not going to get rid of a greater amount at once?" (Katharina)

"No, if I do that, it might damage the tunnel below." (Wendelin)

Among my friends at university there was one guy who majored in archeology. He said that one must proceed carefully when using heavy machinery during excavations.

If you dig out a large amount all at once, considering it bothersome to go slowly, it could turn out badly with rare remains and artifacts getting broken, causing the archaeologists to clamor about their precious materials being lost.

Still, we might be better off as we are not carefully scraping off the soil with a wooden spatula.

"How boring." (Erwin)

"It's not boring for you and the others, now is it?" (Wendelin)

Katharina, Arnest and I search for the tunnel. Erw and the others entertained the flying dragons and wyverns that occasionally turned up here.

The Greater League Mountain Range is a place that should also be called a quasi-monster domain.

That's why wyverns will show up, thinking that prey has come, if humans kick up a fuss in their

territory.

Compared to other monster domains, the distribution of monsters is irregular, but that doesn't change the fact that this is a monster domain either.

I should probably prepare a method for traveling other than across dangerous mountain roads or via magic airships with their expensive shipping fees, even if that's a safe method.

"The tunnel is finished. Thus, if the Earl Baumeister household maintains it, it will be profitable."
(Wilma)

It's as Wilma says.

People don't move readily if there's no profit to be gained.

"And, this me will be acknowledged, allowing me to increasingly focus on excavation." (Arnest)

Because the tunnel is convenient for me and will enable me to profit from it, and because Arnest wants me to acknowledge further excavations, we are eagerly working here like this.

"Dear, you're also collecting the dug-out earth?" (Elise)

"If it's Roderich, he will likely find some way to make use of it." (Wendelin)

I remembered him talking about there being places he wants fill up before.

If I take it there and use the soil to fill up those places, no useless sand and earth will remain here either.

If we pile it up at some bad spot, I would feel anxious that it might turn into a landslide due to becoming slushy from rain.

"Hmmm. This place is a miss as well." (Arnest)

We tried to dig quite the range until evening, but we didn't find the all-important tunnel.

After deciding to do the rest tomorrow, we leap to the Associate Baron Baumeister territory with 『Teleportation』.

The reason why we didn't use the four-wheelers was because everyone would have doubtlessly become sick due to the bad roads.

Since I have come to the actual place once now, it's no problem as we will be able to instantly teleport on-site starting from tomorrow.

Even though they are valuable, convenient vehicles, I know of the risk of them being hated because the infrastructure has to be improved first. Cars feel very sickening if the roads are bad.

As for other issues, there's also the problem of countermeasures against theft.

I think normally they would be stolen with a magic bag if we left them on-site.

"Looks like it's quite difficult to find that tunnel, doesn't it?"

"The range of the location labeled as roughly being the right place is extensive after all..."

We return to the Associate Baron Baumeister territory and take dinner together with father and the others.

As expected, the menus has improved substantially, turning into something that's no inferior to that of other noble families.

I continue to talk about today's excavation work with father.

"I guess it's because the tunnel is also buried on top of the forests and mountains above it now that 10,000 years have elapsed." (Artur)

"If it hadn't been buried to such an extent, someone would have likely discovered it in the past..." (Wendelin)

"If you manage to make it usable after finding it, I suppose many visitors will arrive in this territory. It's something that would have been unimaginable in my youth." (Artur)

I can't imagine it either.

Father was absorbed in maintaining the small Knight Baumeister territory. He was probably desperate to accomplish that much.

"The current me is really no more than a retired geezer who is supporting Paul who went independent as new feudal lord. I think helping is the most I can do. Come to think of it, what about Klaus?" (Arthur)

"He's behaving obediently..." (Wendelin)

I hired Klaus temporarily after he started a rebellion, but in the time when we had been in the Empire he had received assorted jobs from Roderich, and was apparently focused on only carrying out those. Since he received a large reward in the disturbance with the Margrave Browig household, that must have been sufficient for him.

"It seems Roderich is somewhat keeping an eye on him, but..." (Wendelin)

For a person of Roderich's level, Klaus, who has perpetrated terrible deeds in the past, likely is a person requiring high precaution. Him assigning assorted jobs to Klaus also serves as way to monitor him.

"I think there's no need to worry too much, though." (Arthur)

"Why?" (Wendelin)

"Klaus and I were unable to cooperate, but recently I have become capable of understanding his viewpoint." (Arthur)

According to father Klaus seems to have already fulfilled his ambitions.

"Including the Knight Baumeister territory, the development of the Savage Lands is advancing, and exchange with the outside has started as well. This was his ambition. Being able to calmly think of eliminating me and Kurt as no issue for the sake of this aspiration, that's Klaus." (Arthur)

"So you're saying that he has already achieved his objective?" (Wendelin)

"That man wasn't picky with his methods, but now that he's achieved them, that's the end of it. He's

more intelligent than many others. He's at an advanced age, too, so he should stay obedient from now on." (Arthur)

Father's face turned bitter for an instant.

I suppose that intelligence of Klaus is a part that he doesn't like.

He ended up losing his own son, but the lives of Klaus' grandchildren has improved after becoming governors of new villages.

Maybe father is jealous of his difference in ability with Klaus.

Klaus was able to save his grandchildren, same can't be said about father, who couldn't save his son.

"Either way, that's all in the past now. Klaus and I will grow old and die. However, a tunnel, eh? According to the map it's very probable that it's connected to the Breithilde Margraviate, but I wish it will be helpful for this territory to prosper successfully. Personally, it will likely increase my pocket money, too." (Arthur)

Finishing dinner while holding such a conversation, I go to enjoy the evening's cool in the mansion's back yard.

Outside Erw trained swordsmanship with Karl and Oscar.

"Erw, how it's going?" (Wendelin)

I try asking Erw about my nephews' swordsmanship talent.

"They are actually more talented than you and Erich-san, Wend." (Erwin)

"Hmmm. I don't quite know if the comparison targets are way too bad to make a judgment." (Wendelin)

There's no need to talk about my talent in swordsmanship.

And, the one who exceeds me in being terrible at it is Erich-niisan.

"If they do their best, I think they will be able to reach the third or fourth round in the Martial Arts Tournament." (Erwin)

"That gives me a peace of mind then. I guess their mother's blood is strong in them, huh?"

"I don't think that their blood matters. Even my father was defeated in the second round of the tournament in his youth." (Amelie)

Before I realized it, Amelie stood next to me.

Originally I wanted to talk with her much earlier, but previously Elise and the others were present as well as other onlookers.

In front of us Erw is practicing with my nephews, but right now there's no one else nearby.

I guess this means we can have a private chat.

Elise and my other wives might be considerate of us.

"Arthur-sama practices swordsmanship with them if he has time." (Amelie)

Father has no talent in swordsmanship either, but if it's at the level of teaching them the basics, he

should be able to accomplish that.

"Johanna-sama and I teach them writing and calculation, too. Artur-sama also reached the point where he's capable of calculating with almost no discomfort." (Amelie)

While helping with the Associate Baron Baumeister territory which is still in the middle of expansion, despite having retired, he's training archery and swordsmanship with my nephews. Himself studying albeit being busy to all outward appearances might be owed to him feeling something akin to his own incompetence due to the matter with Kurt.

"I see." (Wendelin)

However, I don't voice out my deduction.
It would be rude towards father.

"But that period will also come to an end in a little while." (Amelie)

"Come to an end?" (Wendelin)

"Yes. Karl and Oskar will be left in the care of my parent's home." (Amelie)

After he becomes an adult, Karl will be given a Knight peerage and assigned a territory in the Baumeister Earldom.

It's planned that Oskar will become the Junior Commander of that newly organized Knight territory to support his elder brother, but it was decided that they will be entrusted to the Meinbach family, Amelie's home, until then.

"Isn't that a bit too early?" (Wendelin)

Leaving children, who haven't even turned ten years old yet, with another family feels premature to me.

"Oh my, didn't you depart to the Savage Lands by yourself when you were much younger, Wend-kun?" (Amelie)

"Even so, I returned home every day." (Wendelin)

"Occasionally you didn't come back either though, right?" (Amelie)

"Yes, there were also days when I camped outside." (Wendelin)

Finally Amelie's tone changed now that it was just the two of us.
I guess she realized that Erw doesn't hear what we are talking about as he's too engrossed in the training.

"It's slightly early, but my father said that it's unconditional." (Amelie)

The new Knight household will succeed the the Meinbach family name.
While it will likewise be a Knight household, it will be set up as something similar to real branch

family. That household will also be blood-related to the Earl Baumeister household. They seem to harbor a sense of impending danger that it must not end in failure, no matter what happens.

"He says, it's because they are getting spoiled by their family...father might have a plan too, but..." (Amelie)

The majority of the retainers and residents will be provided by the Knight Meinbach household. Because they are second sons and below, they should normally be in an unfortunate position, but they will be able to secure a new place where they belong thanks to that completely unexpected opportunity.

"Sounds quite serious." (Wendelin)

I end up thinking that Karl is still quite young, but I guess this is about when he becomes a feudal lord. I felt doubt towards the way father and Kurt handled things during my childhood, but seen from the standpoint of those concerned, it was probably the result of them desperately keep things going.

"Are you going to accompany them, Amelie-san?" (Wendelin)

"No. Because I'm the most likely candidate to pamper them as their mother..." (Amelie)

"But you know..." (Wendelin)

I have a problem with that as it's too strict. After all there are occasionally nobles who end up getting broken by that. I know that very well as I encountered a weird noble in the royal capital before.

"Father has considered that as well and said that he doesn't mind me visiting them once a month. But..." (Amelie)

Traveling once a month to the Knight Meinbach territory that's located on the other side of the Greater League Mountain Range will be difficult. A small magic airship is departing once a week from close to the Knight Baumeister household to Breitburg, but if you further travel to the Meinbach territory from there with a carriage, it turns into an issue of money and time. No matter how much of a small surplus she might have, using close to 200,000 cents per year as traveling expenses to go meet her own children is hard for Amelie. After all she's holding a position of being a freeloader in Paul-niisan's home.

"I think that it's shameful, but father's expectation is for me to simply depend on you, Wend-kun..." (Amelie)

In other words, Lord Meinbach planned for Amelie to not stay here but at my side? If it's me, I can easily drop her off with magic at the times when she's going to meet her children and then pick her up later on. Lord Meinbach has noticed the relationship between me and his daughter, and is planing to use that for his own agenda.

Rather than having her forcibly return home and search for a new marriage partner, it's more lucrative for him to leave her at my side, even if it's in an unofficial position.

It's a thinking that's remarkably aristocratic, but the existence of the Knight Meinbach territory's retainers and residents are heavily weighing down on his shoulders.

That means he will move for the sake of his household, for the sake of his fief's population, even if he has to make use of his own daughter.

"I guess he's more noble-like than my father..." (Wendelin)

"Most recently he's especially worried..." (Amelie)

As the Knight Meinbach territory is small, there's not much left to reclaim anymore. There's a limit in the population it can maintain. They have to send away the excess in people elsewhere.

"They are enthusiastically leaving while saying 『I will make a name for myself in the capital!』, but more than half of them stop staying in touch. It would be great if they were able to make a living there, even if it's in the slums, but..." (Amelie)

She's saying that there might be many who have already died.

Amelie says that there were many times where she saw her father worrying, wondering whether he couldn't do anything about it, before her becoming a bride.

"That's why he says that they must not allow this to fail." (Amelie)

He's going to give Karl and Oskar further education, and make them early on meet with the retainer and village chief candidates as well as the residents, who will follow them, to make sure that they will carry out the management and development of the new territory very efficiently.

For him to be able to send out the excess-residents in the Knight Meinbach territory, the development of the new Knight Meinbach territory has to succeed.

At the same time he's saying that she has to stay with me a lot more so that things don't come to nothing due me changing my mind.

I guess he's capable of offering his daughter to me without any scruples for that sake.

"Sure, it's fine. You can come to my place." (Wendelin)

"Wend-kun, you do have authority, so it would be fine even if you highhandedly refused, you know?" (Amelie)

"It's not that I haven't thought of that either, but..." (Wendelin)

While being toyed with by the rebel army and the liberation army during the Empire's civil war, I saw many nobles becoming desperate to preserve their own territories.

Of course they were also scared of losing their peerage and territory, but at the same time they were very frantic exactly because they were responsible for the lives of their fief's population.

Since I have seen such things, I felt that it would be wrong to refuse her.

"Wherever one goes, it's always difficult, isn't it?" (Amelie)

It's because those things become fetters twining around myself. Because of that I feel like I want to decide whom I love like a feudal lord." (Wendelin)

"Love?" (Amelie)

"Amelie-san, you staying at my side is convenient for me." (Wendelin)

"You have really changed, haven't you? To keep such an old lady at your side..." (Amelie)

"Isn't that fine? After all I'm the one who decided for it to be so." (Wendelin)

"It shall be as you ordered, Earl Baumeister-sama. But, is that alright?" (Amelie)

"Hahaha, I'm Earl Baumeister-sama after all." (Wendelin)

I acted confident in front of Amelie like that, but within less than one hour I ended up doing a beautiful dogeza in front of Elise and the others inside the room that had been assigned to us as lodging.

Well, I guess that's the extent of my authority.

"With the circumstances as mentioned just now..." (Wendelin)

Without mentioning my private feeling that I will be happy if Amelie stays at my side with a single word, I carefully and thoroughly explained that I have to accept her as there are various aristocratic circumstances, and that it's also for the sake of my cute nephews.

Elise and the others listened to my words silently.

Since they aren't saying anything, I feel slightly scared.

"There's no particular reason for me to be against it." (Elise)

"Me neither." (Ina)

"I suppose there's none for me, too." (Luise)

"Wend-sama, you should do as you like." (Wilma)

"That's right. We don't have any reason to interfere either." (Katharina)

"Ooh!" (Wendelin)

I raise a voice full of delight due to the truly unexpected acceptance.

"You might as well say that it feels like it finally happens now after such a long time."

"Indeed. But, since it's unofficial, it would be best for it to be limited to where we can see it." (Ina)

"After all Roderich-san would get troubled before long if 『Earl Baumeister-sama』 slipped out deep in the night to have a tryst with his unofficial mistress."

"There's also the issue of security. It will be troublesome, if something happens to you, Wend-sama. If it's here, the area is as good as uninhabited, and thus the deployment of assassins is poses no problem." (Wilma)

"In short, in our eyes things improved with this situation."

"If I can have you interpret it like that..." (Wendelin)

It was quite the harsh analysis of the circumstances, but I will consider it as something good since they gave me their consent.

It was the effect of doing a dogeza while doing my best.

"Besides, as for Amelie-san, I can consider it as 『I guess it's inevitable』."

"Inevitable?" (Wendelin)

"Yes. On an emotional level it's problematic, but this is an important matter. After all she's going to live together with us in the mansion from now on."

You can't live together with people who you dislike.

There are many noble wives who are in such relationships. Once things turn out like this, the atmosphere in a mansion becomes strained and worsens.

It might be a clear solution characteristic to Elise who's a genuine noble lady.

"Wend, since the relationship with your stepmother is lacking at some parts, I think Amelie-san might take care of those parts." (Ina)

"Ina-chan, something like that is usually called 『onee-san attribute 2』. (Luise)

They have analyzed me in various ways, but 『onee-san attribute』...I wonder where Luise picked up this one.

"But, in that case the same applies for Therese?"

"No. Leaving aside the current Therese, the Therese back when we were in the Empire was no good." (Wilma)

"On top of being troublesome, she irritatingly came on Wendelin-san with a suggestive approach." (Katharina)

The past Therese was harshly criticized by Wilma and Katharina.

Though I have no doubt that Elise, Ina and Luise should think the same.

"However, back when we were in the Empire, eh? What about now?"

"Now she's docile. Nonpoisonous." (Wilma)

"Now that you mention it, I don't feel so bad about her anymore."

The current Therese bought a small mansion in the neighborhood and lived there peacefully. For caution's sake we have deployed some guards, but as there are no visitors from outside, I guess her entertainment is limited to me occasionally visiting for a chat while bringing souvenirs.

"It's probably because Therese also had her social position. The situation in Amelie-san's case isn't that complicated." (Elise)

To me it feels complicated, but if Elise is able to say that, I suppose it means that it's not such a complicated matter.

As expected, noble society is troublesome in various ways.

"I think she won't mind being treated as Head Maid who takes care of household affairs. There are many other nobles who keep their mistress in such a way."

Officially they will have the social status of managing the maids, but in reality they are the noble's mistress. There are many such women.

Given that the social status of the those women's children and their eventually newly born children lies in the power of the noble, who's also the family head, other people can't meddle overly much.

"We have heard the story about Amelie-san from you, dear, and tomorrow there's also the excavation job, so let's go sleep early?" (Elise)

As might expected, I decide to go sleep early in preparation for tomorrow without going to the usual tryst cabin today.

If I were to be too careless at such a time, I will surely get severely scolded by Elise and the others.



"I will do my very best at excavating today as well!" (Arnest)

The next morning we leap to yesterday's spot with 『Teleportation』 and resume the excavation. As usual Arnest was full of energy, but Erw rubbed his eyes while looking sleepy.

"Did you get tired from practicing with Oskar and Karl?" (Wendelin)

"No. Do you remember who's in the same room as me, Wend?" (Erwin)

"Aah..." (Wendelin)

Being responsible for watching him just in case, Erw shared a room with Arnest.

"He continuously wrote and researched something until deep into the night. As it bothered me, I couldn't sleep..." (Erwin)

"Erwin, you are saying something strange there. I just calculated the tunnel's estimated spot in preparation for today." (Arnest)

A map of this area, which had that noted down, was grasped in Arnest's hand.

"Steady analytical study will give birth to huge results in the future." (Arnest)

"That might be true, but..." (Erwin)

"Let me sleep normally," Erw seems unhappy.

Arnest, who has an oddly high tension all by himself, continues to dig at the estimated spot with magic.

In the middle of it flying dragons and wyverns show up sporadically, but all of them were turned into raw materials by Ina's spear throwing, Wilma's sniping, and Luise's and Erw's attacks.

"It would have been really great if Doushi had been here too."

"Also Burkhart-san, I guess."

"Those two are busy right now."

The two had the task to head all over the Kingdom and explain the events in the Empire's civil war. Rather than explanation, it might be more correct to call it a lecturer-like job.

Because it's a world that has a lot less entertainment than Earth, there are many people who look forward to such stories.

Since I'm busy as landed nobility, the two got the short end of the stick as that doesn't apply to them.

Especially Burkhart-san has been asked to do so by Margrave Breithilde and thus he's heading all over the country.

If Burkhart-san's fame rises, it will lead to peace for Margrave Breithilde who employs him.

For a moment there was a plan to have Burkhart-san succeed a peerage, but he himself turned that down.

『What's so sad about it? I have no need for hardships similar to yours, Earl-sama.』 (Burkhart)

Even if he, who has already passed an age of 50, became a noble, it's very unlikely that he would be able to stabilize his own territory until his death.

Since there's also the possibility that it could collapse in the generation of his children, I guess his true opinion is to not do the unreasonable?

"I've gotten pretty tired of this." (Katharina)

Having changed wind magic into the shape of something like a drill, we're shaving off the mountain's slope.

As archaeologist Arnest was good at that spell to begin with, but since it's not such a complicated spell either, the three of us are earnestly digging up the mountain's slope.

Leaving aside Arnest, who isn't bothered by such kind of work, Katharina had apparently reached her limit.

"Katharina-dono, excavation is a chain of plain jobs. However, you will not be able to forget the deeply emotional moment when you manage to excavate something." (Arnest)

"Simple tableware from the past or rusted swords, you mean?" (Katharina)

"How did the ancient people use those tools? Just thinking about that is already fun." (Arnest)

"It's a hobby that really doesn't suit me..." (Katharina)

During my previous life, there was a classmate in the same university who excavated a historic ruin as practice during his summer vacations to obtain the qualifications of a curator.

He seemed to be happy as he enjoyed such things, but as far as I have heard him talking about it, to me at least it didn't feel all that enjoyable.

It can't be helped since this is a difference in personal taste.

"That is regrettable! Ooh! Finally it appeared!" (Arnest)

At a place that was whittled down, just one part of an artificial object, which resembled the framework of a tunnel, emerged and shone in the sun.

At last the ancient tunnel, which has been buried for 10,000 years, showed up.

"However, you never know in the middle of mountains like these, right?"

"In these 10,000 years, sand and earth that collapsed down gathered and turned into a mountain. Then trees grew on top of that. Nature is truly fearsome!" (Arnest)

It's not 『The Foolish Old Man Removes the Mountains』, but since it won't emerge if you don't work at it with the intention to tear down a mountain, albeit a small one, I guess it's only natural that it hasn't been discovered so far.

"Let's move all the earth and sand in front of the entrance away." (Wendelin)

"Understood." (Katharina)

"Katharina, you're suddenly fully motivated, aren't you?" (Wendelin)

"I mean, if something appears, you will be curious about its contents." (Katharina)

Certainly, that might be true as well.

I psyched up myself as well, and then the three of us stored all the earth, trees and sand, which buried the tunnel, into my magic bag.

"Just what absurd amount fits in that thing..." (Katharina)

It's probably because I frequently used magic during the Empire's civil war.

My mana has grown to an extent that's obvious at a glance.

"You possess an amount of mana that is not very common even among demons." (Arnest)

"Having said that, I can't best you though, Arnest." (Wendelin)

"This me played hooky during magic training, but even so I was one of the top five mana possessors

in the demon country." (Arnest)

"Then it's really good that you were able to leave the country."

If you are the owner of so much mana, I don't think that the country will let you go, though.

"That is why I smuggled myself out of the country." (Arnest)

He has ignored even his country's rules for the sake of excavating underground ruins.
In a certain sense, Arnest is a genuine scholar, I guess.

"I will enter at once." (Arnest)

The debris at the entrance had been completely removed.
All that's left is to enter the tunnel.

"There are no monsters or something like that in there, right?" (Erwin)

"There is no reason for that to be the case." (Arnest)

Erw's worry is completely denied by Arnest.
We enter inside while staying on guard just in case, but inside it's dark and one can't see properly.
At once I secure illumination by casting 『Light』.
Erw and Wilma turned on the light in the spare lamps for caution's sake.

"Considering it's been in use 10,000 years ago, it's rather clean, isn't it?"

"That is what I told you. This was a big, national project. Have a look." (Arnest)

Arnest tells me to touch the tunnel's wall, but I recognized its appearance and sensation.
It's made out of concrete.

"Mortar from the past?" (Wendelin)

If I were to mention concrete, Arnest with his good perception might suspect something.
I deliberately use the word mortar.

"It is something close to it. This is called concrete. Furthermore, this is a kind of 『Special Concrete』 that was used for facilities that had to be very sturdy." (Arnest)

"Special means that something has been mixed into that concrete or whatever it's called?"
(Wendelin)

"Earl Baumeister, you are an excellent student. Ah, you succeeded in compounding the Extreme Limit Steel. It is the same here." (Arnest)

In addition to very small doses of orichalcum and mithril, ten kinds of rare earth elements had been mixed into normal concrete. By doing that, they completed a tunnel that didn't break down even after 10,000 years have passed.

"To begin with, Earl Ischrubak had to do with the construction of this. His 『Ultra-Preservation』 magic working is yet another reason why it still stands as is. In addition, reinforcements made out of Extreme Limit Steel should have been added to the concrete, too." (Arnest)

I see. Given that this tunnel is made out special concrete that is reinforced with Extreme Limit Steel bars, it seems to be terribly sturdy.

"In that case it can be used right away?"

"It should be alright to do so. If possible, I would like to investigate it for around a month." (Arnest)

"I don't mind that." (Wendelin)

Even if it might be usable right away, there's no way that we can suddenly open a tunnel. Making the necessary arrangements with the Kingdom, providing illumination as the tunnel's dark, doing a safety check of the entire tunnel, setting up stations to check the tunnel users at the territories on both ends of the tunnel, establishing a guard system, and securing personnel. And, since it would be meaningless if we don't get the noble on the other exit's side to prepare, we also have to consider the other party's convenience, too. If we suddenly announce 『We have opened a tunnel, so please feel free to use it』, it would result in the tunnel being overrun by illegal immigration of smugglers and criminals. This is a job for the administration and civil officials who were often criticized in my previous life, but with so much stuff to do, it will take time.

"I guess we will first proceed as far as we can..." (Wendelin)

"However, it's truly a broad tunnel."

"Five road lanes per side are mentioned in the governments public information." (Arnest)

Once I shone the 『Light』 towards the ground, white lines, which I was familiar with from Japan, were drawn there. In total it's 10 traffic lanes with a width where even large trucks fit easily. In addition they even reserved emergency lanes for broken cars on both sides.

"(It looks like a freeway on Earth...)" (Wendelin)

Since it's something that was built by that Earl Ischrubak and the ancestors of the Mizuho people, I guess it's no wonder if they did it full of motivation.

"By the way, it appears that there is also illumination." (Arnest)

Magic lights were installed on the ceiling in regular intervals.

"Inside those there are probably magic stones, which provide mana." (Arnest)

Additionally ventilation holes to exchange the air inside the tunnel were set up in fixed intervals, too.

"The magic stones to make those move should be installed somewhere," Arnest deduces.

"Indeed..." (Wendelin)

I had already taken out the MHCD and was giving Roderich a report.

『I will send guards over right away.』 (Roderich)

Hearing of the available, huge tunnel, the voice of Roderich through the MHCD was full of joy.

"I leave it to you. We will investigate the tunnel as far as possible in the meantime." (Wendelin)

"Investigate you say, are we going to walk?"

"No, for such times we do have the four-wheelers, don't we?" (Wendelin)

Riding separately on two magic four-wheelers, we proceed deeper into the tunnel. Since it's a perfectly paved road this time, no one became motion sick.

"How pleaaaasant——!" (Erwin)

Erw held out his head through the window while driving and frolicked around by himself.

"Operating the four-wheeler is simpler than I thought." (Luise)

In exchange for me, Luise grabs the wheel of the second car and soon becomes capable of driving it skillfully as she has good reflexes to begin with, following after Erw at the same speed.

"Huh? There's something ahead, isn't there?"

After driving through the tunnel for a while, I confirm ten-odd cars and trucks having been abandoned on the emergency lane.

Once we got off and checked their state, the doors were opened and the keys were still stuck at the driver's seats.

"Arnest, this is?" (Wendelin)

"HmMMM." (Arnest)

Arnest searches his own magic bag and retrieves a bundle of several hundred documents. While swiftly turning them over and reading them, he discovered a certain entry and began to explain.

"They followed the urgent evacuation instructions for times of disasters." (Arnest)

"Urgent evacuation instructions for times of disasters?" (Wendelin)

"If you take refuge in a magic four-wheeler at times of disasters such as earthquakes, there is the possibility of crashing into the tunnel's wall due to the aftershock. Accordingly, they parked their magic four-wheelers on the emergency lane, leaving the keys still inside to make it easier to move those cars for rescue parties and such. It is written that this had been a rule." (Arnest)

"What a strange rule. What would they have done if their expensive four-wheeler was stolen?"
(Erwin)

Erw's way of thinking is common in the current age.
Everyone except for Arnest seems to share the same opinion.

"The civilization during the era of the Ancient Magic Civilization was even more advanced than the one in the current demon country. Exactly because it was a state of emergency, they wanted the citizens to act by certain standards and the majority enacted this. Given that there actually existed an insurance against theft, everyone abode the government's instructions without worrying about it in particular." (Arnest)

"Insurance; what's that?" (Luise)

"It is a system where you will be compensated for your losses in case something happens, if you pay a certain amount of money each month in advance." (Arnest)

"I don't really get it. Isn't it usually better to save money to buy a new one instead of doing this monthly pay thing?" (Luise)

"The money paid monthly is just a small amount." (Arnest)

"In that case I think that there will also be some people demanding funds for a new car after saying their car, which has gotten old, was stolen though..." (Luise)

"I will not say that such people will not exist, but insurances are a system that yields a profit if you manage them smartly." (Arnest)

Luise apparently harbored doubts about the insurance system's structure.
Certainly, on the current Lingaia Continent it might be difficult to run an insurance company.

"Putting aside that system called insurance, they stopped their cars on the emergency lane and evacuated outside the tunnel because something happened. You say the tunnel was buried for some kind of reason after they left?"

"Rather than some kind, it was likely the huge explosion which destroyed the Ancient Magic Civilization." (Arnest)

Arnest explains that there was an explosion due to a failed large-scale magic device experiment carried out by the central state of the Ancient Magic Civilization, resulting in the disappearance of the central state. The civilization collapsed in the following chaos.

"This tunnel was built quite sturdily to have withstood such a huge explosion."

"I imagine that the entrances on both sides had been buried at a relatively early stage. It had been built quite sturdily to begin with, and the 『Ultra-Preservation』 was active as well." (Arnest)

It ended up being buried during the destruction of the Ancient Magic Civilization, and then wasn't restored afterwards due to some kind of circumstances.

I guess that means the amount of debris burying the entrances gradually increased, the number of people remembering the tunnel diminished slowly as well, and in the end it turned into a historic ruin.

"The magic four-wheelers are in a good state as well, aren't they?"

"It was good that the entrances had been blocked as the effect of 『Ultra-Preservation』 also reached the tunnel's space." (Arnest)

As expected, had the magic four-wheelers been exposed to wind for 10,000 years, they would have turned into rubble by now.

Though I suppose they would have been taken away robbers before that.

Almost all the magic four-wheelers that have been parked on the emergency lanes seem to be normally movable.

Their state was the same as back then.

Some are close to new, and there are also worn-out, seasoned trucks.

"I suppose we will leave the retrieval of the vehicles to the guards dispatched by Roderich. Let's move on." (Wendelin)

Thinking that, I'm about to return to our cars. But for some reason only Erw was staring at something through the opened door of a slightly separated car.

"Erw, what's there?" (Wendelin)

"Wend, the books from the Ancient Magic Civilization's era are really amazing!" (Erwin)

What Erw was looking at was something similar to weekly colored magazine.

A magazine close to Friday or Focus in Japan, which wrote about the love life and nightly affairs of celebrities, the corruption of politicians and nobles, and also had the typical page with nude and swimsuit-wearing model pictures.

"How magnificent. To not take that along would be a waste." (Erwin)

Erw was entranced with the nude pictures in the magazine he had found.

It was left inside the car, but I guess the car owner didn't consider the magazine to have that much value to take it with them during the evacuation.

Well, even in Japan it was something you'd throw away immediately after reading it.

"It is a cheap magazine. They also exist in the demon country." (Arnest)

Arnest says while peeking into the magazine from behind Erw who's zealously staring on the nude model.

"They also exist in the demon country?" (Wendelin)

"However, nude photos are prohibited." (Arnest)

"Why?" (Wendelin)

"A women movement was naggy about it. Saying something about it infringing the rights of women." (Arnest)

Somehow that's a story I have heard somewhere before.

"Since half of the voters are women, the politicians have to consider them appropriately, too. In addition a movement towards banning sex services has also started since a few decades ago. A part of the intelligent men are raising appeals that this is the very cause of declining birth rates, but seeing as it is difficult to verify that claim, people, who run illegal brothels or release shady publications in the underground, have appeared once the authorities started to regulate those things. These kind of problems are issues that are extremely difficult to resolve since ancient times." (Arnest)

That's truly a story I have heard somewhere before.

"Erw, take it with you and look at it at home." (Wendelin)

"I'm looking at it here because I can't take it home." (Erwin)

Haruka not participating in this time's excavation is owed to her preparations for the marriage ceremony.

Erw has the job of guarding me, and so he entrusted the preparation to her.

"If it's only that much, you should be able to take it back and look at it normally, no?" (Wendelin)

"No! I will be scolded by Haruka-san!" (Erwin)

"Just how much does she have you under her control..." (Wendelin)

"Wend, I'm not being controlled by her!" (Erwin)

It's no wonder that I think that to be the case, seeing that he will be scolded by his wife for just looking at erotic pictures, right?

After all, someone like me...ah, I guess I don't really need something like erotic pictures.

Telling Erw to quickly get on the magic four-wheeler, I try to leave this place.

"Wend, you are also scared of Elise and the others, aren't you?" (Erwin)

"No way, what are you saying all of a sudden..." (Wendelin)

This me, who has become an Earl and who possesses five wives and one mistress, is scared of women?

By no means. I really think that I don't need something like erotic photos.

"Wend, are those your true feelings?" (Erwin)

"Isn't that obvious?" (Wendelin)

"This magazine writes about a special cosplay edition for this week's release...I don't understand the

meaning of the word cosplay, but somehow it sounds fun." (Erwin)

"As feudal lord I own the right over artifacts. Erw, if necessary, you will borrow it from me."
(Wendelin)

Since it piqued my interest a bit, I decide to set it aside just in case.
After all it might actually have some literary value.

"Roger." (Erwin)

I quickly store the magazine into my magic bag and then we depart further into the tunnel.
Of course the matter with the ero-book is a secret from Elise and the others.

"What a long tunnel."

While only depending on the lights of the magic four-wheelers, we head deeper into the tunnel.
Given that abandoned vehicles, which had been left on the other lanes besides the emergency lanes,
gradually became more frequent, I told Luise to drop the driving speed.
We have already advanced roughly 480 km in a half day at an average speed of 40 km/h.
I think it's proper to call it a long tunnel, but if you walk across the mountain roads of the Greater
League Mountain Range, the way in one direction takes around half a month.
I guess you can call that only natural.

"I see it." (Arnest)

Finally we discovered a door, which had a sign stating 『Only authorized personnel』, at the tunnel's
side.

"I will open it." (Katharina)

Once Katharina opens the door with the 『Unlock』 spell, using it for the first time in a while, we
find a huge magic crystal and several peripheral devices inside.

"It is not out of order. If you supply mana, as you see..." (Arnest)

Once Arnest pours mana into the empty mana crystal, it immediately recovers its crimson
brightness.
When we leave the room, the magic lights and ventilation devices inside the tunnel have come back
to life.

"Indeed, with this the tunnel has become really bright."

As expected we were exhausted after being crammed into a car for half a day.
We camp just like that on that day, and once again resume driving with the cars on the next
morning.
The destination is the exit on the opposite side.

"Driving it is simple, and not as complicated as riding a horse." (Wilma)

In the eyes of Wilma, who had become capable of handling a magic gun and doing simple maintenance on it, driving the magic four-wheeler doesn't seem to be overly difficult. She switched with Erw, but is likewise steering it skillfully.

"Mmh? The engine stalled?" (Luise)

"That's odd..." (Katharina)

"If you change the gear, you have to let go of the clutch a bit more slowly." (Luise)

On the other hand, Katharina, who changed with Luise, frequently caused the engine to stall at the beginning.

There appears to be no automatic transmission in these magic four-wheelers.

Given that I only drove automatic cars in my previous life, I recalled that I caused the engine to stall a few times at the beginning.

"Like this?" (Katharina)

"Yeah, that's right. You don't have to be flustered since stalling the engine is nothing particularly significant either. If you have driven for a while, you will get used to it." (Luise)

"Okay." (Katharina)

At first she was bewildered, but even Katharina became able to drive the car normally in no time.

"But, it's truly a long tunnel, isn't it?"

Since Katharina had gotten used to driving, she switched with Ina next.

Given that she has the same good reflexes as Luise, she was immediately able to drive normally.

"We are going to come out in the Breithilde Margraviate, right?"

"According to the map Arnest created while referencing the documents, that seems to be the case."
(Wendelin)

Sitting in the passenger seat, I check back with the handwritten map.

It's close to a region of small, mixed fiefs in the east, but according to the calculations, we should come out at the base of a mountain located in the Breithilde Margraviate. If it's him, the various negotiations and formalities shouldn't pose much of a problem even on the opposite side of the tunnel.

"We arrived." (Katharina)

"We will wait here for a while, correct?"

If we remove the debris on the other side all of a sudden, it might cause many troublesome issues. Hence we have decided to wait here until the guards dispatched by Roderich finish their examination and the collection of the magic four-wheelers. There rest will be a job I will carry out together with Arnest and Katharina.

"Just in case it's necessary to confirm that it's safe."

Therefore just the three of us will now go back through the tunnel.

While casting spells such as 『Detection』, 『Sensing』 and 『Probe』 on the way, we started to check whether there are no damaged parts and internal cracks in the tunnel.

"Nothing less of Earl Ischrubak, a splendid construction work." (Arnest)

Arnest examined the tunnel's state by using an original sonar-like magic.

This spells seems to belong to the wind attribute. Besides darkness magic, which manipulates someone's mind, he's apparently good at wind magic.

He told me that it's his most useful spell during historic ruin excavations.

"I can use some earth and water magic, too. Fire is of no use to this me. It is at the level of starting a fire during camping." (Arnest)

Except for darkness, which is the special magic of demons, he hasn't learned anything but spells necessary for excavations.

In a certain sense it's also a fresh way of thinking.

"Milord!"

Once we have almost returned to the middle of the tunnel's length while investigating, Thomas and Nikolaus show up while leading several hundred guards.

"I see, this is indeed an amazing, ancient ruin."

Thomas seems to be the guard captain and Nikolaus serves as his vice-captain.

Ordering the soldiers, they immediately carried out the work of collecting the vehicles.

"Did the personnel increase again?"

"Yes. The Baumeister Earldom is growing rapidly after all."

New retainers are constantly hired, and they are assigned jobs in accordance to their abilities and personalities.

There are many places that have to be protected. Since public order is slightly bad because of the many new settlers, the organization of the guard unit and the feudal army took priority.

"Nowadays we are treated as seniority."

"By now we have an overwhelming number of juniors."

"Even Roderich, the most senior one among us, has been serving for less than five years."

Thomas' and the others' continuous service isn't much shorter than that of Tristan's group.

"Be that as it may, such a huge tunnel, huh? It looks like guarding it will be difficult."

"We still haven't removed the debris at the exit. Once that's done, we will have to settle things such as ownership ratio and the sharing of guarding and administrative responsibilities, but do as much as you can for now." (Wendelin)

"Ah, there's the allotment of ownership, eh? But, won't the negotiations be easy if it's Margrave Breithilde-sama?"

The tunnel goes through the Greater League Mountain Range.
If one were to speak about the owner of that mountain range, it's pretty much set in stone.
South from the summit it's the Baumeister Earldom. The rest belongs to the Breithilde Margraviate and some nobles of an alliance of smaller feudal lords.
However, the Greater League Mountain Range itself has difficult mountain roads, and serves as dwelling of flying dragons and wyverns. In addition there are also many ferocious wild animals.
If you were to ask which noble is actually exercising their rule, the answer would be: none.

"Half each with Margrave Breithilde-sama then?"

"We are the discoverers. Even at lowest, we will claim the part until the power room."

The room with the magic crystal that acts as energy source for the magic lights and air condition inside the tunnel. That one is important, so we must not yield its ownership.

"Then let's hurry up and put the rule in practice." (Thomas)

Probably because of their experience in the dispute with the Margrave Browig household, Thomas understood very quickly.

While helping with the tunnel checking and collecting the abandoned vehicles, we are actively taking the tunnel under our control by positioning guards. At the same time the guards practiced driving the four-wheelers.

"I'd like to deploy these to some extent."

"We will definitely do that."

Because the tunnel is too long, they won't be able to cope in an emergency situation if they don't move by car.

Using horses would be fine as well, but that would take time.

"I guess it's finally time to dig out the exit."

Three days after Thomas and the guards came, the tunnel was judged to be completely safe.

Guards have been deployed at the entrance and various other places. They go on periodic patrols with the magic four-wheelers.

The guards have even put their hands on the power room with the magic crystal. At last we began to dig out through the sand and earth at the exit.

"No matter how much I dig, and dig, and dig...sand and earth keeps flowing in..."

A huge amount of sand and earth has piled up above the exit in 10,000 years. It might have turned

into a mountain.

I put all of it into magic bags, and go to pass all of it, including the part that covered the entrance, to Roderich.

"Let's use the sand and earth to fill up where necessary." (Roderich)

Roderich proceeded with the plan of the filling up work.

After leaping with 『Teleportation』 on-site, I put the piled-up sand and earth into my magic bag. The trees will be bought by merchants for lumber.

Thanks to the massive demand for constructions, there's never enough lumber around. The merchants bought all of it happily.

"We have no other choice but to keep digging while being cautious to not get buried alive."

Once we remove sand and earth on the exit's side, more of it streams into the hole, returning it all to its original state.

This repeated itself for a while, but at last sunlight shone through the exit.

"It's sunlight!"

With the tunnel opening, everyone is deeply moved by the light that leaks in.

"I will make a path."

Once I got rid of another big amount of debris, it became apparent that the accumulated sand and earth on the exit's side had also turned into a mountain.

After removing all of it, the tunnel was reopened at last.

"It's open, but..."

"How very quiet..."

Luise, who left the tunnel aiming to be the first to get out, can't hide her surprise due to the scenery spreading in front of her.

It's because that place is a rural farming region, seemingly located in the mountains. Several farmers were carefreely plowing their fields.

"Oh dear! Just when I thought that the mountain's slope had suddenly vanished, it next turned into a cave."

"We gotta inform the Lord of this."

"Those people are underground dwellers?"

They are surprised by the suddenly opened tunnel. One of the farmers runs at a great speed to call their lord.

"Huh? This isn't the Breithilde Margraviate, is it?" (Wendelin)

"Milord, maybe it's an area managed by a governor?" (Thomas)

Thomas, I and the others can't hide our surprise due to the rural area outside the tunnel's exit. For some reason or another I had a bad premonition, but that I would be dragged into the characteristic troubles of nobility again was something I couldn't imagine at that moment in time.

Untranslated Extra – Illustration:



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