

Chapter 5 - Big Brother and Little Brother, Little Brother and Big Brother

"Milord, today I'd like you to meet with a certain noble, if you could spare some time..."

The bellies of my wives have recently grown quite conspicuously. I spend every day being totally hyped hoping that my children might be born soon...and at the same time praying that the deliveries take place without any complications.

While I'm torn by such mood swings, Roderich shows up, informing me that a certain noble is requesting a meeting.

"The successor?"

"The family's head is sickly, resulting in the heir acting as his representative. In reality, you could essentially describe him as the current family head."

I suppose it'd be impolite if I don't personally meet with him, if he's basically the family head. Nobility is pretty much a pain when it comes to issues of status and honor.

"Is he one of our relatives?"

"He's the son and heir of the Viscount Madson House."

"I see..."

Well, even after asking, I've got absolutely no clue who's that supposed to be... My head still tends to heavily incline towards the thinking of a Japanese. Rather, noble names such as Konoe, Mushanokouji, or Imadegawa would probably be easier for me to remember.

Come to think of it, there are samurai in Mizuho, but none of them end their sentences on ~deojaru, or could be described as court nobles with white make-up and blackened teeth as they appear in TV dramas. Since I'd have likely become rude by bursting into laughter, if the samurai over there were like that, it's good that I've been spared from that embarrassment.

"He asked whether he could have around 30 minutes of your time for some light gossiping."

"I don't particularly mind if it's around that long, but why would he visit me for something like that?"

"It's because the territory of Viscount Madson is famous for its masonry..."

If one were to ask what makes masonry so important, it's the finely chiseled stone sculptures installed on top of bridge guardrails, or on roads to serve as distance markers.

A modern person might instinctively ask, 『Are those really necessary? Wouldn't it rather save on costs to do away with those things?』, but the common sense in this world dictates that architectural structures look bad without them.

The Viscount Madson territory has little agricultural land since it's full of rock mountains, but they're making good profit with the masonry that uses the stones they can easily procure locally. The stone quality over there is very good, and many exceptional artisans use those for their works.

The Baumeister Earldom also possesses an abundance of stones that can be used for stone pavings and buildings. However, we lack the craftsmen to process those stones. Even though we're trying to recruit such craftsmen left and right, there are still limits as to how many we can get. In the end, we've got not much choice but to nurture our own masons by having young, inexperienced crafters apprentice under retired, elderly masons.

In lieu, it means that we have to buy all the masonry works from the Madson territory until our craftsmen are far enough to stand on their own.

"Viscount Madson and his family have their own circumstances to worry about, too."

"Circumstances?"

"Yes, that place is in the middle of a dispute over the succession."

Tentatively, the oldest son, who's going to meet me today, has apparently been appointed as successor by the old Viscount Madson. However, it looks like he has an older brother who was born by a concubine.

"In that case, he'd ultimately be the only candidate for the inheritance, wouldn't he?"

In this world bloodline plays a very important role for the succession of noble houses. Unless there are some very extraordinary circumstances, it's set in stone for the eldest son of the first wife to inherit the peerage and land.

Still, if you look at the Browig Margraviate, it's obvious, when people disagree, it will develop into a dispute.

"For this reason, the heir wants to enjoy a good chat with you, milord, for the sake of thwarting the succession struggle at its root."

"Ah, as in getting some prestige to his name..."

Something like 『In fact, it's a meeting between two family heads, right?』. Or in other words, I'm supposed to give the heir his much needed legality.

"I've understood the circumstances now. Anyway, there must be some benefit in this for us, like getting a discount on masonry products or some such, right?"

"Yes, that goes without saying."

Nothing less of Roderich. It looks like he's negotiated with them in advance, procuring some nice benefits for the Earl Baumeister House. I mean, even I don't have the spare time to meet people for free.

In the first place, it's unthinkable that Roderich, who's stricter than me in such matters, would make a mistake in the negotiations.

"To be honest, that heir has a reputation for not being the brightest in scholarly abilities."

I've heard that houses with a reasonable standing have relatives and retainers run the territory's administration, treating the family head as a figurehead, if said family head isn't overly smart. This might be a similar case.

"I guess that means the sickly family head wants to give his stupid heir a chance to get some achievements, huh?"

Fully grasping the father's love for his son, Roderich skilfully used it to make some profit out of the situation.

Man, I gotta say, it's nice and easy to have Roderich take care of such things. Stupid figureheads rock.

"The audience is scheduled to last for two hours."

"Got it."

I swiftly proceeded with my preparation for the upcoming meeting, but at this point, I ran into a huge problem.



"Dear, it's impossible for Ina-san, Luise-san, Katharina-san and me to be present during the audience."

"Eh? Why?"

"Because our bellies are too big."

It's an audience for the sake of giving the other party some prestige, but it's somewhat of a custom to appeal that both sides share a close relationship by having the wives attend on such occasions. In reality, we don't know what kind of character the heir of the Viscount Madson House might have, though.

However, Elise refuses to attend the meeting. It's the same for Ina, Luise, and Katharina.

"Wend, it's normal for a husband to not have his wives appear publicly once their bellies become too big."

In this regard, the common sense of this world rather than the common sense among nobility comes into play. The assessment that it's bad for pregnant women to appear in public doesn't make much sense to me, though.

And although Ina informs me of it, she doesn't seem to understand the reason behind it either.

Maybe it originates from an old-fashioned folklore that pregnancy is impure, or the idea that it's very likely for a miscarriage to occur if a pregnant woman strains herself too much. Either way, Elise and the other three won't be able to sit in as their bellies stand out too much now since they've become pregnant first.

"What about you, Wilma?"

Wilma's belly is still small. She should be able to attend without any problem.

"Hm——m, difficult."

"Why?"

"I actually know the heir of the Viscount Madson House. It will definitely turn into a fight if we meet."

"A fight?"

Did something happen between them in the past?

"During my childhood, I had some arguments with him when he stayed at their mansion in the capital by chance."

Wilma was apparently ridiculed by him to be taciturn, unsociable, and gross during her childhood. After all, you can say that it's quite normal for stupid boys to tease girls, or he might simply be a guy with a bad character.

Hm——m, it's kinda difficult to judge which applies here.

"Since it's a story from my childhood, I won't say that I have any hard feelings left, but it might become an issue if I meet him again."

"Makes sense..."

Or rather, I'm going to have an audience with such a rude guy? While wondering whether that doesn't qualify as a bit of a problem, I gently stroke Wilma's head.

"I feel a touch of anxiety, but...maybe that guy has improved now that he's an adult..."

"He's evaluated to be an idiot because he hasn't."

"Figures..."

Wilma's way of talking is quite sharp, but she's not wrong about what she's saying. Now I've become slightly worried.

"In that case, the ones available would be..."

"It would be better for me to not meet with such an unpleasant fellow."

Of course it'd be impossible for Therese...

"Hubby, assuming that guy is really rude, it'll definitely be a bad idea for me to meet with him as I'd likely lash back at him right away."

Katia, no matter how much you don't want to meet with him, I think it's sneaky to use the reason that you'd immediately snap.

"That means, I'm left?"

"I think you'd be the safest choice here?"

Lisa is experienced as the oldest among us, and as long as she doesn't wear that outfit and make-up, the probability of her going on a rampage is close to zero. She might be able to deal with him skilfully as the wife of a noble.

"Rather, why do we have to worry so much over this anyway?"

"Ugh...I'm terribly sorry for causing you distress."

Even Roderich has probably agreed to the meeting with me only because he considered the possibility of the masonry trade being stopped if we dealt badly with the other party, but it looks like he's gradually becoming uneasy himself.

"If Lisa-san attends, it might alleviate some tension if I'm next to her as a maid?"

Amalie-san, I can fully understand the idea behind your words. It might be safer for many women to be present.

"You're probably right. I'll leave it to you then."

"But...somehow I have a bad feeling about all this."

I felt so as well, and in the end those worries turned into reality.



"It's a pleasure to meet you. I'm Alban, the one designated to become the next Viscount Madson."

"(Designated? Ah, by his father, eh...?)"

As soon as the appointed time for the audience arrives, I receive the eldest son of the Madson House. He looks like he's around twenty. His appearance clearly gives me the impression of him

being a spoiled rich boy, but so far nothing out of the ordinary has happened.

Following social etiquette, he's only greeted me normally.

"Please, take a seat over there."

"Thank you very much."

After exchanging greetings, both of us sat down. Then I introduce my wife Lisa, and she sits down next to me. On the other hand, Alban hasn't brought a wife along.

As it looks like he'll be holding the official ceremony to succeed the family headship in a month with his father's sickness being rather bad, he's going to hold the marriage ceremony with his fiancée then. Doing the marriage and inheritance ceremonies at the same time seems to be for the sake of appealing to the fief's population and retainers.

"It might be humble, but please have some of our tea." Amalie-san says modestly, but since it's actually the new mate tea we procured from Helmut, it's a high-class tea.

I hear the guarding of the forest mate trees is becoming stricter as the manpower in the capital's Baumeister family grows, and with the number of trees increasing, the harvest of mate tea leaves has experienced a boost as well. We've procured some of it to offer it to important guests.

"It's a great mate tea. Is it a forest mate?"

Once Amalie-san pours tea in everyone's cup, wearing her maid uniform while at the same time acting as Lisa's helper, Alban notices that it's forest mate tea from just the aroma. He might own the ability to see through high-quality goods since he comes from a good family.

"By the way, who might be the person over there?"

"Ah, he's an attendant. Please don't pay any attention to him." Alban has brought a single youth as attendant.

At first I thought that he might simply be a butler or servant, but the face of this young man somewhat resembles that of Alban. Maybe he's the rumored elder half-brother.

"(What a nasty character!)"

Even though he probably could have had any servant accompany him, deliberately nominating his half-brother might aim at having him give up on the family head succession by clearly showing off the meeting with me.

But, wait a sec. If that's the case, is his half-brother actually someone overflowing with ambition?

I don't quite get the detailed circumstances, but in any case, the audience has started, just as scheduled.

"I'm deeply thankful to you for always providing your masonry products to my Baumeister

Earldom."

"My territory is also prospering from the sales to your earldom. It is us who should be thankful here."

Well, yeah, it makes sense. Since we're steadily building roads and bridges, a supply of masonry products is a constant necessity.

"I have also heard that your wives are soon going to give birth to children."

"Yes, it makes me somewhat worried whether the children will be born safely."

"I'm soon going to marry my fiancée as well. I might feel the same as you, Earl Baumeister-dono, once a child is on its way."

"(Huh?)"

Almost I unintentionally gasped audibly. Alban is supposed to be an idiot, but now that I'm talking with him, he's quite normal, isn't he? Why are those rumors about him going around?

"Seeing how the Earl Baumeister House is prospering and rising after being established by you in person, I think it would be great for you to have many children, Earl Baumeister-dono."

"Well, I'm doing my best."

"Having said that, when it comes to increasing the number of wives, I guess you also have to pay attention to the balance with Margrave Breithilde, your patron."

"Certainly..."

I've heard that he's stupid, but this young man seems to have properly investigated our background. I don't know whether he's done it himself, but it's a fact that he's properly informed about us.

"In such a case, the only option would be unofficial mistresses, huh? It'd be fine to simply have them give birth to children without increasing the count of official wives and lovers."

"Haah..."

Yeah, okay, that's something I hear often recently. Roderich blocks off all such talks, but such proposals seem to flow in without any end in sight.

Still, that's not a topic you'd actively broach while still being unmarried yourself, is it? Moreover, according to Roderich, it'd be a bad move for me to have such mistresses right now.

『Since it'd be noble daughters anyway, even if you had mistresses, they'd boldly demand under-the-table payoffs since they'd be related to you, if they gave birth to children. In such cases, it'd be better to have them officially acknowledged from the very start. Those saying that it's fine to keep it unofficial are usually scammers』

In other words, stories that sound too good to be true have their own snares. Or rather, for me that's not a good story at all.

My children might become magicians, no, according to Arnest, they'll definitely become magicians. If it's exposed that the children of my mistresses are magicians, things will become a major pain in the ass.

"No, I believe the current number of wives I have is plenty."

All of them are still young, and if each of them gives birth to around three children, we will have plenty. Besides, this isn't a 『TV documentary about big families of the Heisei era』. If I had this many children, I'd have trouble remembering their names and faces.

"Please don't say that. Actually I know of two girls I'd like to recommend to you."

Ah, now I understand why this guy is regarded as an idiot. He's not one of those obvious idiots, but rather one who's hard-working but completely incompetent at what he does.

Even though he'd achieve his goal if he simply chatted cordially with me during the meeting, he ends up saying unnecessary things because he's pointlessly greedy.

Because such people aren't identifiable as idiots at a glance, it's troublesome to deal with them.

"No, talk about matters like these..."

"Please wait a minute. They are young women with healthy bodies who won't require any after-care. Their family has a rather low social ranking, so you'll be free to treat them as maids." Alban rattled on while beaming with pride over his own plan having worked out wonderfully, but I haven't missed how his half-brother's expression has experienced a big change.

Alban, that retard, hasn't noticed it, but his half-brother is looking at him as if he's trying to kill him with his eyes.

"..."

Immediately after realizing that I'm looking at him, he goes back to normal, but it's likely that those two girls are Alban's half-sisters and this guy's little sisters. But okay, I get it, he's planning to gain the benefit of being related to me if any children are born out of that connection while at the same time pushing his unwanted half-sisters on me, eh?

However, for him to go with such a sloppy plan that even I'd notice it right away... Him being so deeply convinced of the success of his plan can probably be counted as proof of him being a retarded noble brat just like Wilma said.

"Are they possibly your little sisters, Alban-dono? It'd be rude of me to take such esteemed ladies as mistresses."

Alban is startled, obviously wondering why I know this, but just looking at his face tells one everything they need to know.

Although it was just for an instant, haven't you turned a scornful look full of contempt at your half-brother when you talked about that little mistress idea of yours? Or rather, can you not get me involved in your house's succession dispute?

"Certainly, they're my little sisters, but their mother is of low birth. Still, I think they'll be able to give you plenty of children since they're young. Please make use of them instead of the two over there."

"Instead?"

"I doubt that middle-aged women would be capable of giving birth to your children, Earl Baumeister-dono."

This moron sure is struggling hard at getting back on his feet after blundering once. It'd have been fine if he had put a close to it when his first scenario failed, but instead he keeps going with his own little schemes, while not having any substantial ability at scheming, and thus keeps failing.

Saying that it'd be fine to exchange Lisa, who's soon going to become 30 years old, and Amalie-san, whom I'm treating just like a wife, with younger women because of their age - why would anyone say something so stupid in front of the parties concerned?

Lisa's rank in the hierarchy is low, but she's present at this meeting as my wife. Amalie-san isn't officially my wife, but I've basically approved of her as one of my wives. So why would this idiot insult both of them?

Behind him, his half-brother looks completely flabbergasted. It looks like at least he has a good grasp on our circumstances.

Oh, so Alban fully understands it as well, doesn't he?

"Alban-dono, what's the intent behind your visit today?"

"Of course, I'm here to deepen the relationship between the two of us."

Is he saying that for real? He must be...

It appears that he only looked normal in the beginning, with that front immediately crumbling apart afterwards.

"To me it doesn't look like that at all...but do you have an idea why I would be thinking so?"

"Earl Baumeister-dono, aren't we similar in many respects?"

Hey, dude, that's not even an answer to my question. Anyway, I'm not going to say that I'm particularly capable, but I'm still very convinced of being a better human than you.

"Similar?"

"Indeed. You have eliminated your elder brother, who stood in the way, to become Earl Baumeister. I'm also going to become Viscount Madson instead of Dennis, the older half-brother behind me. Although I also have my position as younger brother to care about, this is yet another duty of one inheriting a noble bloodline. There are some people in our territory endorsing Dennis, but I won't yield to their pressure!"

Somehow, it has turned into an election speech. Besides, does he believe that I became Earl Baumeister by killing my big brother?

Well, he's not wrong, if you only look at the results, and it's not like I'll ever manage to rid myself of the stigma of being the murderer of my brother. But, I'd like to be excused from being considered the same as him.

Rage is gradually building up within me, but suddenly both my shoulders are tapped lightly. Lisa and Amalie-san have signaled me to calm down.

At this rate, I'd have considered blowing this retard away with my magic, but as expected, I suppose that'd be a bad move.

"Hyaaa!" Alban, who has finished his declaration, or rather, election speech, tries to drink his mate tea, which has cooled down, to sate his thirst. However, he suddenly let go of his cup while screaming strangely.

"(Lisa, that's your work, isn't it?)"

As appropriate for Lisa the Blizzard, she has secretly cooled down the tea to a temperature right before freezing solid. In other words, he was surprised by the staggering coldness of the tea.

As a veteran, Lisa is unchallenged in this kind of fine magic control. She's kept the effect of her spell limited to only the tea inside the cup while doing it so inconspicuously that I haven't even sensed her using magic.

"Dear visitor, are you alright? I shall pour a new mate tea for you right away."

Amalie-san quickly cleans away the fallen cup and patches of tea, and pours mate tea into a new cup.

"Maid! Is this mate tea warm?"

"Yes, it was brewed moments ago."

"Very well!"

Having been startled by the tea which was almost frozen, Alban immediately takes a sip of the new tea to warm his mouth.

"Hot!"

However, this time piping-hot mate tea has entered his chilled mouth. Naturally he ends up

perceiving it as being hotter than usual, resulting in Alban letting the second cup fall as well.

"It's too hot!"

"Dear visitor, I told you that it's freshly brewed." Amalie-san calmly deals with Alban's protest, but since some time has already passed, the tea inside the pot should have already cooled down to an acceptable temperature.

Of course it was Lisa who raised its temperature. Amalie-san has noticed Lisa's petty mischief, and thus fills tea into a cup anew.

"Aren't you far too rude towards me who's going to become Viscount Madson very soon?"

"I'm terribly sorry, but I have tried to tell you that it might be better to wait for it to cool down since it's hot as it was brewed a little while ago." Amalie-san immediately apologizes to Alban.

Still, even if he might be a noble, it's misplaced for him to scold a maid over tea being hot. In the first place, it's not like she served him tea that was still boiling. This is something he ought to make sure of himself.

"I know you! You have apparently become Earl Baumeister-dono's mistress as an apology for your stupid husband having tried to kill Earl Baumeister-dono and gone under after failing at it! Humph! That's just how big brothers work! Anyway! Old hags are not needed at Earl Baumeister-dono's side!"

His words are gradually starting to become illogical bullshit. The noble, spoiled brat has probably lost it since he's run out of patience after all his plans didn't work out as intended.

"Earl Baumeister-dono, let me provide you with new mistresses instead of these two!"

Despite having raged just seconds ago, he now continues his previous mistress topic while smiling at me. Dennis is looking up to the ceiling behind him, as if having given up all hope. He might think that Alban is a lost case at this point.

But yeah, if I had such a little brother, I'd also be troubled how to handle him. Dennis is probably wondering whether he should stop Alban, but if he did that, he'd just add oil to the fire. Alban doesn't seem like a man who knows forgiveness.

"Hmmm, you don't understand it unless you're told clearly?"

"Clearly, you say? In other words, you're going to accept my younger sisters?"

Just how has he managed to reach such a conclusion? I'm really curious where his groundless confidence is coming from.

"As if! Now listen, you idiot, your constant nitpicking of my wives is pissing me off! We're done here. I'm cutting all connections with you. Get lost, and never come back here!"

"Wh-!? You sure you can talk like this to me? We won't sell you any of the masonry used for

construction anymore!"

"Shut your trap! Even without such decorations, no bridge will collapse, and roads will do their job normally as well! Never show your ugly mug here ever again, you birdbrain brat!"

"You bastard! I'll make sure that you'll regret this!"

It should have been no more than a little meeting with the successor of a noble house, but it ended in a full-blown fight between me and the other party. It might have been stupid of me to have snapped so quickly, but if you live a long life, such things happen as well. Besides, the other side is at fault here.



"Wh-!? ...A complete severing of all connections...?"

"Roderich, thanks for having introduced me to such a guy, who was funny in a very particular way."

"..."

Once I inform everyone of the events that took place, Roderich is the first to react, flabbergasted. Rather than being troubled with me, he seems unable to even find any proper words to describe the stupidity of Alban which has obviously exceeded his assumptions by far.

"For that reason, they're not going to sell us masonry anymore."

"That's going to become a problem."

"Really?"

It's what I think, but no one should be troubled if no masonry decorates the roadside or the guardrails of bridges. Though it'd be a different story altogether if there was some magical effect that'd cause bridges to collapse without those decorations. Of course such masonry doesn't exist in this world. Albeit, it might have existed in a distant past.

"I think so as well, but..."

While he does, Roderich seems to have difficulty escaping the common sense of this world. He's tied down by the custom that it'd be weird for a high-ranking noble house like ours to not add beautiful masonry to the roads and bridges in our territory.

"Either way, he's someone saying that I should replace Lisa and Amalie-san with his own little sisters as mistresses without even batting an eyelid. I don't want to have anything to do with such a retard ever again."

Even though I'm having a fair share of troubles with noble obligations here, I refuse to deal with a new King of Idiots.

"In the first place, there's absolutely no way that I'd go along with such a request..."

If I were to accept such conditions, one noble after the other would come out of the woodwork, suggesting similar ideas. Roderich becomes shocked by the extent of Alban's stupidity all over again.

"What shall we do about the masonry issue?"

"We can't procure it elsewhere?"

Certainly they produce beautiful masonry, but it's not like the Viscount Madson territory has a monopoly on it. Seeing how their side told us that they wouldn't sell to us anymore, we've got no choice but to get it from somewhere else.

"Sure, other places produce masonry too, but they won't be able to sell us such huge quantities."

After all, there's always something built within the kingdom. The maintenance of the existing roads and bridges also plays into this. Masonry weathers or breaks after several decades or centuries.

"Right now, the Kingdom's economy is thriving under the influence of the Baumeister Earldom's development. Many nobles are using this opportunity to build new roads and bridges in their territories."

Even the other masonry-producing territories can't increase their output so easily. A sudden increase would be difficult for them to pull off.

"Let's bypass this issue by stocking up small amounts, and postpone the lacking parts for later."

Yep, that's a very Japanese, good idea. If I were to meaninglessly announce the abolition of masonry, it'd clearly label me as a villain who stole the work from our masonry crafters.

Let's go with the plan of authorizing finished roads and bridges for the time being while adding the masonry sometime later.

"Let me just tell you in advance, I won't compromise with the Viscount Madson House, no matter what happens."

Not only did that asshole call Lisa and Amalie-san old hags, but he even stuck his nose into my inglorious past. But then again, I have to admit, Alban has quite the character to have the gall to call himself similar to me.

"Even if we were to compromise on this issue, the idea of having to get along with this guy over the next decades sickens me. He's really the very definition of a dumb, noble brat."

I don't really want to say this since I'm a noble myself as well, but he's just too terrible in various ways. I've no interest in ever meeting him again.

"You're right...he's the kind of man who would keep asking for more if we were to compromise on

this..."

If we allow him to mistakenly think that he's above us, he'll likely treat us condescendingly for the next few decades. Looking at the long term, cutting any ties with the Viscount Madson House will be to our advantage.

"I think it's just as you say, milord. We will handle it by shifting to procuring the masonry from another fief."

Roderich doesn't try to influence me into restoring the relationship with the Madson House. He probably believes that it was his blunder since he hadn't realized the extent of Alban's stupidity, albeit he should have known from the rumors.

"No choice. Right, Elise?"

"Yes."

I hardly ever encounter people who are so awful. It stands out because he's a 『noble's』 stupid son, but the rate of stupid children is unrelated to social standing. If you go by probability, there should actually be more stupid commoner sons since noble sons have a chance to improve through education. However, precisely because he's a noble, it stands out all the more.

"Nonetheless, it'd be better if you explained your reasons, just in case."

"Really?"

"Yes."



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.



It's just the time when Erich would finish work as we step out of the underwear shop. After heading to his mansion, he greets us at the front door.

"Wend, it's great for you to have come. Long time no see, Amalie-san."

"You have grown up into a handsome man, Erich-sama."

"Really? Well, it's nothing I could actually tell myself."

Since Amalie-san is still a family member of the Baumeister House, Erich also treats her as sister-in-law. Given that he's a cheat when it comes to handling women, he's happily chatting away with Amalie-san, even though it's been a good while since their last encounter. Yep, Erich is genuine, natural normie.

The two continue their friendly chatter.

"Amalie-san, I hear another idiot has shown up..."

"Yes."

Of course Erich is talking about Alban here.

"Erich, why are dumb nobles drawn to me?"

"Wend, do you really want to know?"

"No, forget it. I'm just grumbling."

Why are idiots always swarming to me like ants to sugar, is just what I always think after being forced to deal with one of them.

"Grumbling, huh...? Let me just tell you for caution's sake: the ratio of stupid nobles approaching either of us is the same."

"What do you mean by ratio?"

"Look, right now the number of visitors you have to deal with is a hundred times more than what I have to handle. Let's say one in every ten is an idiot, then I'll be visited by one, and you by a hundred. But the ratio remains the same, right?"

I think Roderich is warding off the majority, but every once in a while one slips through anyway.

"The second son of the Viscount Madson House is famous for being an idiot. However, the eldest son had a good reputation."

Okay, it looks like Dennis is a decent person after all.

"But, is his family lineage inferior? At least that's what Alban said."

"It's not really all that inferior."

Since Erich has provided dinner for us, we talk while eating.

"Viscount Madson's wife has married into the family from the Baron Hohrad House."

However, the legal wife didn't manage to get pregnant up to an age close to thirty years. As it was natural for this world, the Madson family reacted by welcoming a concubine.

"She's the eighth daughter of a poor noble living in the capital. As his concubine, she gave birth to Dennis-dono and his two younger sisters."

"I can totally relate with the part of her being the eighth daughter..."

I'm an eighth son after all.

In such cases, a noble family would adopt the man born by the concubine as heir. However, right after the concubine gave birth to Dennis, the wife suddenly got pregnant with a child which she hadn't managed so far.

"Uwah! That sure sounds troublesome."

Of course, the wife wanted the child, which she delivered while damaging her belly, to inherit the house. Ever since then the Madson House was enveloped in an internal dispute over the inheritance. The retainers and residents divided into two factions, supporting either Alban or Dennis.

"Isn't it kinda weird to treat the daughter of a Knight as a lowborn, even if she's the eighth daughter?"

"It is. Moreover, Alban has nothing going for him besides his family lineage."

This is how the two brothers were born with one year between them, but while the elder one is excellent at anything, the younger one sucks at everything, just as one could guess from his previous behavior. Support for Dennis to be the suitable successor has been growing steadily, but the official wife and some retainers are opposing it, and with the family head ill, the whole situation has turned into a disaster.

"So it's a family strife as you can find them anywhere..."

"Alban has been calling Dennis lowborn for a while now, for the sake of getting the upper hand. Though, you could also say that he has no other card he could play."

Makes sense, seeing how he completely loses out to Dennis when it comes to ability. Not having any advantages besides being the official wife's child must be quite painful.

"I see. That does sound terrible."

"So you're going to leave them to their own devices, Wend?"

"Well, I was told that they won't sell us any masonry products."

"Oh okay. It'd be quite possible for the other side to look down on you, if you were the one to compromise. It'd be better to stay clear then."

The talk about the Madson House comes to an end with that last comment of Erich. Afterwards we happily chit-chat while finishing dinner, and then Amalie-san and I return to my mansion in Baulburg. 『Teleport』 is really handy for times like these.

Once I get back home, I pass the requested underwear to Elise and my other wives, and after properly checking out the underwear I bought for Amalie-san...though it didn't end at only looking...I go to sleep.



"Wend-kun, you have a visitor."

On the next day, Amalie-san - now back to wearing her maid attire - announces a guest.

"Amalie-san, there's no need for you to wear your maid uniform today, is there?"

"Somehow, I have started to like wearing it."

"Okay, if that's what you want."

The maid uniform on Amalie-san is one of the modern-styled uniforms I had commissioned as a prototype. Only the skirt has been lengthened for its adoption by the Earl Baumeister House, but the design is far cuter than that of the traditional maid uniforms.

"Leaving that aside, who's the guest?"

"It's the eldest son of the Viscount Madson House from before."

It looks like Alban returned to his own territory after getting all angry, but the eldest son has apparently stayed behind. But, what kind of business does he have with me?

"I have some time, so I guess I'll listen to what he has to say for a bit."

There's also the matter with the masonry supply. I think I should at least hear him out.



"Please call me Dennis."

"Earl Baumeister. I don't have much time, so keep it short."

I intend to at least listen to him, but since I've got other obligations as well, I can't spend too much time on him. Besides, since I'll be made light of if I don't come across cocksure, I urge him to hurry up with his business.

"I'd like you to buy the masonry products of our Viscount Madson territory again, Earl Baumeister-sama."

"Are you an idiot?"

I become worried whether this guy, who's been considered to be excellent, has actually grasped the real issue behind the current problem. I mean, we can buy their products, but it was their side that told us that they wouldn't sell to us.

"Go and persuade Alban first before coming to me."

"That's..."

Figures, he can't. Alban only recognizes Dennis as a lowborn brother. If Dennis were to admonish him, the situation would get even worse.

"I'd like you to somehow consider a cooperation with us, Earl Baumeister-sama..."

"Why me?"

It was their side who requested a meeting, pissed me off with selfish, bullshit suggestions, and finally told me that they wouldn't sell any masonry products to us. Just what does he want my cooperation for?

"Your side started talking about the hierarchy of my wives, and even tried to push your little sisters as lovers onto me, right?"

"That's..."

"At that point, it was already set that I'd cut all relations with you. I'll buy the masonry products from other territories, and even if the installation of masonry gets slightly delayed because of that, the royal palace has promised me to waive it. So, now you see how things stand. Goodbye."

Listening any further is a waste of time. Since I've got no reason to compromise with their side, I quickly leave my seat.

"Please wait! At this rate, our masonry business will..."

"That's not my problem, is it?"

Besides, don't you have plenty of other customers, even if the Baumeister House stops doing business with you? Though their numbers are steadily dwindling thanks to Alban...

"Can't anything be done about this?"

"Dennis-dono, you're fundamentally mistaken. And I won't lend any help to people who don't understand what's going on. After all, it'd be just a waste of time and effort."

"What do you mean by that, Earl Baumeister-sama?"

"Dennis-dono, you're said to be a smart guy, but you hate getting your own hands dirty, don't you?"

Yep, what Dennis must do now is to disinherit Alban with the help of the retainers and residents. Once he becomes the new family head, he can start working on improving his relationship with me. However, Dennis apparently doesn't want to do that.

"Dennis-dono, you simply don't want to cast away your reputation of being an excellent older brother who supports his useless younger brother lord, right?"

"..."

If he were to disinherit his younger brother, people claiming that Dennis is a scary elder brother who stole the peerage from the true successor would appear, no matter how useless his younger brother might have been. Dennis very likely hated to have his name sullied by that.

"You have two choices left. Snatch the peerage from your younger brother, and become the new lord yourself, or leave the territory."

"Leave the territory, you say?"

"Aren't you way too naive to believe that you'll be able to assist your younger brother in the future? No matter how great your assistance will be, Alban will always burn with hatred against you."

Alban would regard Dennis as dangerous because he could try to take the peerage and land off him. At this rate, he might plan to assassinate Dennis.

"Which side do most of the retainers support? Yours or Alban's?"

"..."

"Since you're staying silent, I guess it's your side."

"..."

Given that Dennis hasn't denied my comment, the trust of the retainers in him must be strong as well.

"Then you've got no choice but to make up your resolve, and get rid of Alban. If he should become the next lord, your sisters will be forced into an even worse situation."

The worse the Madson House's distress, the worse the families his sisters will be married off to. Above all, Alban hates his half-sisters. He won't hesitate to use them as political tools.

"You have no option but to resolve yourself. At least I don't plan to ever negotiate with Alban again."

"You won't negotiate with Alban-sama ever again...?"

"Sorry, but I don't want to ever see his stupid face again either."

"...Okay. I shall dirty my hands, for the sake of my sisters."

Dennis makes up his mind, excuses himself, and returns to his territory.



And then, one week later, I received a call through the MHCD from Margrave Breithilde.

『Alban was disinherited?』

『Well, he had the reputation of being useless to begin with. I hear Dennis-dono's sympathizers among the retainers and residents approached the current lord, demanding to appoint the elder brother as next lord』

『Viscount Madson accepted?』

『Alban has a history of having caused various problems, and thus he readily went along with their demand, it seems』

『I see』

Another week later, Dennis visited me for greetings after having safely succeeded to the lordship from his sick father.

"Alban and his mother have been sent to a church."

If he had shown mercy and allowed them to stay in the territory, they might have tried to start something. Thus Dennis sent both of them to the church.

"Are you okay with this?"

"Yes."

Even though it should have been a simple meeting, it took quite a bit of time.

"In line with this, we will give you a temporary discount on masonry products. Since it's the base of our livelihood, we can't reduce the prices too drastically, though..."

"That's very welcome."

The meeting proceeds without any issues, but at the end, Dennis hands me a letter. It's from the previous Viscount Madson who's still in his sickbed.

"Let's see... 『You have my gratitude for pushing Dennis' back』, huh...?"

"When I approached father about Alban's disinheritance, he told me, 『So you finally made up your mind, huh?』."

So it wasn't as much of an issue as expected. Apparently Dennis' father also regarded Alban as unsuited to inherit his title. He probably held onto him because he was his wife's son, and in the hope that it'd be fine as long as he had good advisors, but since Alban was much worse than he had expected, he started to wish for Dennis to succeed.

"Father says that he can now die in peace."

That's how the meeting safely comes to an end.

Once I return to my private quarters, Amalie-san is waiting for me with mate tea.

"Wend-kun, you're a kind man."

"Really? I think I said some harsh things, though?"

I mean, I told him to take down his own brother. I can't really consider that to be kind.

"Didn't it work out well in the end? It's simply what I believe on my own, so it's also fine for you to have a different opinion about it, Wend-kun."

"I'm kind, huh?"

"Yes, you are."

With Amalie-san insisting on it like that, I also start to believe that it might be so. Does this also stem from me becoming a father myself soon?

"Elise and the others are due soon, aren't they?"

"I'm looking forward to it."

"I figured."

I continued chatting with Amalie-san while drinking her mate tea. Now there's only two months left until Elise's expected delivery date.