



Thus I leaped to the capital on the following day with 『Teleport』. Today Amalie-san is with me, in exchange for Lisa who can't use 『Teleport』, now that she's pregnant.

"It's been quite a while since I last visited the capital."

Amalie-san isn't wearing her maid clothes this time because she's going to accompany me to a meeting with Minister for Economic Affairs Göpel in the royal palace. He's a new minister who has just recently taken over the post from his predecessor. A plump man in his forties, giving me the vibes of a shopping district chairman.

"So, just as I've told you, that's the current situation."

"Him again...? That youngster..."

Once I explain the circumstances to the minister, he clicks his tongue, starting to grumble about Alban.

"Again...you say?"

"Yes, indeed. I have no idea how highly that youngster estimates himself, but he has caused similar problems on various occasions."

Claiming to be offended by the other party, he'd leave the meetings after angrily exclaiming, 『We won't sell any masonry products to your territory』. Several such cases had been reported to the minister.

"The craftsmanship of the masonry goods in the Viscount Madson territory is of an overwhelmingly high quality. Obviously, since they have to make a living from processing the great amount of stones in their territory, seeing how little farming land the territory has..."

In the past, the Viscount Madson territory was so poor that they'd be frequently plagued by starvation as soon as a drought hit their lands. It was only when they deliberately reared and protected masonry artisans that the Viscount family started to become rich.

Minister Göpel explains that none of this counts as Alban's achievement.

"That's why it'd be the best for Dennis to succeed. The other moron is beyond any help!"

Dennis is the half-brother who stood behind Alban back then, right? I guess, the elder brother has the better evaluation of the two.

"It sure sounds like you're well-informed about their circumstances."

"I'm an authority in the economic faction after all. Anyway, it's going to be a problem for the Viscount Madson territory."

No matter how skilled their artisans might be, at this rate no customers are going to buy their merchandise with such a new Viscount Madson. And if the masonry business dies out, the Madson territory will revert to being the same poor territory it was before.

"The surrounding territories won't be able to ignore this issue either, once refugees flood their lands to escape famines in the Madson territory. In the first place, masonry goods aren't essential for one's daily life, unlike food!"

Why are masonry decorations used as signs at roadsides, or as balustrades of bridges? It's because the Kingdom and its high-ranking nobles see it as part of the economy. If they flag masonry goods as unnecessary and stop buying them, demand would decline, resulting in the money flow ceasing.

Hence, even if the masonry products might only count as extra expenses for the Kingdom and the nobles, they still use them, enabling masonry artisans to make a living with it. It's nothing you could simply cut down just because it's pointless.

However, if they'd need to deal with unprofessional business partners, it'd be only reasonable for the nobles to stop doing business with the masonry crafters.

"The Baumeister Earldom's development is sponsored by the Kingdom. Because you've been prioritizing speed to some extent, it's logical for you to believe that it'll be fine to install masonry products when you manage to obtain them. I mean, it's not like a bridge can't be used just because it has no masonry added to it. Still, if that stupid blockhead keeps this up, Madson's masonry artisans are going to be out of work soon!"

Indeed, I don't need to force myself to buy the masonry products from the Madson territory because I can patiently wait for other territories to provide me with what I need. For the Baumeister Earldom which is currently going through a phase of a large-scale development, it won't pose much of an issue to have many bridges and roads without any masonry. After all, it doesn't really matter whether masonry is present or not.

"Because you've promised us that you'll definitely add masonry products as soon as you can get the necessary supply, you won't hear any complaints from me, Earl Baumeister-dono. Rather than that, the problem here is the Madson territory."

"Do they have a patron?"

"It'd be so easy if they did... A patron could apply enough pressure to make Dennis succeed. Well, we've got no choice but to come up with another way..."

With this, the short meeting comes to an end, and Minister Göpel leaves, deep in thought. He's probably thinking about some kind of measure against Alban.

"Let's go, Amalie-san."

"Gladly."

Next up is my promise to meet with Erich at his mansion, but there's still some time until he comes back home after having finished work. Accordingly, Amalie-san and I use this opportunity to enter

a coffee shop with just the two of us for the first time in a long while.

I've made sure to not get exposed as Earl Baumeister by changing into clothes generally used by commoners.

"A mate tea, and today's recommended cake set."

"I will take the same."

We immediately call a waitress over and make our orders.

"I wonder what we look like to those around us?"

No idea. It's not like there were no lovers and married couples with this much of an age gap back in Japan. If it's this world...well, I suppose calling us sister and her younger brother would be the proper approach.

"A sister and her little brother? Or, if I were the wife of a high-ranking noble, you'd be my young lover?"

I hear that a certain number of noble wives, who finished their duty of rearing children, surround themselves with younger men. Usually that's the kind of relationship when you occasionally spot an elderly, noble lady being accompanied by a young, handsome man. It might be somewhat similar to the woman having fallen for a host.

Because many of those ladies' husbands rather keep their young wives or lovers company, their husbands often approve of their wives' infidelity as long as they don't give birth to any children. I don't have any such wives around me, though.

Especially in Elise's case, she'd be harshly criticized if she ever did something like that because of her family's strong ties to the church.

"Amalie-san, our ages are not that far apart, okay?"

"I suppose, you're right...then it's going to be a sister with her little brother, after all."

Figures. Come to think of it, since I've talked a lot more with Amalie-san than with Kurt, calling her a big sister doesn't sound that wrong to me.

"Wend-kun, it's nothing you need to worry about." Amalie-san gently admonishes me.

"I'm not really worried..."

"Then it's fine. In the end, the opinion of others doesn't matter anyway."

"Yeah..."

Amalie-san seems to be worried that I might pay undue attention to Alban's insults. But am I really doing that?

The retard tried to get along with me by saying that we're similar, but I can't agree with that since we differ in too many things. Going by the outcome, I've killed my older brother. Is Alban also about to kill his half-brother? But, the premise is completely different here.

It's not like I'm worrying about it so much that it'd make me feel depressed, but it still got stuck in a corner of my mind after being told all that.

I think that's pretty much describing how I feel about it.

"It just made me think about various things, but brooding won't resolve anything. It's all a matter of the past now, too."

"Indeed."

It's just as Amalie-san says. Thanks to Alban's insults, I've also brooded over various matters from the past, but it's not like thinking about is going to change anything, right? As it's already done and over with, rewriting the outcome isn't possible anymore.

"That's why I said, you don't need to worry about it."

"Okay."

I feel like her saying this took a weight off my heart. Moreover, it gradually woke in me the urge to get my revenge on that retard. That asshole has called Amalie-san an old woman.

"Ah, however..."

"Mmh?"

"I feel that I did something bad to you, Karl and Oskar..."

It's what I somehow feel, but once I actually voice it out, I cannot help but believe that I've said something terrible.

"You did?"

"Going by the outcome, I've destroyed your family with my actions."

Amalie-san living separated from her children right now is because of me.

"Oh, so that's your take on this...but, you don't need to mind it."

"Why?"

"I don't know what my two boys might be feeling deep down. Even though they seem to idolize you. But, as an awful woman, I like my life as it is right now."

"Really...?"

"The people around me might consider me to be a terrible woman, but I like my current life, so you don't need to worry about me."

"Okay, I understand."

I feel like her words give me some more peace of mind.

"Amalie-san, should we move on then?"

"Sure, let's do that."



We leave the coffee shop, and head over to a store. Actually, I've been asked by Elise and the others to get something for them.

"Underwear for pregnant women...I wouldn't be able to buy that out of embarrassment...if you weren't with me..."

Although no one besides me can actually do this, I wouldn't really want to enter an underwear shop by myself... Just Amalie-san being with me is already a big help.

"No need to be embarrassed about it, Earl Baumeister-dono."

"Wha-!?"

Once we enter a high-class underwear shop which is famous even in the capital, we run into Lukas Götz Beckenbauer, the director of the sorcery guild's research division. He's a genuine pervert who summoned Ina and Luise's underwear through a magic circle...well, to be precise, it's been me who summoned them with my magic, I guess...

"Come to think of it, you mentioned last time that your home ran an underwear shop, didn't you?"

It might be the reason why he's so strangely well-informed about underwear.

"Indeed. My older brother had inherited this store."

"Okay, so why are you here today?"

"I'm helping out."

He used past tense back there because his big brother suddenly passed away a few days ago. Moreover, he left no children behind, resulting in Mr. Beckenbauer's second son taking the shop over as inheritor.

"A new owner quickly taking over is fine and all, but my son is still a youngster, and various

problems have cropped up. Thus my wife and I help out like this on our off-days."

"Is that so...?"

This guy's knowledge about underwear is truly deep, but he's still somewhat a pervert, so yeah...

"It's the underwear for pregnant women your wives had ordered, right? They're ready for you to pick up."

Or rather, this guy is even fully aware that it's underwear ordered by my wives.

"I merely remembered it by chance because the order was so big." After explaining himself, Mr. Beckenbauer spreads out one piece of underwear after the other in front of me so that I can check their quality.

Well, as might be expected of him, his handling of the underwear is skillful, but that still doesn't change me regarding him as nothing more than a perverted geezer. It's clear proof that the first impression plays a big role among humans.

"That's all. Also, are you possibly going to buy underwear for the lady over there as well?"

"Yes."

He might be a pervert, but he's not bad as a businessman. Noticing that I might feel bad about leaving only Amalie-san out of the loop after having bought underwear for all my other wives, he uses that opportunity to immediately encourage me to buy her some underwear as well.

"Eh...? I don't really need any."

"Just regard it as thanks for today, okay?"

Given that I'll also have a benefit from it as the one who's going to see her underwear later, it's no loss for anyone.

I ask Mr. Beckenbauer to recommend some underwear to her.

"Since she will need to try them on, I'll leave this part to my wife. Sweetheart!"

"On my way. Oh, welcome Earl Baumeister-sama. Thank you for always relying on our shop."

Given that it's not like I can watch Amalie-san changing her underwear either, I leave the rest to Mrs. Beckenbauer. They have a dressing room, which Mrs. Beckenbauer uses to have Amalie-san try on various pieces of underwear.

"Isn't this a bit too bold?"

"Around this much exposure will please your husband."

"It's rather skimpy though..."

"Madam, this type of underwear is currently in fashion in the capital. Also, this year's popular color is black."

"Black? But I like white..."

"If you always wear the same color, your husband will get bored of it."

Even just listening to them talk, Amalie-san enjoys herself...not. It sounds like Mrs. Beckenbauer is recommending her fairly bold underwear.

"Earl Baumeister-sama, we've finished choosing."

"Very well, please bring me the bill."

"Certainly. Thank you for your continued patronage."

Deciding to leave the fun of finding out what underwear Amalie-san has chosen for later, I pay the bill.

"Earl Baumeister-sama, you're always welcome to come back here when you get a lot more wives."

Mrs. Beckenbauer's remark makes me flabbergasted. I mean, I'd rather not get any more wives.

"Earl Baumeister-dono, thank you for the purchase."

"No problem, but anyway, how are things proceeding with your magic circle?" I ask Mr. Beckenbauer about the research of the magic circle that used my mana to summon all kinds of things.

Dude, isn't that actually your real job?

"Improvements of magic circles like that one only proceed if you pile up an astronomical amount of trials and errors. So far I haven't made much progress at all. The way ahead is still long."

Despite his research not progressing, Mr. Beckenbauer doesn't look like he minds it. I feel like this guy actually has a fairly decent character, seeing how he helps out in the shop under these circumstances.

"Leaving that aside, Madam, the underwear you bought today has the feature to adjust to the sagging of your breasts and butt as you get older. Please make use of it by any means..."

"They aren't sagging that much yet!"

"Dear, why must you always say one comment too much!"

Once again, Mr. Beckenbauer went too far by blurting out something unnecessary, earning himself a double slap by Amalie-san and his wife. Yep, it's good that this guy hasn't inherited the underwear shop.

