

Steel 121

Chapter 121: Bloodbath at Innsbruck II

With the battle having begun, Berengar rapidly loaded his rifled musket before taking off another shot at the oncoming attackers; his projectile struck through the abdomen of an oncoming levy, bursting it apart and sending the man grievously injured onto the ground below where he slowly bled to death. Right after doing so, an arrow was fired upon him from below and glanced upon his steel skull cap; if it were just a few inches lower, it would have pierced his eye. Berengar quickly took cover behind the merlons as he began to reload his musket again.

His troops were operating under the orders of fire at will, and as such, the firing sequence was sporadic, as cannons went off at different times, and muskets followed in suit. Eventually, a group of levies made it to the edges of the walls, where the defenders began pointing their muskets through the machicolations and unloading their lead projectiles onto the poor souls below. Now that the enemy was directly below the defenders, the thousands of infantry who still wielded the 1417 Land Pattern Musket, which was smoothbore and thus had limited range, were able to engage the enemy behind the safety of the walls.

The screams of the enemy filled the air as they were blasted apart by cannons and muskets alike. Despite the devastating fire which was rained down upon them, some ladders eventually made their way into a position where the defenders closest to them fixed their bayonets and pierced through the levies' chests who scaled the ladders. Due to a lack of armor, the bayonet thrusts were extremely efficient at piercing through the levies' chests, and the bodies were kicked down from the ramparts and onto the forces below. Eventually, the ladders were pushed back down to the ground below, crushing some of the men in the massive horde that attacked the city's walls. Surrounded, the defenders rapidly fired their muskets as quickly as they could, each soldier getting off roughly three shots a minute into the pool below.

Without any way to defend themselves, it had become a turkey shoot. The defenders stayed behind the cover of the merlons and fired into the mob of peasants and men at arms who kept pressing forward, trying to get out of the firing zone of the mighty cannons. Despite the attackers nearest to the wall being within the cannons' blind spots, they were unfortunately within the line of

sight of the musketeers due to the machicolations, which provided the ability to fire directly down on the enemies below while being protected by the stone walls. With over 3000 infantry firing 2-3 rounds per minute, the defending forces could fire over 9000 rounds per minute onto the forces below, who numbered roughly 15,000 in total. Though not every projectile hit its mark, it took only a matter of minutes before a sea of corpses had filled below the Castle's walls.

The level of chaos and carnage wrought upon the besiegers in such a short time span was unimaginable. The nobles were terrified by the powerful weapons in which Berengar's forces wielded and had already fled to the edges of the battlefield; their armies were nearly annihilated even the heavily armored men at arms could not resist the might of the thunderous weapons in which Berengar and his armies were equipped. These noblemen were the children and vassals of the mighty Barons and Viscounts that had marched off to war with Lothar. They came to the conclusion that Berengar's rebellion was fated to end in an overwhelming victory. Witnessing death descend upon the battlefield as they had, they finally realized the reason why Berengar was so rapidly able to conquer cities; they highly doubted whether the stone walls of the era could defend against such overwhelming firepower.

Without realizing they were still within the range of the cannons, the commanders gathered what remained of their army and began to discuss among themselves how to proceed. A man in his thirties dressed in full plate lifted the visor to his bascinet and spoke with a voice filled with trepidation.

"What foul sorcery has Berengar the Accursed conjured to produce such devastating weapons? It must be true that he consorts with demons if such destructive power lies in his hands! How could we mere mortals defeat the devil and his representative here on earth!"

The Lords who had gathered had not gotten a good view of just exactly how their armies were so quickly slaughtered; they merely heard the thunder and saw the blood and flesh of their men splatter across the battlefield, completely negating any armor they may have been wearing. It was as if Berengar had created an army of sorcerers and demons. For how could the average soldier possess such dominating force?

Another Lord agreed with the previous statement and added his own

"We must flee quickly, or surely we will be devoured by the gates of hell! We must warn others of the demonic power in which Berengar possesses!"

However, before they could flee in haste, the thunder of 6 guns going off echoed in the air as their explosive shells landed upon the gathering of nobles and tore them asunder. Berengar smiled wickedly as he gazed through his spyglass. In under an hour, the siege had been lifted, and his enemy was torn to shreds; the commanders were all dead many of which were the regents of the unconquered regions of Tyrol. This overwhelming bloodbath would allow Berengar to place a Garrison within Innsbruck and move onto the depleted regions which refused to bend the knee to him and swiftly conquer the rest of Tyrol.

Eckhard quickly approached Berengar and asked what he wanted to do with the remaining forces still within firing range of the cannons, all of which were completely shell-shocked after witnessing the deaths of their commanders and comrades in such a short period of time.

"My Lord, what shall we do with the remaining enemies?"

Berengar's lips curved into a wicked grin as he gave his final command in defense of Innsbruck.

"Open the gates and have the Cuirassiers ride them down!"

Seeing that Berengar had decided to silence the enemy to prevent any word of his advanced weaponry from leaking, Eckhard merely sighed as he saluted by pounding his fist on his breastplate.

"It will be done, My Lord."

After Berengar's orders were given to the Battalion of Cuirassiers, who had up until now not been given a chance to display their might, the roughly 1,200 men mounted their horses before they rode out to butcher the thousand or so men who had already begun to route. The heavy cavalry quickly caught up to the fleeing footmen and cut them down like wheat to the scythe. Not a single besieger had made it out of the battle alive, and Berengar once more displayed the lengths he would go to to ensure his overwhelming victory in this war and all the wars to come. The more Berengar could prolong the

spread of accurate information about his weapons, the longer he could maintain his overwhelming technological advantage over his enemies.

While this defense was going on, another battle was taking place back in the heartland of the Viscounty of Kufstein. While Berengar was crushing his enemies who marched upon him, Count Lothar's forces had arrived within Kufstein. If the defense of Innsbruck were considered a bloodbath, then the Siege of Kufstein would be considered a sea of blood.

Chapter 122: Defense of Kufstein

Theodoric was at the head of his armies; they had marched from Vienna to Kufstein for the last few weeks, while Berengar was engaging in defense of Innsbruck and the bloodbath which would be the result. Theodoric had just arrived in the Viscounty of Kufstein. They were currently in the Barony of Kitzbühel, where they planned to lay siege to Kitzbuhel before marching on the City of Kufstein. However, when they entered the region, they noticed strange forts in the pattern of stars protecting the local villages. As they got close, explosive shells had rained down upon their army battering away at their forces.

It did not take long before Theodoric and his forces began to panic, wasn't Kufstein supposed to be open for the taking? Something was amiss, but they could not give up because of this incident as such Theodoric began to rally his forces who were terrified by the mysterious weapons that bombarded their ranks. Theodoric immediately began to order a retreat from the village in which they had initially wanted to raid; despite having overwhelming numbers, they could not get close to the village without losing hundreds of men, and as such, Theodoric commanded his troops.

"Retreat! Fall back to Kufstein. Clearly, Kitzbühel is loyal to Berengar; we must regroup with Linde and her forces!"

Though this event was shocking, Theodoric could not fathom the possibility that Linde had betrayed him, and by extension her father, as such he figured it was the act of the local Baron who took his orders from Berengar.

Explosive shells fired out of 24 lb siege cannons exploded upon impact, the explosive blast and shrapnel tearing apart the bodies of the men affected by it. The men were terrified by such destructive power and rapidly retreated

towards the direction of Kufstein. With advanced defenses, a single small star fortress could protect the vicinity of the local towns and villages from invaders quite efficiently. If the Army was willing to suffer more losses, they could have eventually taken the town and potentially even the fortress, but their main goal was to seize Kufstein and ransack it. As such they abandoned the idea to raid Kitzbühel and the surrounding regions, instead, they decided to place their faith in Linde.

After marching for several more hours, the Army, whose morale was greatly shaken by the previous events, arrived in the City of Kufstein, where to their surprise, the entire city was surrounded by such impressive fortifications that were similar to those which had wrought destruction upon their forces at the village they had just fled from. Luckily for them, the cannons did not fire upon sight, convincing Theodoric that his army of 5,000 men was truly welcome in the region. However, as he approached the City's gates, he noticed they remained shut; shortly after. He noticed the distinctive silky strawberry blonde hair of Linde fluttering in the wind on the ramparts above. She was dressed in a black and gold dress in which Berengar had gifted her that looked like it was from the Tudor Era, which had yet to transpire in this world. The sun glistened on Linde's porcelain skin and illuminated her peerless face creating the illusion of a Goddess protecting the city's gates.

Theodoric immediately felt his heart race as he gazed upon the heavenly beauty, and as such, he put on a smile as he requested entry into the city

"My dear Linde, would you please open the gates so that we may enforce your father's rule over this rebellious region?"

However, Linde's reaction to his words confused the old Viscount; she stared at him with a look of pity mixed with disdain, all while her angelic voice resounded in the air, commanding the defenders on the walls to unleash hell.

"Open fire!"

The moment Viscount Theodoric heard those words spoken by the young beauty who he greatly desired, his heart sank into an abyss; in the next second, the thunder of a thousand muskets and dozens of 24 lb siege cannons went off, devastating the army of the 5,000 men. Linde quickly

scurried off from the battlefield and allowed the men of the garrison to do their work.

In his last moment, Theodric realized that he had been tricked, that Linde had betrayed her own father and lured him and his men to Kufstein so that the enemy could weaken Count Lothar's forces. He had completely fallen for the trap, and his Liege was entirely unaware of his daughter's betrayal. After realizing this, a musket ball pierced through the Viscount's bascinet and into his skull where it turned his brain into mush before exiting out the other side of the helmet.

With the advancement of the star fortress and the men on the walls protecting it, there was not a single area where the enemy could hide; they were quickly torn apart by musket balls, canister shots, and explosive shells. Their limbs littering the battlefield, alongside the remains of their corpses and the splattered meat paste of those unlucky enough to not leave an intact corpse behind.

Without their commander, the army quickly fell into chaos; some strayed towards the walls hoping they would be out of the firing line, others routed away and were blasted to bits by the cannons. Much like Berengar's defense of Innsbruck, the Siege of Kufstein, if it could even be referred to as such a thing, was quickly turned into a sea of death. There was nowhere for these men to run within the confines of the Viscounty of Kufstein; every village was protected by its own star fortress and a small garrison of men to defend it. To lay siege to the city of Kufstein, one would normally have to go through the path of these fortresses and first clear the way. However, if one were foolish enough to be lured into this trap, then they would have no choice but to fight their way out of the path of these forts.

As such, the men who remained and tried to mount some offense against the city of Kufstein were quickly torn apart by the many muskets which lined the walls. Because the garrisons were not Berengar's field armies, and as such, were not the cream of the crop, it took them longer to load their weapon, and as such, the slaughter was prolonged in comparison to the bloodbath at Innsbruck. As for the souls who had routed back the way which they came, they would face fierce resistance from the many forts along the way, most of which had previously been tolerant to their march into the trap that was set for them.

In the end, not a single soul who had entered Kufstein with the intent to invade was allowed to leave alive. Berengar had left the defense of the homeland up to the garrison commanders, and they did not disappoint the man. With the trap sprung and the enemy army annihilated, a quarter of Lothar's forces had died within Kufstein, a fact he would not become aware of for some time, one which would ultimately prove to be his undoing. For when Count Otto's forces finally made it out of the blizzard and into Vienna, a great battle would unfold, one in which Lothar would now be outnumbered due to the heavy losses he suffered here at Kufstein.

Chapter 123: Refugee Crisis

After the battle was over and the area cleaned up, the gates to the city of Kufstein were once more opened, and as such, refugees from across the German-speaking regions began to arrive in Kufstein in search of a better life. Many of these people did not have the ability to bring anything of value with them; as such, they were merely hoping that they would be welcomed with open arms.

Word of Berengar's political reforms brought a great deal of interest among the common folk towards Kufstein; it had become a paradise in the minds of many who had never stepped foot in its territory. While the conditions they would find themselves in were vastly superior to the lives they had before, no doubt a life of labor awaited them.

While Berengar was off at war, Linde was left behind to act as regent. This was a shocking revelation to the nobles who currently comprised of the House of Lords who had been burdened with the task of ushering in Berengar's vision while he was away. Because Berengar had not found a suitable candidate for Chancellor, which under his system would basically be the man he appointed to act as a sort of Vice-President whose vote would break ties in the House of Lords, and who would act as a temporary leader when Berengar was away, he had appointed the person he trusted most around him as Regent which was of course Linde.

Currently, Linde was sitting in Berengar's office space where she was signing bills into laws; these bills were drafted specifically to handle the incidents with the growing refugees. Though they had previously had an influx of peasants fleeing their masters and entering Kufstein, it now seemed as if the entire world was fighting for a position within the city or the many towns and villages

around. Berengar had previously set up a Department of Immigration that handled identity verification and assignment of labor to the newcomers. Currently, Linde was in the act of approved increasing their budget so they could employ more people to handle the ongoing refugee crisis.

Though the city of Kufstein was designed with rapid growth in mind, she could hardly believe the costs incurred in finding appropriate jobs for these migrants and providing education for themselves and their families. Now that she was no longer pregnant, Linde could enjoy a glass of wine or a mug of beer now and then, and as such, she licked her lips as the delectable taste of red wine slid down her throat.

It had been weeks since Berengar first departed for his war, and yet she had already begun to desire his return greatly. While she pondered about when her lover would finally come home, the door to the office opened, and Henrietta was standing in the doorway. Throughout the past six months, her relationship had gradually improved Linde. Though Henrietta would always be on Adela's side, she became accustomed to the idea of having a nephew, and as such, had been spending much time with the infant Hans, which resulted in some degree of amiability to form between herself and Linde.

Considering the Castle had become awfully lonely without Berengar or her Parents around, she could only turn to Linde for socializing. Thus, the little loli approached Linde, who was busy signing documents, and inquired about what she was up to.

"What are you doing?"

Linde sighed heavily as she put down her quill and smiled at Henrietta before answering her question.

"I am managing your brother's affairs for him. With the war, plenty of peasants have come to Kufstein seeking a better life, and as such, I have to expand the department of Immigration and the Department of Education. I also have to put many of them to work in building their own tenements, which of course takes time and money for these unskilled peasants to learn how to handle a job in construction properly."

Henrietta really did not understand half of what Linde was talking about, but she pretended like she knew as she smiled and continued to chat with the woman she once despised.

"Anything else?"

Linde let out a heavy sigh one more and rested her weary head on her fist before complaining about all the work she had to do

"Due to the war, the arms sales have increased rapidly, thus generating sufficient profit, but I also need to expand the garrisons and raise new field armies for Berengar's war efforts. Though 5,250 men may seem like a lot, eventually, there will be losses, and those men need to be replaced. Thus I need to delegate a certain sector of the industrial district solely to producing arms and armor for our own forces. I seriously do not know how your brother manages to do this much work every day; it is exhausting!"

As such, Linde pulled out a flagon of wine and poured more of it into her chalice as she took another large sip from the golden cup. She was well aware of the massive army of Teutonic knights that was coming to their borders, and she needed to rally more troops for Berengar so that when he finished his conquest, he could deal with the Church's forces. As such, she had begun a period of conscription where all male residents of Kufstein aged 16-20 were forced into military service for an undesignated period of time. This also applied to all migrants who made their way to Kufstein; as such, the numbers of Berengar's forces were growing rapidly, so much so that the arms factories could not keep up with the demand for the equipment needed to field and train the conscripts.

Linde's problems were temporary; once properly distributed to the regions and educated in the trades necessary for their careers, the Viscounty of Kufstein would gain a significant amount of benefits from this population growth. Luckily they had implemented the four-field system and other agricultural advancements; as such, they had enough to feed the booming population without relying on imports, at least for now. Deciding she needed to take a break, Linde got up from her desk and walked over to Henrietta before suggesting.

"How about we go take a nice hot bath? I'm getting sore from sitting in this seat all day."

Henrietta smiled and nodded while agreeing

"That sounds fun!"

as such, the two girls absconded to the large bathhouse constructed in the Castle, where they swam in a heated body of water the size of a small swimming pool. Linde would return to her mountain of paperwork after she had finished a brief period of relaxation.

Chapter 124: Northern Surrender

Berengar was currently sitting on the seat of power within Innsbruck, kneeling before him were the surviving Lords of Northern Tyrol. Having lost their regents and the overwhelming majority of the forces they could muster in their disastrous attempt to retake Innsbruck, these men were left with little support to defend against Berengar's invasion. Seeing as how these men were in control of the nearest provinces to Berengar's forces stationed at Innsbruck, they knew their days were numbered and that Tyrol would soon fall into the hands of Berengar. These relatively wise men had traveled to Innsbruck to officially surrender the North to Berengar, and by extension Duke Wilmar.

Berengar, who had a smug smile, was resting his face onto his fist while listening to the terms of surrender in which the Lords presented. At the head of the group was an older man with long white hair and a matching beard. He was a Lord who was the sworn vassal of the Baron of Landeck and was the man representing the interests of the dozen or so Northern Lords who had gathered to surrender to Berengar officially. The man kept himself standing with a cane and slowly announced his words.

"Viscount Berengar, on behalf of the Lords of Northern Tyrol, we present the terms of our surrender. First and foremost, we will recognize you as the reigning authority of Tyrol until Duke Wilmar has defeated Count Lothar and decides on whether or not his family will remain in power. In return for this, we want you to leave our realms in peace and not bring your war to our doorstep; enough blood has already been shed resisting your rule. "

Berengar nodded his head and smiled gracefully at the elderly man

"I accept this condition, are there any more demands?"

The elderly Lord nodded as he continued to speak the terms that the nobility of the region had come up with to negotiate their surrender.

"As you know, we have suffered sabotage to our food storages during this conflict; as such, we would request aid in regards to the crisis we are now facing in our lands."

Berengar thought for a moment about this, while the harvest this year was exceptional for his territory, it was not to the degree where he could feed the other Viscounties and Baronies, it would be some time before he received such yields, as such, he would be forced to buy the grain at his own expense and transfer it to these Lords. However, if he did not do such a thing, many innocent people would starve to death during the remainder of the winter, and he would be directly responsible for it.

As such, he decided to bite the bullet and pay the expense to supply these regions. After all, he was waging war to gain territory and population to aid his growing ambitions. Losing a large chunk of the population of the lands he would conquer from starvation would greatly hinder his future progress. As such, Berengar nodded and agreed to this condition as well.

"Very well, I will pay for your food stores to be adequately resupplied. Anything else?"

The older man nodded his head and spoke of his last condition.

"If you win this war and successfully put down Count Lothar's rebellion, and the Duke decides to appoint Liutbert as his father's successor, we request that you honor this arrangement and do not act as a usurper! If you are truly waging war for the sake of restoring Duke Wilmar's authority to Tyrol, then you will have no problem accepting this condition!"

This put Berengar in a difficult position if he accepted this request, and he was not rewarded with the County of Tyrol for his efforts; he would have waged this war in vain, but if he denied this condition, then he was essentially making it publically known that he was actually nothing more than a usurper, and that would further embolden the remaining regions of Tyrol to continue to defy him,

which would be disastrous as he did not have enough men to lay siege to every city and town in every province of Tyrol. He was relying on a few overwhelming victories at key provinces to force his enemies to the negotiating table. They would be much more likely to do so if they believed Berengar was acting in the interests of Duke Wilmar instead of himself.

Berengar tapped his finger on the armrest of the chair he was seated in several times before coming to a decision. After several moments of near-silence, Berengar finally voiced his decision on this condition.

"I accept... If that is all, then I hereby recognize the surrender of Northern Tyrol."

Seeing Berengar accept the third and final condition made many of the other noblemen smile; truthfully, aside from the Barons, and Viscounts directly under the vassalage of Count Lothar, most of the lesser noblemen who lived in Tyrol were not exactly supportive of Lothar's rebellion and had merely been following orders. With Berengar accepting the final term, they felt that he was sincerely acting as a loyal supporter of the Duke rather than a man who was using the current crisis to usurp the County of Tyrol for his own greed.

As a result of this surrender, Northern Tyrol was temporarily under Berengar's control. He planned to be marching upon Southern Tyrol and Trent shortly in order to capture the remaining territory of the County of Tyrol. For now, Berengar had to think of a way to convince Duke Wilmar to revoke the title of Count of Tyrol from the von Habsburg-Innsbruck dynasty and appoint his own dynasty as the future Counts of Tyrol. Little did he know that when Duke Wilmar finally heard the news that Northern Tyrol had surrendered to Berengar after a little over a month of combat, he would begin to favor Berengar's abilities greatly and would become far more amicable to the idea of making Berengar and the von Kufstein Dynasty the Counts of Tyrol.

For now, Berengar was in the process of resupplying his forces and giving them a much-needed rest; it would be at least a week before he would march upon the South. Luckily for him, Linde had already implemented the process of conscription, and soon enough, he would have reinforcements on the way; it would only take two more months for several thousand more men to finish basic training, by then Berengar would be able to replace his losses, and even gain a significant boost to his armies numbers.

Chapter 125: Adela's Plea

Adela was currently within her room reading a letter from Berengar; Despite the fact that Berengar was off at war; he made sure to send letters to his women as often as he could, informing them of his massive victories in Tyrol. The teenage girl twirled one of her golden twintails as she lay belly down on her bed with a smile on her face. The news she was reading was excellent; the Northern Lords of Tyrol had all surrendered to Berengar, recognizing him as the current authority in Tyrol, and was providing him with what little support they could manage.

Ever since her older brother Gerhart had made a fool out of himself and invoked their father's ire in his failed attempt to demolish the relationship between Berengar and Adela, the young girl had mostly stayed to herself. Aside from eating meals with the family, she would stay within the confines of her room and repeatedly read the letters Berengar had written to her. She wished she was in Kufstein to provide some aid to the man she loved, but unfortunately, she was in Graz for the time being. Though Vienna was under siege and her father was at war, Graz was in a state of peace, albeit one of vigilance.

Oddly enough, Adela and Linde had been corresponding through a series of letters and had seemingly grown closer. However, there was still a rivalry between the two as they both desired to monopolize Berengar's attention for themselves; despite this rivalry, there was some form of amiability among the two young women as they both discussed their concerns over Berengar's safety and desire to be with him again.

After reading Berengar's latest letter for the third time in the past three days, Adela sighed and voiced her concerns aloud.

"Stay safe, Berengar..."

Afterward, she heard a knock on her door and quickly stashed the letter away underneath her mattress before opening the door. In the doorway was her second brother Heimerich; the teenage boy was dressed in a baby blue doublet with a matching jerkin over it. His entire attire was set up in the fashion sense in which Berengar had introduced across the entirety of Austria, which greatly resembled the Tudor style from his previous life. There was a stern look on the handsome youth's face; his facial features were charmingly

robust much like Lambert's. He truly exemplified the archetype of a young Knight. He was seventeen this year and carried an aura of martial authority. Noticing the expression on Heimerich's face, Adela instantly became worried about what might have transpired to force the youth into such a state.

Before Adela could ask what was wrong, Heimerich said in a grave tone

"Come to the Great Hall; I have news about father to report to the family."

Adela knew something must have gone wrong if Heimerich forced her to meet up with her family in the great hall. As such, she quickly put on her slippers and followed her older brother to the Great Hall. When she arrived, she noticed the various expressions on her family's face, especially the anxious look on her mother Wanda's exquisite visage. The only person who did not appear to be worried among her family was Gerhart, who was rather upset that his position of Regent was stripped away from him and given to his little brother. After Heimerich sat down upon the seat of power in Graz, he cleared his throat before making a declaration about the news in which he had received.

"Father is currently on his way to Vienna, he was trapped in a Blizzard within the Bavarian Alps for the past few weeks, which is why he was out of contact, he has lost a fifth of his forces due to attrition, as such he suspects that he will be vastly outnumbered when he tries to take Vienna back from the traitorous Count Lothar. As for the state of Vienna, the Castle has yet to fall, but the city has been completely taken and ravaged by the occupying forces. Father expects heavy resistance and has asked for our prayers..."

Adela's family immediately broke out into fits of prayer as they frantically prayed for the Lord's protection for the head of their household. The only member in the room who was not overly concerned about this news was Adela, this was because she was aware of the destruction of a quarter of Count Lothar's forces at Kufstein. After all, she had already been informed of the events that transpired by Linde. Though her father would have to lay siege to Vienna to defeat Lothar, he would have the advantage in numbers even with his losses from attrition.

War was a dangerous business, and no matter how protected one might seem, anything could happen that might lead to their deaths on the battlefield.

Thus the lives of their loved ones who were off fighting in some distant region of Austria were in the hands of the Lord, and they could only pray for his mercy. As a pious girl, Adela joined her family in prayer to the Lord to protect her father, as well as Berengar, as they both continued to fight for their family and nation.

After being informed of her father's situation, Adela realized that she had the ability to aid in her father's siege by asking for support from Kufstein; as such, she returned to her room, where she quickly wrote a letter to Linde informing her of the current situation with Vienna. Due to Berengar's conquest of Tyrol, Adela doubted whether or not he would be able to receive her request for aid before it was too late; as such, she sent the letter to Linde, who she knew was currently acting as Berengar's stand-in within Kufstein.

The letter contained a formal request for material aid to Count Otto's forces to eliminate Count Lothar and his allies at Vienna. Adela knew that Kufstein was in no position to split its armies and attack Lothar where he was at his strongest; however, she also knew that Kufstein's agricultural and industrial sectors were greater than any other region in Austria, and as such, she requested logistical support from Kufstein to her father's siege of Vienna.

Adela was quite worried; though she and Linde were no longer outright enemies, they were not exactly allies either. She was asking the young woman to act on behalf of her romantic rival to capture or eliminate her own father. Though Linde had already greatly betrayed her father and his schemes, those actions were on behalf of Berengar, who she was deeply in love with, whether or not she would provide logistical support to Count Otto and his forces was yet to be determined.

After signing the letter with her signature, Adela quickly handed it off to a messenger who would travel across the Duchy of Austria, where he would hand it off to Linde in Kufstein. Hopefully, the young teenage girl could receive Kufstein's support and greatly enhance her father's chances of victory and, more importantly, survival.

Chapter 126: Preparing for an Invasion

At the moment, Berengar was standing in the Great Hall of Innsbruck surrounded by his Officers; in front of them was a large table with a giant map splayed across it; upon this large map were wooden figures acting as

representations of Berengar, his allies, and his enemies. It had been roughly a month since Berengar first began his campaign to conquer Tyrol. After several overwhelming victories, he now found himself controlling roughly a third of the territory in which he had desired to conquer.

Since the beginning of the War, when Berengar first left Kufstein, he had put in place measures to begin conscription, he knew his meager army of a little over 5,000 men was not enough to maintain control of Tyrol in its entirety, and as such had begun a new wave of recruitment designed to adequately train the conscripts in the use of firearms, line tactics, and basic combat maneuvers within a matter of weeks.

Though it was not the Grand Army of Germany that he had envisioned for the future, his current needs required him to make some sacrifices in the training regimen and the equipment in which the conscripts would use. As such, Berengar had tasked the armories to manufacture the 1417 Land Pattern Musket instead of the more advanced 1417/18 Rifled Musket.

At the moment, 5,000 conscripts in the form of infantry were waiting in Innsbruck alongside the veteran forces of Berengar's army. While they waited for their orders Berengar was discussing with his Officers the best path forward into the conquest of Tyrol.

Berengar moved a set of Infantry figures across the map and into the position of Sterzing, Meran, and Schlanders which were the primary hubs of rebellious forces in Southern Tyrol, before announcing his plan for a rapid conquest of his enemies to the men by his side.

"The plan is simple, these three cities are the key centers of resistance to my authority in Tyrol, with the aid of the armies of the Lords who have declared their support for me, we will split our army into three components, I will take Sterzing, Eckhard will lead the forces to Meran, and Arnulf will command the men at Schlanders. In one single swoop, we will bring South Tyrol under our authority before moving onto Trent!"

Eckhard agreed with the plan but also had some concerns; as such, he decided to voice them at the moment.

"What about our position in North Tyrol? How many men will we leave behind to secure our interests?"

Berengar smiled; as always, Eckhard did not lose sight of the big picture, so Berengar made a bold declaration.

"500 men in Innsbruck, and 500 in Schwaz, as for the remaining regions in the North, establish 250 man garrisons to secure the loyalty of the Lords who have pledged their support to me."

Eckhard nodded in agreement; though these were rather large garrisons, they would be able to adequately defend the regions from enemy sieges, especially with their technological superiority. Eckhard's next question was in regards to the artillery Battalion.

"What about the artillery?"

Berengar had already developed a plan regarding the most efficient use of artillery, and thus he explained his plans to Eckhard.

"We will split the battalion into three separate batteries; one will go with each army to ensure that there is sufficient firepower at each siege to bring down the walls of the enemies."

Listening to Berengar's plans, the Officers of his army, largely comprised of the Knights and Nobility from Kufstein, had nodded their heads firmly in agreement. If they continued to act as a single army, it might take them months if not years to bring Tyrol completely under their control, seeing how this campaign was only a smaller part of the Civil War going across Germany at the moment, nobody wanted to spend that much time securing a small region like Tyrol.

Arnulf, who had been listening to Berengar's words, had a single thought on his mind, and as such, voiced his concerns.

"What if Lothar returns from Vienna? It has been well over a month since he first began his siege of Vienna, and he should be close to victory by now."

Berengar shook his head and responded to Arnulf's concerns with the latest information he had received.

"Lothar is busy defending Vienna from Count Otto, whose forces have arrived and begun besieging the city in an attempt to wrest it from Lothar's grasp. He and his armies will not be returning to Tyrol any time soon, and if they do make it out of Vienna alive, their numbers will greatly be reduced."

Hearing this news Arnulf, and many of the other officers felt more relaxed about Berengar's plans. This three-pronged operation was nicknamed Operation Trident and would be a deciding factor in Berengar's victory in the war for Tyrol. As such, Berengar chatted with the officers for some time in great detail about logistics and tactics before finally ending this strategic meeting.

"Gentlemen, if all of your questions have been answered, then you should get some rest for tomorrow at the break of dawn; we will march upon our enemies! God with us!"

Immediately upon shouting that last part, the men all saluted Berengar and shouted the phrase which had become the battle cry of the armies of Kufstein.

"God with us!"

After ending the meeting in such a way, the officers returned to their forces to prepare them for the coming battle. With this, Berengar returned to his temporary quarters, where he sat down on the bed and sighed heavily into the dimly lit room in which he resided alone.

"I need to finish this war quickly so I can return to Kufstein and into the loving arms of Linde..."

After having such a thought, Berengar prepared himself for the night and then went to sleep, thinking not of the violence and brutality that he would soon be enduring, but of his two women, and his infant son. He began to reminisce about the days of the not-so-distant past which were far more peaceful than the ones he currently found himself in. It was hard to believe that he had only been reincarnated into this world less than a year ago.

He had accomplished so much in this small amount of time, especially when compared to his previous life, whereby the time he was 21, he was still at Westpoint achieving absolutely nothing in his life; coming from a relatively poor background, he had spent his entire youth gaining the knowledge and grades necessary to get an academic scholarship so that he could attend a university, ultimately after several life factors Westpoint became his best option, and so he begrudgingly chose to join the military. After graduating, he wasted his life away in the hellhole known as Afghanistan until his final days.

In this life, Berengar was fortunate enough to be reincarnated into Nobility. After getting his first taste of real power and wealth, Berengar had become incredibly ambitious, no longer desiring to simply industrialize Kufstein and retire in wealth and luxury. Now that he had a chance, he wanted to be like the many great men from history he had read about in his past life. Thinking of past, present, and future, Berengar fell asleep with a smile on his face. His conquest had only just begun!

Chapter 127: An Awkward Family Reunion

The light of dawn shone down onto the burgeoning city of Kufstein; the star-shaped walls that protected the city and its inhabitants were split down the middle as the river Inn flowed through the center of the City. A large castle rose above the many tenements constructed in the half-timber style commonly found in the German-speaking regions. Though Berengar had plans to move into a more modern palace, at the moment, the Castel in Kufstein acted as the main residence for Berengar and his family.

Within the Dining room, Linde sat at the head of the table at the left side, which was the spot reserved for the Viscountess; of course, at the moment, there was no Viscountess of Kufstein since Berengar was unmarried, albeit engaged to Adela. However, since Berengar's parents abdicated and retired to the countryside, Berengar had allowed Linde to use the seat. Today was a rare occasion for the Castle in Kufstein, for it held a rather lively gathering. Just this morning, her siblings arrived from Innsbruck, in which they had been transported to Kufstein under the guise of "Berengar's protection" in reality, they were under house arrest, and Linde was watching over them.

Aside from Linde and her siblings, Henrietta sat at the table and was greatly uncomfortable with the whole situation. Liutbert was sitting in the spot Berengar used to sit at before his reign, which was closest to the seat

reserved for the Viscount, which was currently vacant. He could not help himself from staring at Linde with confusion. This was not the sister he had grown up with; there was no coldness nor contempt in her eyes for everything around her. Instead, she wore a gentle smile and gazed upon her family with genuine fondness. It had been many months since she last saw her siblings, and though Linde's relationship with her father was strained, to say the least, she was willing to try to get closer to her siblings.

Eventually, Liutbert had to express his doubts over Linde's shift in character.

"Who are you, and what have you done with my sister?"

In the past, such a rude comment would have sent Linde into a fury, but now she merely laughed it off, as she recognized that her personality had changed greatly in the last year. Instead, she replied to Liutbert by asking about his meal.

"How are you enjoying your meal, Liutbert? Surely the breakfast here in Kufstein is better than anything you have ever had in Innsbruck!"

Liutbert fell for the sleight of hand and quickly took a bite out of the breakfast sandwich the kitchen staff had prepared before responding to his little sister.

"It is excellent; I did not know such fine cuisine existed!"

Linde chuckled at his remark and taunted him for his inexperience with Kufstein's culinary arts.

"If you think this is good, wait until you have had dinner! You will never want to leave this place."

As Liutbert and Linde discussed the meal Adelheid was glaring at Linde, she could not believe the changes in her precious big sister's personality over the past year. It was too dramatic, just what sorcery had Berengar cast to make her once proud and domineering big sister transform into such a sorry state. However, she did not wish to make a scene and, as such, kept her thoughts to herself.

Eventually, Linde's little brother Herman interrupted the ongoing conversation and steered it into deep waters; he was scowling at his two older siblings and scolded his big sister, who he had once looked up to, for her lack of loyalty to the family.

"I can not believe you betrayed our father! All for that traitor Berengar, who as we speak is currently ravaging our family's lands in an attempt to steal away father's rightful title!"

Herman was roughly the age of Adela; he had just entered his teenage years and was filled with intense rage every time he thought about his older brother's surrender at Innsbruck and his older sister's outright betrayal. After all, Linde not only slept with the traitor Berengar but had actively plotted against their family in support of Berengar's ambitions; to him, his sister's actions were completely unforgivable.

Linde glared menacingly at Herman; the boy clearly did not understand how wrathful Berengar could be; luckily for him and his siblings, they were all allowed to live peacefully in Kufstein under house arrest, where they could dine on the greatest food and live in absolute luxury while the war waged on.

Seeing his elder sister's fury, which he was all too familiar with, a cold sweat broke out on Herman's forehead as he shivered at the thought of what Linde might do to him for speaking ill of her lover. He immediately shifted his glance back to the plate where he ate the omelet in front of him. Linde, however, would not let such an accusation slide by, and as such, she addressed Herman's statement.

"Why would I ever support father and his damned obsession with becoming Duke? Since when had father ever paid the slightest bit of attention to us kids! Our entire lives, he has neglected us to pursue his dreams of being Duke of Austria, all because he has an inferiority complex about being part of the branch family and not the main Habsburg line. If you ask me, he deserves to lose his head for his treasonous actions. Berengar is not a traitor. Instead, he is the only one of Father's major vassals who has enough of a conscience to act against father's illegitimate rebellion!"

Though Linde's words were harsh, they were also true, at least regarding the parts about her father. Count Lothar considered all of his children as

disposable pawns whose sole purpose was to advance his ambitions. He was never much of a fatherly figure to his children, which is one of the reasons why Linde had turned out so poorly before she met Berengar. Though Linde was spoiled growing up, it was only a way for Lothar to coerce her into acting in his treasonous plots. The reason Count Lothar was so enraged about Berengar and Linde's affair was twofold firstly the man saw Berengar as nothing more than low nobility unworthy of mixing with his family's prestigious blood. Secondly, Berengar had not only taken his daughter's chastity but also impregnated her, thus taking away the ability to make a powerful political alliance through marriage.

Though Herman wanted to defend his father's actions, he really could not find the words to do so. Instead, he sat in silence like a child who his mother had just caught with his hand in the cookie jar. There was a rift between Linde's family at the moment; this was due to the results of her actions and that of their fathers. As such, they continued the remainder of their meal in silence; this little family reunion turned out to be more awkward than any of them had realized. While Berengar was off at war, Linde was now tasked with not only looking after the affairs of the realm but also keeping a watchful eye on her family, ultimately the only member of her family who was completely on her side as her little half-sister Adelheid.

Chapter 128: Blood in the Snow

At the moment Berengar and his army were crossing into the Southern portion of Tyrol, his armies had recently split and headed in separate directions, and he was now in command of a force numbering roughly 5,000 men in total, half of which were his own forces. The other half of the army comprised levies from the southern Lordships, which supported Berengar's campaign to put down Lothar's rebellion and re-capture Tyrol from the traitorous lords who openly defied the authority of Duke Wilmar.

Unlike Berengar's army, which was filled with the most veteran members of his infantry and cavalry units. The peasant levies were poorly equipped, and many of them had never seen a battle in their lives. At most, they would act as cannon fodder for Berengar's forces; their role would be to soak up the enemy's missile fire while his troops gunned down the hostiles. At the moment, it was late in the morning but not quite yet noon, the wind was still, and all that could be heard were the sounds of thousands of feet marching to

the beat of the drums as the infantrymen sang another one of Berengar's marching songs.

After crossing through the frosty crags of the alps, Berengar's forces finally found themselves in a position overlooking the city of Sterzing in the distance. However, to their surprise, they also saw an army marching towards them. It would appear that the enemy had opted to sally forth into the field in an attempt to intercept Berengar's forces and eliminate them before they entered the boundaries of the city. As such, Berengar shouted for his troops to hear.

"Form ranks!"

His commands were passed onto the Officers and the NCOs before finally reaching the enlisted personnel. With this command, the veteran forces of Berengar's army formed lines and began to load their weapons. The artillery battery also began to take an elevated position above the field below where the enemy army was marching. The cavalry did their jobs and took positions on the flanks, where they would soon be rushing the enemy army. There was no cavalry to speak of in the enemy's forces; in fact, much like everywhere else in Tyrol at the moment, the professional forces were all gathered with Lothar in Vienna, leaving behind small garrisons and large groups of levies to defend their homes.

There were a few noblemen and knights, but they quickly dismounted from their horses the moment they saw the overwhelming number of cavalry Berengar had brought with them. As such, the Cuirassiers of Berengars ranks slowly began to trod off at the enemy position while his infantry prepared their muskets. The levies at the moment were used to protect the flanks of Berengar's line infantry. With this formation rapidly assembled Berengars forces began to march slowly and uniformly towards the enemy army, the cavalry already beginning their charge.

As the cavalry charged towards the enemy, the thunder of the 12 lb cannons resounded in the distance as explosive shells were launched upon the enemy forces. The explosive blast and the shrapnel from the shells battered the enemy forces. Quickly turning the lightly armored levies into chunks of flesh and meat paste. Limbs were scattered, heads rolled, and blood stained the snow below. However, there was only one battery able to fire upon the

enemy. As such, the numbers of the enemy forces who were affected by the barrage were significantly less than in Berengar's previous battles.

Berengar was naturally at the head of the cavalry and quickly pulled both of his pistols from Erwin's saddle; it was already loaded and prepared to fire; all that needed to be done was cocking the flintlock action, which Berengar and his Cuirassiers did in unison. The enemy had a few archers with them and began to fire on the steel-clad horses of Berengar's cuirassiers, at this period in history, barding was still an effective way to protect your horse, and as such, Berengar had spent a great sum of money armoring the horses of his cavalry, after all, they cost him a fortune to purchase, it would be a shame if they died so easily on the battlefield.

The arrows loosed upon his cavalry as a large volley fell from the sky as if they were raindrops, yet to the dismay of the enemy's forces, the arrows failed to gravely injure neither the horses nor the cuirassiers. Instead, the three-quarter's plate armor and the steel plate barding covered the majority of the cavalry's body, deflected the bolts as if a padded arrow was hitting them. If anything a few arrows found their way into the gaps in the armor, but these were not vital areas, and as such did little more than inflict pain upon the riders and their horses.

As such, the enemy levies quickly raised their spears, anticipating a clash from the heavily armored Cavalry forces, however before such a situation could occur, the horses strafed out of the direction of the spear walls and galloped to the side. While the horses maneuvered in this way, the hundreds of Cuirassiers pulled on the triggers of their two pistols and aimed down the enemy at point-blank range.

As the hundreds of pistols went off, they quickly cut through what meager defenses the levies were equipped with and shredded the bodies of the men who made contact with the lead balls. Blood-curdling screams filled the air as the blood of the levies splashed upon their comrades. After firing their shots, the cuirassiers quickly stowed away their pistols and unsheathed their heavy cavalry swords as they rerouted their horses into a full-scale charge.

By now, the enemy ranks, which was comprised of mostly greenhorn levies, were filled with terror and dread as they were pushed forward by the somewhat more veteran forces behind them into the meat grinder. They could

not help but think to themselves that the weapons in which Berengar and his army wielded were some form of vile sorcery gained by consorting with the devil's minions. These were an uneducated and superstitious bunch, and the propaganda the Church put out about Berengar filled their fearful minds as they walked ever closer to the enemy formations.

When the musketeers finally got within firing range, they formed a proper firing squad with the first column kneeling and the second holding their rifles above the heads of their kneeling comrades. The Officers gave the orders to fire, which resulted in over a thousand lead projectiles flying down range and into the bodies of the levies advancing upon them.

With a single volley, the hostile peasant levies were quickly overwhelmed by Berengar's technological superiority, many of which had begun to break ranks and flee back to the city. As for the brave souls who remained and continued to fight Berengar's forces, they were quickly cut down by another volley of fire before even reaching their enemies.

Unlike previous battles, Berengar did not immediately give chase. Instead, he raised his fists and gave the opposite order.

"Halt!"

With that, his forces came to a sudden stop. The levies of Berengar's forces were thanking god that their lords were wise enough to join forces with Berengar, for if it were them who had marched upon such an army, they too would be lying dead in the snow. After gazing upon the violent remains of the battlefield, Berengar noticed a sea of corpses whose blood had drained out onto the snow below. The grim sight had left those uninitiated among Berengar's ranks feeling sick to their stomachs.

After standing in the cold gazing upon the grizzly scene, one of the Lords who had backed Berengar finally snapped out of his daze, the scenes of the battle that had just been waged consumed his sense of reason for quite some time. Now that his mind had returned to him, he asked Berengar about the routing enemies.

"Should we not pursue them?"

Berengar merely shook his head and pointed his blood-stained sword at the piles of hundreds of corpses that lay scattered across the frost-covered ground before speaking the thoughts on his mind. A wicked grin was on his face as he revealed the details of his plan.

"They have already paid a great price for rebelling against us; when the survivors return to the city and inform the garrison of what they have witnessed here today, how do you think that will affect the morale of the defenders? When we finally lay siege to this city and unleash the power of our guns upon it, do you think they will still have the will to fight?"

With that said, the lords who had backed Berengar instantly thought what would have happened to them if they had chosen to stand with Lothar against Berengar, and they shivered at the chilling thought. Surely their cities would be next. Luckily for them, they had chosen to back the right horse.

Without allowing the lords time to respond to his remarks, Berengar raised his sword in the air and commanded the army behind him.

"I want a siege camp built before sundown! Forward March!"

With that, the army that had suffered few casualties in this battle began to march upon the City of Sterzing, where they would lay siege to it for the next few days. Though Berengar had no way of knowing how his other two armies were faring, he had a feeling that they were in a similar position to him right now. As such, he smiled as he rode on horseback into the vicinity of the City of Sterzing.

Chapter 129: Establishing Camp at Sterzing

Berengar sat atop his trusty steed Erwin, the muscular black destrier gallantly trodded at the front of the Army in which Berengar was currently leading. Aside from the thousands of infantry he had at his back, the man also led a few thousand levies raised from the Lords and Regents of the portion of Southern Tyrol in which supported Berengar and his campaign. Beside him were the commanders of these mostly levy-based units; they were clad in knightly armor in the design fitting for the time period.

This army was one of three which had begun to march on three critical regions, which acted as the centers of rebellion against Duke Wilmar within

the region of Tyrol. By laying siege to these areas, Berengar would effectively bring Southern Tyrol under his control in one fell swoop. As such, Berengar smiled as the men in his army sang along to the marching song Erika from his previous life; it had become one of the favorites of the men in his army.

The levies and noblemen who were marching aside Berengar and his army were quite confused about the chipper nature of Berengar's soldiers. The veterans of Berengar's army knew that thus far casualties had been low among their forces, and now they had a bunch of levies to soak up the enemy's arrows and bolts. Thus they were in a perfect mood; as for the conscripts who recently joined the army, they were following their seniors' lead.

Before long, Berengar's forces had arrived at the city of Sterzing and once more made camp outside of the enemy's range of fire but well within their own. Though he only had three cannons in this army, as he had split up the battalion among the three armies, if concentrated on one wall, it would be more than enough to open a gap for his forces to charge through.

The cannoneers, who at this point were well accustomed to laying siege, had quickly set up the guns behind some defensive barriers and began to fire off at the city's walls. When the thunder of the guns echoed into the evening sky, the many levies became frightened, not knowing how to react to such a thing. Seeing the distraught expressions on the faces of the levies, the veterans and conscripts of Berengar's army all began to laugh at the men and the pathetic looks on their faces.

If these levies looked like they were about to shit bricks, they could only imagine the faces of the enemies currently bombarded with explosive shells. Berengar decided to take a moment to comment on the situation.

"Is there anything more beautiful than the echo of an artillery battery and the smell of gunpowder amid a cold winter's sunset?"

He was speaking to his officers and the lords who had gathered to support him. If Eckhard were here at the moment, he would probably sigh and think to himself that Berengar was enjoying himself a little too much in this campaign of his. As for the other officers under Berengar's command, they all gazed off into the sunset much like Berengar had and took a moment to listen to the

thunder of guns and the screams of the bombarded among the beautiful scenery.

One of his officers spoke up to Berengar and his twisted idea of beauty

"My Lord... I think you should lie down; you are clearly unwell..."

Berengar merely chuckled at the man's comments and smiled as he inhaled deeply, enjoying the scene before his eyes. After snapping back to reality after several moments, Berengar gave the officers their orders.

"Well, what are you all standing around and waiting for? Make sure the camp is properly established, and the sentries are set to schedule!" We don't want a repeat of what happened in Schwaz, do we?"

Fearing the backlash of their Lord and Commander, the officers quickly got to task assembling the siege camp. Under the sunset, thousands of black and gold tents were quickly set up, with a series of trenches supported by sandbags and barbed wire established around the perimeter. Guard towers were on all sides to keep a watchful eye on the potential arrival of enemies.

Berengar had failed to use a trench system outside of Schwaz, which was a mistake on his part. By digging a semi-modern trench system around the encampment, he was capable of providing a vastly superior line of defense against oncoming attackers, which could fully make use of the several hundred rifled muskets in his army and their range advantage.

As the sun faded away and the moon replaced it in the sky above, Berengar decided to take the first watch. Thus he grabbed ahold of a musket, loaded it, and climbed into the trench system where several sentries were keeping watch. Seeing their Lord and Commander jump in the hole with them, these new conscripts were quite shocked. Theyx expected Berengar to be in some large tent, with a fire going and maybe even a woman by his side. Yet here he was, taking up the first watch in the trenches alongside them.

Berengar gazed into the distance as he looked upon the city's walls, which were under a near-constant bombardment. It would take a few days for the walls to come down, and when they did, resistance in the South would come to a swift end as long as the other sieges were also successful. Though with

his tactics, and the enemy's lack of understanding towards them, he did not fear defeat in this war.

It would be quite sometime before the other European powers would begin fielding firearms en masse. However, his victory in this war would certainly spark the development of such sophisticated weapons. Due to Berengar's influence on this timeline's events, the matchlock would come into existence far earlier than it had in his past life.

When it did, Berengar would finally be facing some stiffer resistance from his opponents, but for now, the advantages that firearms presented were too great for his enemies to overcome. Military historians would study Berengar's campaign in Tyrol for generations to come. This war in which Berengar fought would symbolize the end of an era, as soon the entire world realized that the age of knights and chivalry had long passed. The era of steel and shot had just begun!

Chapter 130: Right of Conquest

Berengar spent the first shift of the night on watch, protecting the barriers of the camp as a sentry within the trenches. The use of a trench line supported by sandbags and barbed wire was an invention that would normally not exist until the late 19th century. However, with his past life's memory as a combat engineer, Berengar developed such a defensive system with ease.

Barbed wire had been used extensively in his fields to keep cattle and other domesticated livestock within the boundaries of the grazing land allotted to them. However, after the ambush on his previous encampment in Schwaz, Berengar quickly learned to utilize trench tactics. When he was resupplying in Innsbruck, he ordered a barbed wire shipment to his army.

The sappers in his army spent some time constructing such complex fortifications. Still, in the end, the encampment was so well defended that the likelihood they would suffer significant casualties from an enemy ambush was extremely low. Luckily for them, after seeing the odd defenses of the camp, the enemy did not bother to send a force to test it; it was already terrifying enough to suffer the explosive bombardment of the 12 lb cannons.

After staying on the watch for the first shift, Berengar returned to his tent and slept until the dawn, where he was among the first of his troops to awaken in

the morning. Though he did not have access to coffee at the moment, he fully intended to establish a trade with the Byzantine empire in exchange for coffee when his territory grew to a significant enough degree that he could trade with Empire to the East with ease.

As for now, Berengar and his troops primarily relied on their own natural ability to awaken and stay awake. When the morning came, the armies gathered in the trenches, and those with the 1417/18 Rifled Muskets fired off shots at the defenders on the wall with a fair degree of competency. Though not every shot claimed the defenders' lives, enough of them hit their mark to permanently scare the garrison of Sterzing to keep their heads down.

While his troops utilized their advanced weapons to intimidate the enemy forces, Berengar was in discussion with his officers over his plans for the ongoing war effort. Like normal, Berengar drank from a pitcher of light beer as he continued his discussion about the operation to his officers and the Lords in command of the many units of levies that comprised their ranks.

"It will take another day or two before the wall comes down; as such, we will continue to bombard it regularly; when the wall finally crumbles, we will send the levies into the fray while the line infantry will be kept behind and fire upon the defenders on the wall. The Cavalry will stay and protect the encampment until a time arises where the enemy has been pushed back."

Though the lords who had shown their support to Berengar were perturbed by the fact that their levies would be used to storm the gap, they could not very well decline. As for Berengar's officers, they were more concerned about the success of Operation Trident as a whole, and as such, one of them voiced their concerns.

"What about Eckhard and Arnulf's armies? How are they faring?"

Berengar slid the wooden pieces which represented the allied forces into position outside of the city walls of Schlanders and Meran and addressed the Officer's question.

"I have recently received notice that Arnulf and Eckhard's armies have begun to lay siege to the rebellious cities. Within a week, the majority of the resistance in the South will come to an end, and we will be able to march on

the Prince-Bishopric of Trent, thus ending the rebellion within Tyrol once and for all!"

The push into Trent would require the unification of his three armies. With his ambitions to conquer the region, Berengar was taking advantage of the rebellion in Tyrol to seize the land in its entirety, even what would be considered Italian regions in the 21st century. Trent was not technically part of the County of Tyrol; they were, in fact, an independent Prince-Bishopric and recognized as Church territory.

Due to the conflicts between Berengar and the Church, Berengar had fully intended to conquer the region and incorporate it into his territory. Especially since the Bishop of Trent had openly declared his support for the Tyrolean rebels, simply out of spite for Berengar. By doing so, the Church had given Berengar an excuse to invade The Prince-Bishopric of Trent and thus unite the entirety of Tyrol under his authority; since Berengar was given this opportunity, he did not intend to waste it.

His plans to march on Trent did not sit well with the other Lords who considered it an unlawful annexation of ecclesiastical territory. One of the Lords even spoke his mind on the matter, which visibly upset Berengar.

"You intend to march on an ecclesiastical principality? Under what grounds do you dare to usurp the territory of the Church?"

Berengar stared coldly at the old and pious noblemen who had sided with Berengar out of support of Duke Wilmar, despite his religious objections to the heretic known by the church as Berengar the Accursed. The look in Berengar's eyes displayed his murderous intent; rather than justify his actions through the legal jargon, Berengar took a more daring approach.

"The Church has already declared war upon me! Therefore Trent will be mine by right of conquest! Since I have the might to seize their territory, I will do so, and if the Bishop of Trent has any complaints, he can say it directly to my face before I have him placed in front of a firing squad!"

The fact that the Church had sent the Teutonic Order on a mission to invade Berengar's lands and usurp his authority was already considered a declaration

of war by the young Viscount's standards; as such, he did not fear invading their nearby lands and capturing them for himself.

As for the allied Lords, they could tell by the look in Berengar's eyes that he was entirely serious about conquering Trent and that he would not be persuaded otherwise. Though they disagreed with his actions, they were far too frightened by the weapons his army possessed. Thus they were intimidated into backing down and following orders; though they secretly prayed that they would not be excommunicated for following Berengar's orders.

After concluding his thoughts and informing his Officers of how to proceed, Berengar dismissed the men and allowed them to spend their free time as they wished. There was not much to do outside of maintaining order and waiting for the wall to crumble down. Thus Berengar used this time to write to Linde and Adela. Informing him of his progress and that his war would swiftly come to an end.

As the cannons roared and the muskets echoed throughout the day, Berengar found himself in a tranquil mood, soon enough, the walls would come crumbling down, and his forces would invade the city. By then, the defenders would either surrender the castle to him in fear of retribution, or a massacre would unfold. Either way, Berengar would be happy with the results. As for Eckhard and Arnulf, their armies were similar in laying siege to the enemy while staying in their camps. While the war in Tyrol progressed rapidly, the remainder of the conflicts in the German regions were bogged down in long sieges and bloody field battles.

Only Berengar and his use of superior technology and tactics could so quickly win a war. As for the rest of Germany, Berengar reckoned it would be years before the conflict was over, and he fully intended to spend a fair portion of his time securing his power and advancing his new territory once he officially conquered Tyrol and established himself as a legitimate Count.