

# Steel 111

## *Chapter 111: Memorial Service*

After a long night of bloody struggle, Berengar stood at attention before his troops, who were now fully dressed in their battle attire, with their musket's slung over their backs. Currently, the men that comprised of his army were holding a brief memorial service for the men who died the night before, between 100-200 men had perished in the ambush from the previous night, and while the enemy's forces were nearly annihilated by Berengar's army; Berengar felt nothing but sorrow for the lives of his fallen soldiers which were lost in the conflict.

Unlike most Generals, Berengar deeply cared for the lives of the men under his control and tried his best to mitigate losses. Every soldier lost meant that someone from his workforce would have to take their place, which decreased productivity. War was necessary for the expansion of a State, and thus benefiting the Nation that enforced their demands in the long term. The short-term costs were something every leader must become accustomed to. Still, it was not an easy responsibility to bear. If Berengar had deigned to mind his place in the world and sit back in Kufstein and peacefully flourish as he had initially planned, then these men most likely would not have lost their lives so early.

Yet, these lowly ambitions could no longer contain Berengar's growing desire for power. As a man who had very little in his previous life in terms of authority and wealth, the moment he tasted true power for the first time, his thirst for supremacy became unquenchable. Despite his relative benevolence when compared to monarchs of the past, Berengar was still a man. Like all men, he was inherently prone to the corruption brought forth by absolute power. In his old life, there was a saying, "Absolute power corrupts absolutely." While Berengar had grown increasingly malicious towards his potential enemies. He was still compassionate to his loved ones and those he was responsible for. However, now was a time of war, and he could not give a warm-hearted speech about how great the men who perished the night before were. No, Berengar knew he had to inflame his soldier's desires for vengeance, and as such, the speech he touted as the fallen soldiers were laid to rest was one of fire and fury.

"I look upon every one of you are standing here before me, and I see men, men who have given up everything to fight the enemies of Kufstein courageously. Please make no mistake, the men who ambushed us last night may have been mere peasants drafted into service to fight against us, but they were still the enemy! They chose to ambush our camp while we slept, and they chose to kill over a hundred of our brothers in arms! These men who have perished have fallen defending their comrades, their officers, and their Lord! Henceforth I decree that the family of any man who dies honorably in battle shall be given exemption from taxes for a duration of time! I am certain that the men who have perished on this day desire but one thing from all of you, and that is to avenge their deaths! So I have decided before we march on Innsbruck, we shall lay siege to the Castle of Schwaz and route out the man responsible for this attack. I promise to have him and anyone else deemed responsible beheaded, where their heads may be mounted on pikes outside of the ruins of their once-mighty castle! God with us!"

Having finished his speech, the men gathered before him, numbered in the thousands, all began to chant the battle cry repeatedly.

"God with us!"

As they did so, the honor guard fired a volley into the air after the men were fully interned in the graves below. Berengar vowed to build a memorial upon this spot for the men lost in this battle when he finally won this war. Seeing that he had now stoked the flames of vengeance in the hearts of his soldiers, he gave an order to his troops.

"Now, pack up camp, and set forth for the city of Schwaz! Now is not the time for tears, now is the time for battle! May God show mercy to our enemies, for we will not!"

With that said, the army began to gather their equipment and pack up the siege camp; within an hour, the army of over 5,000 men was once more on the march; the city of Schwaz was nearby and had invoked the ire of Berengar and his troops. Though Berengar would not harm unarmed civilians, those who resisted his conquest were considered enemy combatants and would suffer the same fate as the defenders.

Nobody expected Berengar to lay siege to Schwaz on his way to Innsbruck. Though this would give his enemies time to rally against him, it ultimately would not matter, for the power of steel and shot was not something these feudal armies could easily contend with. It would be quite some time before his advanced weaponry became known to all and even longer before anyone had successfully replicated it. For the time being, Berengar's armies would become the most dominant force on the European battlefields.

Schwaz was merely the first of many battles that would take place over the coming months as Berengar began his conquest of Tyrol. While his armies marched to Schwaz, another army was marching towards Kufstein. Though it would be a couple of weeks before they arrived, their intentions for Kufstein and its people were far viler than anything Berengar had in mind for his enemies.

As winter raged across the Austrian alps, more than one army was on the march, the war for Austria had already begun, and time was of the essence; luckily for Berengar and his forces, he possessed the power of gunpowder and could easily render the once-mighty walls of Castles to ruin in a matter of days. His 12 lb cannons gave him an enormous advantage when it came to siege warfare—something which he would demonstrate to the world shortly.

#### *Chapter 112: Agents in the Shadows*

Linde sat near her infant child, who was currently sleeping in his crib. Though she had no way of knowing what kind of man her child would eventually grow into, she truly showed unconditional love to the child, so clearly, he would turn out well, would he not? Despite being an infant, the child was born with a full head of strawberry blonde hair like his mother, and his eyes were sapphire like his father's.

Linde knew that one day her child would grow to be a great and powerful man like his father, but the extent to which he would accomplish remained

unknown, for mankind did not possess the power to see the future. As Linde watched over her child, she received a trio of letters; one was addressed from Berengar, one composed by her half-sister Adelheid, and the final letter was written by her father, Count Lothar.

She read over the contents of each letter with a smile on her face. Berengar's letter contained information that he was laying siege to Schwaz after surviving an ambush from the local Regent's levies. This shift in plans was not important to her as Berengar would most likely have to wipe out the Viscount's son after seizing Innsbruck anyways as the young man was sure to rebel against Berengar.

As for the letter from Adelheid expressed a plan the girl had hatched to allow Berengar to seize the Castle without laying siege to it. Adelheid was greatly concerned about the possibility of the walls being brought down and her defenses with it. After all, Linde had communicated to her half-sister the effectiveness of Berengar's cannons. The plan was actually brilliant, and as such, Linde would later write a letter to Berengar informing him of her sister's plot so that he could take the Castle at Innsbruck with ease. Thus allowing him the benefit of having fully functional walls while he waited for the enemy to make their move.

As for the letter by her father contained information regarding the army he was sent to seize Kufstein and how Theodoric was leading it; immediately upon reading that name, Linde's smile turned into a frown. She could not help but voice her concerns.

"When that lecherous old fool comes to Kufstein, I will make sure he is the first to die from the cannons' bombardment!"

She was all too aware of Theodoric's proclivities; he was a lecherous man particularly attracted to young women and girls. The old man also had a pension for sacking every city he laid siege to. Undoubtedly if Linde were actually to let Theodoric into her lover's city, the man would ransack the city and potentially attempt to force himself upon her. As such, she wanted the garrison to target their explosive shells on his position when his army arrived. After all, it was a common practice to wear a tabard with one's coat of arms emblazoned upon it during this time; he would be easy to scout from among the enemy's forces.

Thus Linde spent some time drafting letters to Berengar to relay the information she had received from bothering her sister and father. Once finished, the letter was dispatched with a messenger to ride towards

Berengar's encampment outside of Schwaz, where it would be delivered to him, hopefully before the might of his guns completely brought the city down.

After finishing with her letters and spending time watching over her sleeping son Linde got to work, gathering several intelligence operatives beneath her command. These hands were the best among her saboteurs and assassins; they were equipped with a revolving flintlock pistol based on the collier pattern design from Berengar's previous life. These weapons were best used outside of the battlefield as the cylinder had to be manually cycled, and the reloading speed was atrocious. However, they were excellent for personal defense and had been specially constructed for use among Berengar's operatives.

Linde had begun to address the operatives known as hands as they were gathered before her in secret.

"I have a task for you all to fulfill, I won't lie, it will be dangerous, but with advancements in technology over the last six months, particularly in the field of chemistry, you have a much higher chance of returning with your lives!"

One of the head operatives who, like his comrades, were currently shrouded by a hooded cloak spoke up from among their ranks.

"What is it that you require of us listener?"

Linde smirked as she heard her shadowy title before giving her decrees to the well-trained agents of Berengar's spy network.

"I need you to infiltrate the various Baronies and Viscounties throughout Tyrol. Your objective is assassination and sabotage. Take out high-profile targets, sabotage the food stores of the cities, as well as strategic positions such as key defensive structures. With the use of TNT, you will have a much greater chance of destroying enemy fortifications. The purpose of these actions is to provoke the enemy Lords into marching upon Kufstein, or Innsbruck where Berengar will have seized soon enough. I want them so infuriated that they will feel that they have no choice to end their misery unless they personally take action against our Liege! Thus allowing Berengar to trap them with his armies."

The same agent who had spoken up before nodded his head while answering Linde's assignment with the affirmative.

"It will be done!"

With that, the qualified agents of Berengar's growing spy network were set to the task, as for the remainder of the Viscount's operatives, they would be assigned to counter-espionage operations within Berengar's lands.

As such, the war of intrigue that was waged behind the scenes of the war for Tyrol had begun. The other Lords and Ladies of the realm were no longer safe in their own castles against the shadowy agents of Berengar's vast spy network, as they would soon come to find out. Linde felt it was necessary to take action on her man's half; while Berengar was off at war as the valiant commander, Linde would handle the dirty work within the shadows. Thus the couple expertly complemented one another when it came to matters of war and intrigue. Soon enough, all of Germany would be caught in their collective web.

#### *Chapter 113: Siege of Schwaz*

Berengar was currently sitting outside the city walls within the confines of his siege camp. He was having breakfast, which consisted of rye crackers, and salted pork. He ate the same food as his soldiers and refused to have special treatment while in the field. As such, he was sitting next to an Officer, an NCO, and an enlisted soldier. The cannons echoed across the field as they continuously bombarded the city walls; one might think a thunderstorm occurred if they were not accustomed to such advanced weapons.

Though the skies above were gloomy, and the cold breeze was filled with falling snow, it was by no means a thunderstorm. The cool breeze whipped across Berengar's face, which was the only portion of his skin that made direct



contact with the air; he was covered from head to toe in thick fur-lined wool clothing like the rest of his troops. Actually, Berengar's armies attire was far less garish in the winter; with a set of winter boots and gloves, they looked far different than their field equipment that was utilized in more favorable conditions.

Though they did not look as exquisite as they normally would, they were kept warm by their clothing, and in the end, practicality was far more important than aesthetics when it came to an army's gear. As such, the men ate their crackers and pork under the falling snow while the explosive shells continued to bombard the city's thick stone walls. It had already been three days since the siege had begun, and Berengar was confident that the walls would soon come crumbling down after all the sections they had been bombarding were already in a miserable state.

Just when Berengar was about to speak to his soldiers, he overheard the sound of stone crumbling down upon itself and the cheers of his men. Seeing that the wall had collapsed Berengar quickly put on his steel skull cap and his feathered hat before marching to the frontlines where his troops had quickly rallied. Finally, they would be able to seize the city, as for the castle's bombardment, that would still take a few days. With sword in hand, Berengar cried out to his force as he rushed for the shattered section of the wall.

"Charge!"

The overwhelming majority of the soldiers in his camp rushed to the broken wall with bayonets affixed and swords in hand as they resisted the oncoming missile fire from the archers and crossbowmen above. Luckily for them, their vitals were covered in hardened steel plate armor, so as long as they were not shot in the face, they would endure the rain of arrows descending upon them. Berengar's forces quickly arrived in front of the wall where they formed a firing line and rained musket balls upon the defenders who filled the gaps, the mighty spear wall the garrison of the city had formed quickly collapsed under the lead balls which pierced their armor as if it were non-existent, and sent them to the afterlife.

The defensive line collapsed with a single volley and was quickly rushed upon by a sea of bayonets and swords. Those troops in the rear of Berengar's formation continued to fire upon the defenders upon the ramparts, rapidly cutting away at the archers' numbers who desperately tried to combat the tide of black and gold which forced its way through the gap within the city wall.

The wall was brought down under concentrated fire from Berengar's artillery battalion in three sections; each region was undergoing a similar sight. Berengar batted a spear out of his way with the blade of his sword before

lunging directly into the open bascinet of the city defender, piercing through the man's eye and thus his skull ending his miserable existence. He was leading the charge at the center gap within the city's defenses; slowly but surely, his troops were overwhelming the local garrison.

Eckhard was leading one of the other locations where he used his rifled musket and bayonet to outmaneuver a spear that was thrust in his direction before piercing through the man's mail and gambeson with the lengthy bayonet, which was shaped perfectly to get through the gaps in the mail hauberk. Like Berengar, he led the forces into battle as the city defenders slowly began retreating. Eventually, the defensive line was broken. Rather than pursue the fleeing garrison to the keep, Berengar's forces lined up, reloaded, and fired upon the city's defenders as their backs were turned, instantly gunning them down with no remorse.

Berengar, Eckhard, and the Commander of the third section all yelled out similar commands to their forces.

"Give no quarter!"

As the soldiers of Berengar's army advanced through the city, they gunned down anyone who was remotely garbed in armor or equipped with a weapon.

At the moment, Berengar was leading his forces through the city, where a

crossbow bolt was fired out of a window and into his breastplate, where it left a mild dent. Enraged by the action, Bernegar commanded a nearby grenadier to lob his grenade through the window; after lighting the fuse, the grenadier did as instructed, and within seconds, the grenade went off, after which Berengar led his forces into the building to clear it completely.

When Berengar burst through the door, he witnessed a horrific scene; the crossbowman inside the building was utterly torn apart by the fearsome blast and shrapnel of the grenade, but so were what appeared to be the remains of a mother and her two daughters. Evidently, these civilians were hiding in the room where the Crossbowman had taken his position.

Berengar could not prevent himself from sighing at the scene as he spoke his thoughts aloud while the rest of his soldiers cleared the building.

"Such is the price of war..."

Similar scenes could be seen throughout the city, as the archers and crossbowmen took refuge in buildings before firing upon the advancing enemy, which would result in a grenade or two being lobbed into the structure, killing every living thing inside. Though Berengar prohibited the deliberate targeting of civilians, he did not prevent his soldiers from clearing a room with the most effective methods available, even if it meant the death of innocents.

As such, the City was rapidly taken, and the city's defenders either fled to the Castle as the last defense or were killed in the streets. Berengar's casualties were extremely low due to the high degree of protection the hardened and quenched half-plate armor afforded to his soldiers. The cavalry suffered even less than the infantry as they were equipped with Three-quarters plate armor, and though dismounted, they took part in the siege as well.

Soon enough, the city was secured, and all that remained was to bring down the Castle and the noblemen within it cowering behind their walls. As such, the artillery was moved into the city and lined up in a manner to attack the walls of the Castle; within a few days, Schwaz would completely fall to Berengar, and he would show no mercy to the young Lord who acted as Regent. All of this could have been avoided if the foolish boy had just stayed within his city and had not bothered attacking Berengar's forces as he advanced onto Innsbruck. Ultimately someone had to pay the price for the lives lost in the ambush, and that was left to the Viscount's son and heir, who ruled in his stead while he was off committing treason.

#### *Chapter 114: Absconding into the Night*

It was a cold winter's night, and the moon was covered by the clouds in the sky, thus allowing the agents of Berengar's spy network to engage in sabotage and assassination against the Lords of Tyrol and their forces. At the

moment, a spy shrouded in dark clothing maneuvered through the city of  
Lienz under cover of darkness.

His goal was to destroy the granary of the city; as such, he began to approach the grain stockpile with a stick of dynamite in hand and a match. As soon as he was within range of the warehouse, which contained much of the city's food surplus, he lit the match and used it to ignite the fuse of the dynamite which he threw into the building; before the blast went off, he had already disappeared into the night.

As the entire city overheard the loud explosion, its flames engulfed the granary into a smoking fireball; the local garrison quickly reacted to the scene and was dismayed to find that their city's primary stockpile of food had been sabotaged under their watch. Surely heads would roll for this disaster. The next day the local regent would open an investigation into the incident, but unfortunately for the people of Lienz, they would never find the culprit. This scene was just one of many appearing across Tyrol; under Linde's commands, the war of intrigue had begun.

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In the city of Meran, another one of Berengar's agents was currently active; she had been operating in this city for many months, providing intel to

Berengar, long before the war began. Recently she acquired orders to assassinate the commander of the city garrison. All this time, she had been working as a tavern wench, where she was currently pouring a drink to the target of her objective. The man had frequented the bar regularly so that he could flirt with the woman. After all, she was quite the attractive young woman and had been the object of his desires for some time now. As such, when she was about to walk away, he began to press her for an answer to his long persisting advancements.

"Hey, sweetheart, what time do you get off tonight? I would love to show you around the city."

It was by no means the smoothest pickup line, but finally, the woman relented; after all, she planned to take this man's life today, and what better way than to accept his proposal and go on a date. There would be plenty of opportunities to quietly end the man's life on such an occasion. As such, she put on a pretty facade and smiled at the man before accepting his invitation.

"Shortly after midnight, you can pick me up then."

The garrison commander smiled from ear to ear as he heard the woman's reply. Finally, she had given him a chance! He could not wait for the evening

to occur so that he could spend some quality time with the woman he was intensely attracted to.

After having his drink and meal, the garrison commander went back to work, but he finished his job before the appointed time. Throughout the hours, the attractive young woman had maintained her position at work until finally, midnight arrived, where she was let free from her job as a tavern wench. After exiting the building, she saw the garrison commander, dressed in relatively expensive clothes waiting for her to finish. Seeing the man so eager to meet his death, the assassin smiled as she approached him and bound her arm around his.

"So, where are you taking me?"

The garrison commander smiled and led the assassin along the road

"It is a surprise."

Though the veteran spy smiled, she remained cautious on the inside; she had no idea if she was potentially walking into a trap. Nevertheless, they soon arrived at their destination, which was a dark alleyway with nobody present. Quickly the garrison commander's warm smile turned into a sinister grin as he pushed the woman against the wall and tried to force himself on her. Before



long, a group of armored soldiers appeared nearby, numbering four in total, and began to flank the commander as the man whispered in her ear.

"We know you are a spy, but we are going to enjoy your time with you first."

Realizing that her cover was blown, the spy pulled out her revolving flintlock from her cloak and fired a shot directly into the garrison commander's chest, which instantly pierced his heart. The soldiers were shocked to see their commander collapse after the loud gunshot. Still, before they could react, the spy manually shifted the chamber to the next round and fired off another shot piercing the nearest guard's skull sending him to the afterlife. She managed to fire off a total of five shots in total killing every member of the squad who sought to force themselves upon her.

The spy moved quickly, the sound of gunfire was sure to attract the garrison, and as such, she fled to her quarters, where she packed up her stuff and quickly abandoned the town before it went into lockdown; she had to escape before the City officials realized that they had been infiltrated. After packing up her gear, the woman rapidly disappeared from the city of Meran, where she had stolen a horse and absconded into the night. Ultimately she would return to Kufstein, where she would be replaced by another member of Berengar's spy network. Nevertheless, she had dealt a significant blow to the city's

defenses as both the Commander and Vice commander were killed in that alleyway, leaving the city without a competent commander. Which would be greatly beneficial in Berengar's conquest of the region alter on.

Such was the life of a spy; at one moment, you were safely hidden among the masses. The next you were fleeing for your life, the pretty young woman had expected such an outcome and had already prepared for it; by the time the garrison could react, she was already long gone, and they would become more cautious about who they let into their city going forward. Not that such an event would prevent Berengar's network from infiltrating the city; at most, it simply made it more difficult to do so.

### *Chapter 115: Bringing Down the Castle Walls*

The cannons continuously bombarded the walls of the Castle in Schwaz throughout the past few days. While Berengar's spy network was active in their acts of assassination and sabotage, the young Viscount was busy laying siege to the object of his vengeance. Not once had the Regent or the family of the Viscount sued for peace throughout the continuous bombardment, not that Berengar would accept such terms. Still, he found it strange that they had not even attempted to contact the besieging army.

Nevertheless, the defenders could do nothing but sit by and wait for the walls to come down, as Berengar's forces had superior range, and if they even tried to poke their heads above the ramparts, they would surely be shot dead. Having estimated the time it would take to bring down the walls, Berengar was now standing at the head of his army, which surrounded the castle, waiting for the moment when the walls came crashing down around their enemies. Just as predicted the large stone walls came crashing down, scattering dust and debris throughout the air, luckily Berengar and his forces were far enough away to be affected.

Finally, after a few days of bombardment, the Castle walls had fallen. With it, Berengar ordered his troops to advance; as such, the armies of Berengar advanced with their muskets loaded, and bayonets affixed where a similar scene to what occurred a few days prior in the city below unfolded. The musketeers advanced while lobbing grenades into the crowd of men at arms guarding the sections of the castle walls that had fallen; after the grenades had detonated, the firing lines opened fire upon the defenders, sending musket balls passing through their armor and wrecking their lines of defense. It was only after several volleys had been fired into the defenders, that Berengar's forces rushed the survivors with their bayonets and swords.

Berengar, of course, was once more at the head of his troops, leading them into battle with his sword raised, adeptly dodging and parrying the attacks of the polearms and swords that came his way. The only real threat to his life would be the single-handed blunt weapons in which some of the enemies wielded as such; he made sure to stay on his toes as he thrust the long blade of his cavalry sword into the vital areas of his opponent's body or the gaps in their armor. It would appear that the armies before him were the most heavily equipped of the city defenders, and as such many of them wore brigandine or coat of plates. Thus it took substantial skill to move around their weapons and reap their lives.

The battlefield became a chaotic mess as bayonets clashed with spears, and gunshots were fired above the heads of the melee and into the ramparts whose sections still held archers and crossbowmen that attempted to repel the invaders. Blood spilled across the snowy ground as it stained the floor red, and bodies rapidly collapsed upon it. Having concentrated their fire on three sections of the castle walls as they had done before, Berengar's forces were invading from all sides, slowly pushing back the castle's defenders. Before long, they would be forced back to the Keep where the Viscount's family resided.

Berengar deflected an oncoming sword strike from a heavily armored man at arms. Quickly finding himself on the defensive against the superior swordsman Berengar was pushed back to his troops, who quickly came to his aid. As Berengar blocked yet another oncoming strike, two of his soldiers flanked the man-at-arms and simultaneously pierced through the gaps in his armor, one through the armpit and one through the aventail of his bascinet.

Thus the man who had briefly caused Berengar some trouble was quickly cut down by his soldiers.

Before long, the Castle courtyard was overrun by the black and gold-clad forces of Berengar's army; all that remained was to burst down the door to the keep of the Castle; rather than get a battering ram Berengar ordered one of his 12 lb cannons to be brought forth, where it was rapidly loaded and fired at the mighty door of the keep which was blasted into smithereens by the overwhelming power of the solid cannonball.

Afterward, his troops rushed into the Castle. They began to gun down any survivors they came across, ultimately finding themselves in the great hall where the Regent and the Viscount's family was currently huddling together in fear. It turned out that the Regent was not a member of the Viscount's family as his children were too young to effectively rule, as such one of the Viscount's advisors was left in charge of the Viscounty of Schwaz and had ordered the attack on Berengar's camp in the night which had resulted in the city being besieged.

After finding the wife of the Viscount huddling together with her small children, Berengar found himself with a moral dilemma. Despite the fact that he had sworn to behead the Viscount's family and place their heads on pikes; his entire family was comprised of women and children who had nothing to do with the ambush; as such, he came to a decision. Berengar pointed to the man who he believed to be the Regent of Schwaz and addressed him.

"Are you the Regent?"

the man nodded his head in fear, he did not know what fate awaited him, but as Regent, he should be afforded some protection; as such, he instantly admitted it. Before he could introduce himself, Berengar gave a command to his troops

"Have this man executed by firing squad for the public to see!"

Two soldiers saluted Berengar before following his orders

"Yes, my Lord!"

after saying that, they grabbed ahold of the regent and dragged him away, kicking and screaming. The man begged for a reprieve from Berengar's wrath, but neither he nor his soldiers were listening.

"I am the Regent; I am a man of noble birth! I am afforded ransom!"

Yet Berengar did not pay attention to a single word he said; as far as he was concerned, the man was guilty and deserved to pay with his life. After the regent was dragged away, Berengar sheathed his sword and approached the Viscount's family, where he began to address them.

"I am Viscount Berengar von Kufstein, your Liege has declared open rebellion against Duke Wilmar of Austria, and I am here to reclaim these lands in his stead. So long as you comply, I assure you no harm will come to you."

After witnessing how Berengar had disregarded proper etiquette and had the Regent dragged away to be executed, the wife of the Viscount did not dare believe him; nevertheless, there was nothing she could do about the situation thus, she bowed her head in respect, hoping that the young man before her would keep his word.

"Then we are under your care."

A satisfied grin spread across Berengar's immaculate face as the Viscountess submitted before his rule; as such, Berengar gave a decree to his soldiers.

"Keep a Garrison of 800 men here to maintain order, and repair the damage. As of now, the Viscounty of Schwaz is hereby incorporated into my domain. There shall be no harm done to the civilians and prisoners so long as they do not resist, am I understood?"

In unison, the soldiers within the Great Hall all called out to Berengar

"Yes, my Lord!"

Thus Berengar had successfully captured the Viscount of Schwaz, where his army would rest for a few days before moving onto Innsbruck. This was the first major victory in his conquest of Tyrol, which would prove to be a long and bloody endeavor. Despite this small victory in the Austrian Alps, and the

microcosm that was the war for Tyrol, countless battles waged across the German Kingdom that were far more devastating, unfortunately not every army had the discipline in which Berengar's was instilled with, as such tens of thousands of refugees from across the German-speaking region had begun to make their way to Kufstein in search of a better life.

#### *Chapter 116: Marching to Innsbruck*

After a successful siege of Schwaz and its stable occupation, Berengar waited a few days for rest and resupply. Now that he had effectively eliminated the enemy forces between Kufstein and Innsbruck, he could establish a stable logistical network to supply his war efforts which would go a long way towards establishing dominance in Tyrol. No matter how powerful his army was, if they were cut off from supplies, it would only mean their demise; as such, Berengar and his army waited in Schwarz for a few days to fully resupply their forces and the garrison before moving out.

During this time, Berengar properly oversaw his forces and ensured they conducted themselves in a civilized manner. Prisoners of war were afforded proper treatment, and the civilians were left to go about their daily lives without harassment. So long as there was no armed resistance, Berengar would tolerate their protests. The moment the citizens took up arms to attack his Garrison, they would be authorized to use lethal force. This point was effectively communicated to the native population, and though there was some civil unrest, it was primarily peaceful.

Despite Berengar's reputation for advocating for the wellbeing of the common folk, he was still considered a foreign invader in the Viscounty of Schwaz. As such, there was naturally a degree of resistance to his occupation. Nevertheless, it never got out of hand. Therefore Berengar never cracked down upon it during his degree. Sometimes the people needed to vent their frustrations civilly, and Berengar knew this all too well. His orders for the garrison were to build friendly ties with the locals and only use violence to maintain authority as a last resort. It was a completely different occupation than normal in this world, and the initial resistance had already begun to die down by the time Berengar left.

To properly defend the region, Berengar left a small unit of artillery behind, a total of three field guns and the necessary artillerymen needed to operate them. Word surely would have spread by now of his siege of Schwaz, and that

would most likely entice his enemies to march upon the City in an attempt to break his siege, unfortunately for his enemies, if they decided to march upon Schwaz, they would be met with a fully captured city with three field guns mounted upon it, and 800 men with muskets defending upon the ramparts.

Eventually, his forces were fully resupplied, and his army was prepared to march upon Innsbruck; as such, Berengar once more mounted his mighty steed Erwin before standing at the head of the army; he looked upon his army with a smile upon his visage before declaring the order they had all been waiting for.

"Forward March!"

Thus an army of over 4000 men departed from the city of Schwaz as they set forth for their destination, which was the heart of Tyrol, where they would engage in another fierce battle for dominance of the region. As the army marched, the band's sounds echoed in the cold winter air, and the men began to sing the lyrics to another marching song. The sight of thousands of soldiers departing through the city gates into the frost-covered Alps as they sang marching songs could be observed by the people of Schwaz as they gazed upon the departing army with complicated expressions.

In the dead of winter Berengar's soldiers marched with eager expressions on their faces; the cruelty of war did not dispirit them, rather their overwhelming victories and the might of the weapons and tactics they possessed managed to lift their spirits, knowing that they were able to lay siege to a city effectively, and its castle with minimal losses.

Berengar sang along to the tune that was playing, which was none other than the infamous Erika in which the Wehrmacht had been famous for singing in his previous life. Seeing the pleasant smile on the young Viscount's face, Eckhard sighed heavily; every time he fought alongside Berengar, the mad man was filled with excitement and eagerness to wage war. He had never witnessed a Lord so eager to fight alongside his troops at the frontlines or the complete and total disregard for the consequences such actions might have. As such, he could not help but ask Berengar what possessed him to behave in such a manner.

"My Lord, if I may ask, why are you always the first into the fray?"

Berengar's pleasant smile switched to a smug one upon hearing those words before speaking his mind.

"A commander should always lead by example!"

It was a noble response that made Eckhard look more fondly upon his Lord and Commander. Of course, that was only part of the reason Berengar jumped into the fray at the first opportunity he got. Much like Alexander from the ancient era, Berengar was not only good at warfare but thoroughly enjoyed it. The adrenaline he felt as the arrows and bolts were let loose upon him, the sweet fragrance of gunpowder filling the air as his soldiers fired upon the enemy, and the exhilaration he felt as he fought for his life against a skilled opponent. These were things that could not be replicated elsewhere in life.

Truthfully Berengar did not know when he began to take pleasure in combat; it was not something he enjoyed in his past life during his tenure in the US Army. Yet he did not feel guilty for it; after all, Berengar never once proclaimed himself to be a pious man. In fact, if heaven truly existed then, he knew he would not see its pearly gates. Yet he was not concerned with the afterlife; after all, he had already died once, and all that presented to him was an opportunity to achieve great things in this second life. Thus Berengar did not concern himself with such subjective things as morality, he had a war to win, and if he was going to be waging war, he might as well enjoy himself.

History would not write about this hidden side of Berengar's personality, for he and his offspring would ultimately write the history books. Berengar knew that future generations did not look kindly upon warlords, and conquerors, especially those who enjoyed the bloody business of warfare. Instead, the history books would recognize him as a benevolent Monarch who rose to the occasion to unite the German-speaking regions in a time of great chaos and civil strife, a man who always looked out for the interests of his people, and most of all, led the German people into a new age of advancement and prosperity.

### *Chapter 117: Siege of Vienna*

At the moment, Count Lothar was currently sitting in his siege camp outside of Vienna. While the defending and opposing forces slung rocks at one another through their trebuchets, Count Lothar was sitting in the rear of his forces,



safely watching the progress of the siege from afar. At the moment, the siege towers were once more attempting to get to the walls of the enemy formations; unlike Berengar's efforts in Tyrol, this was a true medieval siege in every sense of the word. The prevalence of firearms had not yet become widespread in Europe outside of Berengar's forces. As such, crossbowmen hid behind ramparts and pavise alike as they fired upon each other from a proper engagement distance of over 300 yards.

Seeing the siege towers heading towards the location, alongside men with ladders, the defending forces focused on taking down the invaders. Among the ramparts clad in full plate armor was Duke Wilmar's oldest son Gautbehrt who personally led the efforts to defend the city walls. Despite the siege ongoing for weeks, the invading forces were just now starting to make progress on their attempts to get past the mighty walls of Vienna.

With an arming sword in hand, Gautbehrt stood along the ramparts as an act of morale, the moment those siege towers were within distance to unleash their hordes; he would begin to cut them down. Soon enough the first siege tower dropped its bridge onto the ramparts allowing for Count Lothar's forces to cross onto the city's walls swiftly. Instantly Gautbehrt collided with the enemy forces alongside several of his allies. A chaotic melee broke out between the defending and opposing forces on multiple sections of the walls.

Gautbehrt deflects an oncoming blow before gripping the blade of his sword in a technique referred to as half swording and precisely dug his blade into the gaps between the enemy man-at-arms shoulder armor. Though it was not enough to kill the man, it gave him a position of control where he continued to press the man forward and over the edge of the wall, where he swiftly fell to his death. Before Gautbehrt even had time to catch his breath, another attacker rushed towards him with a mace in hand, which he swung desperately at Gautbehrt, whom the attacker recognized to be the enemy commander.

Swiftly evading the attack, Gautbehrt flipped his sword upside down and repeatedly struck the man in the skull with his pommel; after several strikes, the man collapsed with his skull bashed in from the blunt force trauma.

Gautbehrt screamed to his troops over the sound of the ongoing carnage

"Hold the line! We must defend the walls!"

As such, the defenders of the city of Vienna struggled with all their might to defend the city walls against the invading force. Unfortunately for the defenders, they were not nearly as well equipped as Count Lothar's forces. Many of the men within the garrison were wearing the more primitive coat of plates over a mail hauberk and gambeson jacket. Their helmets were primarily open-face bascinets with a mail aventail, and their limbs were either left unprotected or protected by a combination of the splint and plate armor.

Compared to the man at arms of Lothar's army, which was covered from head to toe in a mixture of brigandine and plate, the defenders had many more exposed areas where they could be gravely wounded or even killed. After several hours of bloody struggle, the defense of the City walls began to collapse, and the city's defenders brave as they were found themselves on the brink of defeat. Ultimately Gautbehrt was forced to give the order to his surviving men.

"Retreat! Retreat to the Castle!"

With that, the once valiant defenders of the city fled from the walls and ran back to the Castle for a last line of defense. Leaving the city for the taking of Count Lothar and his forces. Immediately upon taking the walls, the attackers opened the gates and allowed for the rest of the army to enter the city, where a combination of looting, \*\*\*\*, and murder began to take place as the soldiers under Lothar's command began to sack the city for its worth.

The heavily armed soldiers killed those who resisted, women and girls were taken from their homes and ravaged by the invading men, and entire city sections were burnt to the ground. It was truly an uncivilized time for warfare, and the once-proud city defenders could only watch from atop the Castle as their city was lit aflame from below. Praying to God that some form of relief would come soon, or else even they would suffer at the hands of Count Lothar.

Count Lothar gazed upon the scene of his forces raiding the city with a malicious smile; while drinking from a chalice of wine, a messenger came to report the situation from the frontlines.

"My Liege, the City, has been seized, Gautbehrt and his men have fled to the Castle where they are currently holding on. It will be some time before we can break through its gates and truly claim Vienna as our own. What are your orders?"

Count Lothar said in a completely vicious voice as he gazed upon the messenger.

"Continue to raid the city; I want to see how long the defenders can withstand the sight of their precious capital being ransacked."

A sadistic grin appeared on the messenger's face as he responded to Count Lothar's orders.

"As you command, my Lord!"

With that said, Lothar continued to gaze upon the fires that began to spread across the city and the screams of the victims of his army. Soon enough, Vienna would be his, the Duke's family would become his hostages, and he would be able to force the old bastard to abdicate and place him as the new Duke of Austria. Once that was the case, he would rally his forces and end Berengar's little rebellion. Everything was going smoothly.

After arriving within the safety of the Castle's walls, Gautbehrt cursed loudly as he detached his great bascinet and hurled it into the corner in a fit of fury.

"Goddammit!"

When his commanders saw his reaction, they could not help but ask what they should do now that they were stuck in the City's Castle.

"My Lord, what are we going to do now?"

Gautbehrt sighed heavily in an attempt to calm his nerves; after several moments of deep breathing, he opened his eyes, and with a solemn expression, gave his orders.

"We will wait until reinforcements arrive; by now, my father is aware of Count Lothar's betrayal and has sent an army to lift the siege. We have to hold on until then..."

One of the commanders looked at Gautbehr with a complex expression as he voiced his concerns.

"What about the city?"

Gautbehr covered his face with his steel-clad hands before saying what his troops feared the most.

"Unfortunately, there is nothing we can do about that now. Hopefully, relief will arrive soon so they can end this madness!"

Unfortunately for the City of Vienna, Count Otto's forces had been caught in a blizzard within the Bavarian Alps. They were unable to come to their aid for the foreseeable future. Only time would tell if the Castle of Vienna could hold on long enough for support to arrive or if the family of Duke Wilmar would fall into the hands of the wretched Count Lothar. During the duration of the siege the citizens of Vienna would suffer immensely under the pressure of Count Lothar's forces, but that was the price of war.

### *Chapter 118: Taking the City!*

Upon arriving at Innsbruck, Berengar and his army immediately created a proper siege camp, which was well defended and placed out of range of the enemy's weapons. However, unlike the sieges Berengar had led before, this bombardment was brief, and not concentrated on the weak points in the City's defense. This act was to maintain the integrity of the walls as there was a far more sinister plot afoot, one which would allow him to take the city without the need to bring down the walls.

Berengar's riflemen continued to take shots at the enemy defenders until the sun went down. The enemy defenders were not accustomed to such weapons and figured this was the ordinary tactics employed; as such, they were unaware of Berengar's true intentions. It was not until late at night that Berengar had gathered a group of a little over two dozen grenadiers at the edge of the siege camp. These were his most elite forces within his infantry battalions, and they would be following him behind enemy lines soon enough.

Due to conspiring with Adelheid, the cell of agents contained within the city walls, and even the castle itself, Berengar did not need to lay siege to this city in the manner he had previously done. Instead, he and his grenadiers were waiting for a diversion that would be the signal to approach the sally port in the city's walls, where a spy would personally allow him and a few of his men into the city where they would fight to open the gates so that the rest of his army could invade.

Eckhard was standing next to Berengar; though he would not be taking part in the operation, he wanted to voice his concerns over the current plan in which Berengar was about to take part.

"My Lord, I really want you to rethink this... Participating in this operation yourself is an enormous risk to not only your own life but the success of the army."

Despite his Vice-Commander's complaints, Berengar remained undeterred; he would never order his men to undergo such a dangerous operation if he himself was not willing to take the risk. As such, he clasped Eckhard on the shoulder and smiled at him, with a gaze filled with confidence.

"Do not worry, my friend; I promise you, within a matter of minutes, the main gates to the city will be open, and the army will be able to secure the area with minimal casualties! Do not fret, for I will endure, as I always have."

Eckhard wanted to debate with Berengar further about his actions. However, he did not have the chance to do so, as a massive blast went off from within the city and gained the defenders' attention, who rushed to put out the fire that was spreading. By smuggling TNT into the city and into the hands of his spy network, they were able to sabotage the granary and draw the guards' notice who would leave the walls relatively undefended.

Berengar let go of Eckhard's shoulder and lifted his musket into the air; since he was going into the city with small numbers, he decided to arm himself with a proper musket for this operation and a pair of grenades. He immediately began rushing towards the nearby sally port and commanded his troops to follow.

"That's the signal! Go! go! go!"

With that, the grenadiers alongside their commander rushed towards the sally port with muskets in hand and bayonets affixed. As they reached the small gate, Berengar and his men noticed a figure shrouded in black open the gates, which allowed them access to the city.

The figure was a young woman, but one could only tell due to her high voice.

"Quickly, take the gates! The guards will notice something is amiss soon enough, and will be on alert!"

With that said, Berengar and his grenadiers rushed to the main city gate, where a few dozen defenders stood watch. Berengar immediately gave the order to lob their grenades.

"Frag out!"

A series of grenades were thrown to the enemy's positions and rolled beneath their feet. The city's defenders looked cautiously at the strange devices whose fuses were aflame for a brief moment before they were engulfed in the explosive blast and the shrapnel provided by the steel shell of the device. Not a single man on watch survived the blast of the grenades, and the grenadiers quickly took the position of defense as a couple of the men began to open the gate. Noticing another explosion near the gates, a company of the garrison quickly rushed to its direction where they walked straight into a firing line; Berengar gave the order to fire the moment they were within firing range.

"Fire!"

with his words, two dozen muskets went off in unison, shredding the steel brigandine armor of the company of soldiers who advanced. Though it was only enough to kill roughly a dozen or so men and as such plenty of enemies remained, though they were initially taken aback by the mysterious weapons and their destructive power; when they noticed a second volley was not fired, they began their advance once more. As the gate was slowly rising, Berengar and his forces did not bother reloading their muskets. Instead, they lobbed their spare grenades into the crowd, which immediately detonated, tearing the advancing company to pieces. By the time the second wave of grenades went off, not a single soldier among the enemy company had remained standing.

Berengar once more gave the order to reload; now that they were out of grenades, they would rely on volley fire and melee to defend the gatehouse until the gates were fully open. It did not take long for another enemy group to arrive, where another volley of musket fire once more gunned them down. However, this time, the gates were open enough for Berengar's men to rush through, and several dozen more infantrymen rapidly formed ranks and fired upon the oncoming enemies.

Before long, his entire army had entered through the gates of the city of Innsbruck and began to hunt down the enemy as they pushed toward the castle. Count Lothar's son and heir, as well as Linde's older brother, was in a deep slumber as his city fell around him. Without even the slightest awareness of the ongoing situation, the Castle of Innsbruck was quickly surrounded by Berengar's forces. Where he would prepare for a similar set of tactics the following night, by the time the Regent became aware that the city had fallen, it would be too late to mount a defense.

### *Chapter 119: Negotiating Surrender*

By the time the sun rose, the city of Innsbruck was fully in the hands of Berengar; the only part that had yet to fall was the Castle that contained the Count's family. Berengar intended to capture them and leave their fate to Linde; after all, they were her siblings. Nevertheless, when Liutbert, who was Count Lothar's son, and Heir, as well as Linde's older brother, realized that the city was taken within a single night, he could not believe his eyes.

In a fit of fury, the young man, who was a couple of years older than Linde, lashed at his advisors who were trapped within the Castle's walls alongside him.

"How did this happen? How was Berengar the Accursed able to take the city in a single night?"

Much like Linde Liutbert had strawberry blonde hair and sky blue eyes. He was quite the dashing figure and was a brilliant mind in his own right. Unfortunately, he had long since been betrayed by his own family and was completely unaware of this fact. Neither he nor his advisors knew how the Castle had fallen so quickly; when they heard the explosions last night, they had assumed it was just another bombardment taking place. They were

completely dumbfounded by the idea that their walls had failed to fulfill their purpose.

One of Liutbert's advisors, a lanky and rat-faced man, nervously spoke his thoughts on the matter.

"My Lord, we do not know how Berengar took the city, but I assure you he will not be able to enter the Castle so easily!"

Liutbert scoffed at the man's reasoning; if Berengar could so easily take the city without anyone realizing how he had achieved it, what would prevent him from using the same tactics to take the Castle. As a result of his anger, Liutbert threw his chalice at the advisor who had spoken up and chastised the man.

"Berengar is at our doorstep! It is only a matter of time before he takes this Castle! What do you think his men will do to my sisters when they enter the house of my forefathers!?!"

Liutbert was not a fool; he quickly realized the position he was in and had immediately come to a decision, though he hated the idea if he wanted to spare himself and his siblings, he would have to negotiate a surrender. Because Berengar was a condemned heretic, Liutbert could not expect him to follow the common etiquette of the battlefield and allow him and his siblings the privilege of ransom. Thus he turned to his advisors and informed them of his monumental decision, which his father would undoubtedly disapprove of.

"I will meet with Berengar and discuss my terms of surrender, I don't care what it takes but I will ensure the safety of my family!"

The advisors looked at Liutbert with shocked expressions, and as such, expressed their concerns.

"The Count would never allow it! He would rather that you and your siblings fight to the death against this rebel than surrender your family's home to the enemy!"



Liutbert was in no mood to argue with his advisors; as such, he walked up to the man who had said such foolish words and backhanded him across the face.

"I am not my father, and if that blaggard would see his children slaughtered rather than live to fight another day, then he is truly not worthy of my loyalty!"

This statement was outright treasonous, but Liutbert would never be put in this position if his father had not schemed to overthrow their relatives and become the Duke of Austria. After displaying his authority through violence, the advisors quickly got to work to sue for peace with Berengar.

...

Berengar was currently camped outside the Castle's walls with his army. They were in the process of loading the cannons; however, right before they could fire the first bombardment, a white flag was raised above the Castle's ramparts, which forced Berengar to stay his hand. Berengar grabbed a white flag of his own to symbolize that he and his forces were willing to negotiate peacefully. After both flags were visible the two parties met in between the besieging army and the castle's defenses.

Berengar wore a conceited expression on his face as he stood before Liutbert, who was scowling with disfavor. The two men stood before each other with a few guards to ensure their safety; Berengar was quite a bit taller than Liutbert, which got on the young Regent's nerves. Finally, Berengar broke the silence with a smug remark.

"Are you going to waste my time, or do you have something to say?"

Liutbert wanted to make a witty retort but chose to shut his mouth and focus on diplomacy. As such, he quickly laid out his demands.

"I will surrender Innsbruck to you and the Castle within it so long as you ensure the safety of myself and my siblings!"

Berengar gazed upon Liutbert's figure, trying to investigate any clues about the man's character before responding. After concluding, he inquired about the details.

"Anything else?"

Liutbert quickly shook his head with a defeated expression before responding.

"I may not be the wisest man in the world, but I know I am in no position to make demands. All I ask is for my safety and that of my family."

Berengar smiled and stuck out his hand in a friendly gesture

"Very well, under these terms, I accept your surrender, you will be escorted back to Kufstein where your sister is currently residing, you will be kept as my guests until a time where your father either surrenders or perishes upon the battlefield. As for the possession of the title of Count of Tyrol, that shall be up to our liege Duke Wilmar to decide."

Liutbert frowned as he sighed in defeat eventually he shook Berengar's hand. Berengar's guards began to escort the defeated Regent; however, as he was walking away, the strawberry-blond-haired youth quickly turned around and asked Berengar a question that had always been on his mind.

"I wonder if you can humor my curiosity for a moment?"

Berengar, who was about to order his troops to storm the castle, turned around and looked at the man with a curious gaze before commenting.

"I don't see why not?"

Berengar's troops carefully guarded Liutbert to ensure he did not attempt anything foolish, noticing the restraints he was under, Liutbert swiftly asked his question.

"As long as I have known my sister Linde she has never once obeyed any orders she has been given; in fact, that Ice Queen has humiliated many powerful young men for the sake of entertainment; how exactly did you get her to obey your orders?"

Berengar laughed at Liutbert's comments; out of all the questions he could have asked, it was about how he could tame Linde? To Berengar, this was quite humorous; after chuckling for a few moments, Berengar smiled and

spread his arms in the air before announcing in a voice in which all his troops could hear.

"How do you tame any woman? By giving her a good tumble!"

The men under Berengar's commander immediately began to laugh at their commander's remark, and Liutbert was left blushing at the words in which Berengar had spoken. He never expected Berengar to answer his question so boldly; after that, Liutbert was escorted to a temporary holding cell by Berengar's men, where he and his siblings would stay until they could be safely transported to Kufstein.

With that out of the way, Berengar now held Innsbruck and Schwaz, as for the remainder of the regions within the County of Tyrol, they were currently suffering sabotage and assassinations left and right, and soon their regents would become so enraged that they would march on Innsbruck to put an end to Berengar's so-called rebellion. In doing so, they would be playing right into the young Viscount's hands. As for Count Lothar's forces that were on their way to Kufstein. They were only a few days from reaching their destination, and when they did so, they would be in for a rude awakening.

#### *Chapter 120: Bloodbath at Innsbruck I*

With Innsbruck fully under Berengar's control and the walls intact, the young Viscount rapidly mounted his cannons on the best positions of the city walls. Unlike the walls of Kufstein, which were expertly designed to prevent any blind spots, the medieval walls of Innsbruck did not allow for proper coverage, especially with as few as 15 field guns, considering he left three of his cannons behind in Schwaz, he was limited in his use of artillery, but that did not matter, the hundreds of rifled muskets among his troops, could make up for the lack of defensive artillery. As for the remaining smoothbore muskets, they could be placed through the machicolations and effectively counter enemy troops who got too close to the walls.

Berengar currently stood atop the walls of the city of Innsbruck gazing off into the distance with his spyglass, it had been over a week since he had seized Innsbruck, and finally, an army could be seen in the distance. The sabotage and assassinations which targetted the enemy Lords of Tyrol and their domains had been ongoing since the beginning of his campaign. As such, they had caused quite a degree of damage throughout the hostile regions of

Tyrol, infuriating the noblemen and regents who ruled over the regions in place of their Barons and Viscounts who were off engaging in the ongoing siege of Vienna.

Due to the outrage in which these Regents suffered, they had dispatched whatever armed forces they could muster to attack Innsbruck; after all, they did not believe Berengar's army would be well equipped to withstand a siege after the losses they must have suffered during two sieges and an ambush. They were completely unaware that Berengar had taken Innsbruck without much of a fight, and thus his casualties were quite low. Just as Berengar had planned, his enemies would descend upon Innsbruck with their remaining fighting forces, allowing him to take care of them in a single sweep. As for what happened after this battle, Berengar intended to threaten the defiant realms into submission and march upon their weakened garrisons if needed.

Eckhard approached Berengar and noticed he was gazing into the distance with a spyglass; the old veteran figured the enemy was on the horizon and thus asked about the important details.

"How many are there?"

Berengar smirked malevolently at the approaching armies before handing the spyglass to Eckhard.

"See for yourself."

Eckhard took a look into the spyglass and frowned. What he saw was over ten thousand peasant levies, supported by a thousand or so men at arms who most likely acted as the key components of the garrisons in which protected the cities and towns of their enemies' realms.

After putting down the spyglass and handing it back to Berengar, Eckhard voiced his opinions.

"It appears they have drafted cannon fodder from the common people to rush at our defenses. This will be a bloodbath that will surely affect the productivity of Tyrol for years to come."

Berengar sighed and nodded at Eckhard's claims, it would undoubtedly be a one-sided massacre that would greatly affect Tyrol's future, yet to Berengar, it was a price that needed to be paid. Berengar, however, corrected Eckhard as he lectured him about the necessity of the battle.

"Decades... However, it is a sacrifice that must be made; without demonstrating our overwhelming power here to the Lords of Tyrol, we would be forced to lay siege to every city, the casualties would be disastrous not only to our own forces but the local populations."

As such, Berengar lifted a nearby red flag and waved it in the air; this acted as a signal to the artillery crews to wave their own red flags. Within a matter of seconds, every artillery crew was notified of the need to load their weapons and began to act accordingly. When the soldiers sitting on the ramparts saw the red flags waving in the air, they immediately became alert, recognizing that the enemy army was approaching, and began to load their muskets.

The defending army waited for a little over an hour before the enemy was within firing range of the artillery pieces. However, the artillery still did not fire; with explosive shells, the 1417 12 lb Cannon could fire at an effective range of 1680 yards with 5 degrees of elevation. However, they had no plans to engage the targets at such a distance. Otherwise, the enemy would surely flee back to their homes long before the defenders had inflicted mass casualties on them.

Berengar himself had loaded a rifled musket and was standing on the ramparts waiting for the arrival of the enemy. After some time, the enemy army stopped within firing range, in Berengar's hands, and that of many of his soldiers could reach well over 500 yards with their 1417/18 Rifled Muskets. The reason for this was due to the effectiveness of the mine balls projectile and the long barrel length, which was 6 inches longer than the barrel used by the 1861 Springfield Rifled-Musket, which was utilized by Union forces during the American Civil War from Berengar's previous life.

Unaware of the enemy's effective range, the enemy began setting up their siege camp within range of their rifled muskets and cannons; it was only after they had dropped their defenses and became busy with the hard labor of setting up camp did Berengar signal for the attack to begin.

"Fire!"

With those words, over half a dozen cannons and hundreds of rifled muskets went off in unison, unleashing a disastrous wave of explosive shells and lead balls penetrating deep into the heart of the enemy forces. When the enemy commanders gazed upon the thunder of the guns and the carnage that was rained down upon them, they were completely shocked. Though they had heard Berengar's army was equipped mostly with hand cannons, they figured the effective firing range was a few yards at best; never in their wildest dreams did they envision such overwhelming destruction wrought upon them as they were building their camp.

The commanders were quick to act and immediately ordered their men to rush towards the wall with ladders in hand; they did not even have the time to build any siege weapons; as such, they could only hope to get over the wall with the use of ladders. Though the intensive fear was in the eyes of the peasant levies who felt as if the hand of God was crushing them beneath his grasp, they mustered the courage and attempted to get close to the wall.

What resulted next would be a battle that filled the enemy with utter despair, for only death and destruction awaited them now that the battle had begun.