After the meeting with the King’s Drum-dono, we had a practical meeting.

Veryard-dono, who had risen up to the rank of Viscount, gave us a report on the current situation.

He told me that they have enough food to last for one year, and that their education is going well. Those with high ability have been dispersed throughout the country as an immediate asset.

“Well, in our country, we have always been very good at underworld espionage activities. Those people have gone to various countries to conduct price surveys and so on. We are working hard to train our administrative staff under the slogan ‘Rich country, wise people.’ Adults and children alike are working together to learn about world affairs and economics.”

I didn’t doubt Drum-dono’s words, but I didn’t expect him to be as thorough as he was.

If a king is a king, then his subjects are his subjects too.

Oops, I can’t help but be surprised.

“I understand. Then I will report on the progress of our plan.”

I, too, should stop hiding things.

After that, I spoke about the current situation without hiding anything.

“The development of the Magic Train is going well.”

The construction of the rails is underway from the end point at Dwargon via the intermediate Farmenas, to Blumund in the middle of the line.

The ingredients produced at Farmenas is transported to Dwargon, where the cargo is replaced with industrial products. Then they unload at Farmenas and send the rest to Blumund.

Eventually Blumund will have to act as a collection point.

“Of course. So, food hygiene will be an important part of the job in the future?”

“Yes, sir. Also, we would like Blumund to consider where to sell the necessary supplies.”

“Of course. I’ve explained that to the officials we sent to you as well.”

“Mmmm, I heard you are Fuze-dono’s best friend, but Veryard-dono is no exception.”

Come to think of it, Rimuru-sama also told me that Veryard-dono is a shrewd man, so we can’t be too careful. I see, this is indeed an opponent with whom we can’t let our guard down.

“That’s a good point. Then what do you intend to do about the abandoned land?”

“I’ve made plans on that as well. Here in the vicinity of the royal capital, we have secured a site for the World Station. From there, we will set up a vacant lot in all directions to connect to the city road.”

“How?”

“We’ve prepared some land on the outskirts of Royal Capital. We plan to connect it with the World Station and make it a logistics base.”

“My God…”

We were so well prepared, it was astonishing.

From here, the negotiations began in earnest, without any bellyaching.

Our monster kingdom will provide the labor force. We will build a huge ‘World Station’ and open a line to Dwargon.

This will be followed by the opening of new routes to Sarion and Ingracia.

At the same time, it was decided to build warehouses on the vacant land that had been prepared. This will allow Blumund to grow into a major commercial area in the future. With land prices likely to rise, it’s imperative to secure a prime location before it’s too late.

This place, the Blumund Kingdom, will be a logistics base in the future. I had planned to buy the best location for the site, but…

“Then, it’s a branch of the “Four Nations Trade Federation,” but because the current location is temporary, I would like to build a new one.

“Don’t worry. We’ve secured a special area for you.”

I had a bad feeling about that.

I tried to decipher Veryard-dono’s expression, but the smug smile on his face kept me from doing so.

“Does that mean you’ll have to give it away?”

The land needed for stations and rails is treated as compensation for technology and labor, as well as joint expenses in the future, so there’s no problem since we’ve discussed that it would be free. Therefore, I have put off the purchase of the branch’s land until later, but the situation is getting worse.

My fears have been proven true.

“No, no, please don’t do that. In the Blumund Kingdom, we have decreed that all land is the property of the state. And we have transitioned to a new form of government-loaned lands.”

They got me!

Even I never would have guessed that they would pull off such a feat.

I’m impressed that they’ve passed such a bill. I wonder how they managed to convince the aristocrats who have vested interests in it?

“What are the rents in that area…?”

“On a per square meter basis, we plan to pay one silver dollar.”

It’s not expensive.

It’s not cheap, but if you wanted to rent land in the capital of Ingracia, you’d need three silver coins per square meter. So it’s better to buy, even if you have to pay income tax every year.

But there is a bigger problem.

The problem is that the other party can take control before the profit or loss!

Rimuru-sama is surprisingly unconcerned, but this is the kind of thing that makes things hard to deal with.

What will you do if they change the terms and conditions in the middle?

As long as we’re on friendly terms with them, it’s fine, but people are replaceable, so it’s important to secure permanent rights.

I don’t think this would happen, but what if they raised the rent?

If it is within the range of common sense, we can accept their request on a case-by-case basis. However, if they raise the rent unreasonably, one can’t deny the possibility of quarrel.

I understand that this is just a contingency, but older sister has told me to think about that eventuality.

If we owned the land, the unreasonable demands would be grounded. But if the other party has the right to the land, it will be a problem if conditions are not met.

If you complain, the owner has the right to question you. If you don’t like it, you have no choice but to leave.

That’s why I want to make sure we get possession. If that’s not possible, then it’s hard to over-invest in this place.

Now, just as I was wondering what to do, Veryard-dono grinned.

“Rents will fluctuate according to the economy, but here’s an interesting story only for Myourmiles-dono!”

This guy really can’t stop.

I have a bad feeling, but I’m afraid I mustn’t stop listening.

“What’s the story?”

“It’s very simple. We in the Blumund Kingdom would like to offer you a settlement concession as a token of our friendship.”

“Concession, you say?”

“Yes. It’s about the special area mentioned earlier, and that we’re willing to grant extraterritoriality to the special area by entering into a perpetual land lease that will be in effect permanently.”

“My God!”

I was surprised, but it was too good to be true.

It seems that Veryard-dono is going to explain it to me before I even have time to ponder what kind of a backstory there is.

“There’s no backstory. It was His Majesty Drum’s idea. I was against it, but the other ministers voted for it and it was adopted. There are equal advantages and disadvantages to this idea. The disadvantage, of course, is that we will be hit by other countries if we sell off our land.”

“Well, I guess so.”

I was surprised that they didn’t try to hide it, but when I heard it was Drum-dono’s idea, it made sense. And I think I see the merits of it.

“The advantage is, of course, that we can expect your country to invest in us to the fullest. Also, we have decided that our country can gain an advantage by adding various conditions to the permanent land lease contract.”

“What do you mean?”

The question is what kind of conditions will be added.

“What? It’s simple. One, that you employ our citizens as your employees. The other is that I want you to establish a headquarters for the Four Nations Trade Federation in our country.”

I see, I thought to myself.

“If the headquarters of the Four Nations Trade Federation is in the Blumund Kingdom, it will not only become a logistics center, but also a center of the world economy. Replacing the current position of the Ingracia Kingdom would not be an impossiblity, and the value of the Blumund Kingdom will skyrocket.

Land prices will rise, of course, and the real estate income alone will be very lucrative if the representatives of each country have embassies there.

Unlike tourist destinations, this one is not affected by the economy. Moreover, it promises jobs for the people of Blumund.

If you have the will to join and work together with the Four Nations Trade Federation, it becomes a gamble with a great return. I was convinced from the bottom of my heart that this is just like Drum-dono, a genuine gambler.

And it was also in Rimuru-sama’s vision that the Blumund Kingdom would be the center of the world economy. I had no reason to oppose it, so I nodded my head and agreed to it.

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After that, we had a detailed discussion with Veryard-dono and signed a contract.

The contract is basically to protect each other’s rights and interests. For example, all contracts will be cancelled in the event of a war.

I thought it was satisfactory, but I wanted to hear what Veryard-dono really thought, for future reference.

“I would like to ask you one thing.”

“What is it?”

“Well, Veryard-dono was against the deal, or so I’m told. I’d like to know what you think about the result.”

Because the content is such that we gave preferential treatment to the "Four Nations Trade Federation," miscellaneous matters such as explanations to other countries will increase. I was wondering if he wasn’t amused, if not displeased.

“Oh, I see.”

Then Veryard-dono looked thoughtful. He got up without looking at me, and then, while I was wondering what was on his mind, walked to the window and looked out.

“?”

Veryard-dono clears his throat in front of me.

“I’m talking to myself, so please pay me no mind.”

After refusing that, he opened his mouth seriously.

“A nobleman is a creature who never shows his true feelings. You must not. If the negotiations turn out to be unfavorable, they will say that things went as planned. Otherwise, you will show your opponent weakness. I said, ‘I was against it.’ That is, I want you to understand that I was for it at the time of the negotiations.”

I was surprised that that was the real intention.

If so, it was exactly what Veryard-dono was aiming for.

I don’t think I’ve lost, but I’ve learned once again how hard it is to negotiate with the nobility.

That’s why I couldn’t help but grumble about it too.

“Oh dear…I still have a long way to go. I thought I was good at dealing with noblemen, too. But I’m not sure if I’m going to be able to represent the Four Nations Trade Federation if this continues.”

“No, no, Myourmiles-dono is a tough guy, even from my point of view. Excuse me.”

“Ha-ha, I’ll take that as a compliment.”

I looked at Veryard-dono with a wry smile. Unexpectedly, Veryard-dono laughed too.

His usual cool expression belied the humanity in his face.

That’s why I couldn’t help but smile at him.

“I hope you won’t be offended, but would you be interested in working for me?”

Well, he’d definitely say no. But there was still a hint of truth in my questioning.

I was confident that having a man of Veryard-dono’s caliber working for me would give us the best possible advantage as we expand our operations in the Ingracia Kingdom, which would be plaguing us in the near future.

“Hmm.”

“Ha-ha, it’s not my place to say anything. If you can pass this off as a joke…”

“No, no, it’s an interesting suggestion.”

“What?”

I looked intently at Veryard-dono’s face.

He’s very serious, not a joke in sight.

“Are you serious?”

“Yes. I’m actually thinking about changing my job, too.”

After saying this, Veryard-dono told me about the current situation and future prospects for the Blumund Kingdom.

The rich and wise are a double-edged sword. The future of the people is secure, but the status of the nobility will be shaken in the future.

“We have no land-owning aristocrats in Blumund. Nor are there many of them. Maybe one percent of the city’s million people. There are less than 2,000 knights, and their families number 8,000 or so, so there are less than a hundred people involved in politics. That’s all well and good for now, but in the near future, everyone will be in an honorary position. That’s the direction His Majesty Drum has set.”

Indeed, it was a small country that was able to achieve this drastic reformation by protecting the interests of the nobility. There may have been opposition, but as a result, they’ve continued to this day.

“Because Veryard-dono was not, you know, opposed?”

“No. It’s more a matter of profit. I just thought I’d have to find another job before I became unemployed.”

With a grin, Veryard-dono said that.

I saw that smile, and I knew.

I’ve been beaten.

“Well, that’s one for you. Did you pretend to answer my question and then sell yourself?”

“Huh, I was hoping you’d figure that out.”

I see. If I hadn’t figured it out, I wouldn’t have passed.

“Then, really?”

“Yes. I’d like Myourmiles-sama to hire me. However, is it okay to treat me as a consultant for the time being?”

Of course.

I understand his position as a nobleman. He won’t be able to move much for a while. But I’m counting on Veryard-dono’s intellect and experience, so there’s no harm in being a consultant.

“Of course! I look forward to working with you in the future.”

“Thank you very much.”

Veryard-dono and I shook hands with each other, laughing inivincibly.