

## Steel 251

### *Chapter 251: Adela's Concerns*

Within the city of Graz, deep inside the belly of its Castle, was a young woman in the middle of her adolescent years. This girl was Adela von Graz the fiancée of the infamous Duke Berengar von Kufstein. While Berengar was beginning to introduce a series of legal reforms that would shock the European world, his fiancée was reading a letter written to her by her rival in love.

This rival was none other than Linde von Habsburg. With the arrival of Princess Honoria, Linde felt a significant threat to her position and thought it was necessary to inform Adela about the situation since Berengar had purposely neglected to mention the appearance of a new potential rival.

This letter did not openly entail the secret that Linde suspected this young woman from the east to be the lost Princess of the East. Instead, it merely introduced her as a young maiden lying about her identity and trying to get close to Berengar.

However, as Adela read the contents, her expression began to sink. She was well aware of the relationship between Berengar and Linde at this point; after all, it was common knowledge. She had even come to terms with the idea of Berengar taking a lover on the side and had convinced herself that great men were capable of doing such a thing.

However, news of a foreign beauty from the east who was potentially lying about her identity while trying to capture Berengar's attention was something Adela did not take lightly. Judging by the contents of the letter, Adela figured there was more to the story.

If Linde was worried about this new arrival to the point where she would write a letter to Adela, it was a fairly serious situation. Adela lay down upon her bed as she read the contents of the letter with a pouting face. She instantly voiced her discontent with the situation.

"Berengar, you dummy!"

Adela had a quick wit, and she instantly looked closer at the letter; perhaps something that she missed would explain Linde's worry more adequately. After studying the letter, Adela found it was written in code; if she could write down the first letter of every third word, it formed an expression of its own.

She quickly began to decipher the content, and after writing it down on a separate piece of paper, two words stuck out like a sore thumb.

"Princess Honoria"

Adela was not too familiar with the royal court of the Byzantine Empire, and as such, was utterly unaware of who Princess Honoria was. Still, the fact that this young maiden from the east had the title of Princess could only mean one thing. Adela's position as the primary wife was being threatened.

After all, if Berengar were to add a Princess to his collection of beautiful young women, then indeed it made sense for him to marry her instead, especially if she came from a powerful kingdom. With this news, the young girl was beginning to nibble on her thumbs in anxiety.

After careful consideration, she realized that her fourteenth birthday was around the corner, and she would have to have a conversation with Berengar about this when he finally arrived. As such, she wrote a letter to Linde thanking her for informing her of these matters and requesting her presence at her birthday so the two of them could confront Berengar about this issue together.

After writing the letter, Adela heard a knock on her door. As such, she quickly walked over to the door and opened it, revealing the voluptuous figure of her eldest sister Ava, who by now had a worrisome expression on her face.

Since Berengar's reconquest of Austria, Ava's husband Wolfgang had been deposed as count of Salzburg and replaced by his younger brother at Berengar's behest. Despite her and her husband's apologies for their actions while Berengar stayed in Graz, the man had gone through with his threat. He thoroughly removed Wolfgang from any position of authority, he did so while Conrad was still alive, and he was the Regent of Austria.

Since then, Wolfgang and Ava had permanently moved to Graz at the behest of the new Count of Salzburg; after all, the man could never forgive his older brother for forsaking their homeland and fleeing Steiermark while Salzburg was embroiled in warfare.

Since then, Ava and her husband had become humbled, and with Adela being the fiancée of the new Duke of Austria, Ava no longer found her for the daily conflict. Instead, she had begun to grovel at Adela's feet so that the young girl might convince her future husband to restore Wolfgang's position.

Thus after Adela saw Ava in her doorway, she began to sigh and shake her head as she asked Ava the question on her mind.

"What now, Ava? I am a little bit busy!"

Ava could tell that Adela was distressed, which was unusual for the little girl who was usually so full of life; as such, she instantly saw it as a way to curry favor with her younger sister. Thus Ava put on a worried facade and returned Adela's question with one of her own.

"Little Adela, is everything alright? You look quite upset...."

Though Adela knew what games Ava was playing, she honestly didn't care, as it would be nice to vent her frustrations to someone. As such, she opened the door all the way and allowed Ava into the room before she sat down on her bed and hugged her pillow.

"A Princess is visiting Berengar, and I am afraid he will try to marry her instead...."

Ava was quite shocked by this; when she had tried to seduce Berengar, he paid no attention to her natural charms. Thus she was also quite upset when she heard some other woman had begun to attempt to latch onto her little sister's beloved fiancé.

However, she hid her inner fury and tried to console Adela instead

"A princess, huh? What Princess? Do you know her name and what Kingdom she is from?"

Hearing this, Adela merely shook her head before responding to her sister as she stared at the floor.

"I have never heard of her before. Do you know who Princess Honoria is?"

Ava had to think about it for a few moments before a light sparkled in her eyes, and she remembered where she had heard the name.

"Where did you hear that Princess Honoria had visited Berengar? That should not be possible; as far as I know, there is only one Princess by that name, the Imperial Princess of the Byzantine Empire, supposedly she is quite the beauty.

However, she has been locked up in the palace her entire life and is restricted from interacting with outsiders. There is no possible way she has visited Kufstein to see Berengar, her father the Emperor wouldn't allow it!"

Hearing this, Adela's eyes lit up, and the dread she felt began to fade away; she might have been reading too much into the letter. Still, the odds of a hidden message like what she had found by pure coincidence were entirely non-existent.

As such, she decided to show Ava the letter, and after explaining to her how she found out about the Princess's name, a scowl formed on Ava's face as she tried to think through what this meant. Eventually, Ava came to a conclusion and began to suggest what she thought the message conveyed to her little sister.

"In the actual letter, it appears as if this girl is going by the name Valeria Zonara, and she claims she is from Antioch. However, Linde suspects she is lying about her identity. The hidden message might be the guess she has about her identity.

I highly doubt that it is princess Honoria, unless, of course, she ran away from home to visit Berengar, but that's impossible, right? I mean, how would she even know who Berengar is? Let alone how could she get to Kufstein by herself? This has to be some form of mistake."

Adela nodded at Ava's comment; it made sense. However, she also knew Linde's character well enough to know that she would never panic like this and send Adela an encrypted message with a suspected identity unless she was positive about her conclusion. Thus her sister's comments did little to calm Adela's nerves, despite the sound logic.

After a few moments of thinking things through, Adela realized there was no point worrying about such a thing. She would have to confront Berengar when he arrived for her birthday. It was not far away, and she could wait patiently for an answer until then.

Seeing Adela cheer up, Ava began to ask her the question that was actually on her mind.

"Now that you are in a better mood, can you ask your fiancé to restore Wolfgang's position for me!"

Hearing this, Adela merely rolled her eyes and began to push Ava out of her room.

"Get out of my room Ava!"

Despite Ava's protests, she eventually found herself on the other side of the door pouting. This was the thirteenth time she had asked Adela today, and as per usual, she was rejected. She would have to find some other way to convince the girl to talk to her fiance about the issue at hand.

### *Chapter 252: Berengar and Honoria*

While Berengar was in the middle of his usual office work, Honoria patiently waited outside his study. Even though she was allowed to move within the City of Kufstein freely, she mainly had stayed inside the Castle, waiting for opportune moments to approach the man that had caught her interest.

Because Berengar was constantly guarded by Linde's watchful gaze Honoria had few opportunities to get to know Berengar very well. Berengar had not responded well to her advances up to this point. At least not as well as she had hoped.

She was beginning to doubt her charm; after all, Berengar already had Linde, a woman so beautiful she was dubbed one of the three heavenly beauties of Austria. Even Honoria had begun to doubt her charms when in comparison to Berengar's lover.

Nevertheless, she was undeterred, so long as she was staying in Kufstein, she wanted to find out more about Berengar and determine whether or not he was indeed fit to be her man. Thus she was waiting outside his study door, so she could "conveniently" run into him, giving her an excuse to ask him to lunch.

After several hours of waiting around the Castle, Berengar finally receded from his seclusion. When he did, Honoria immediately began to walk by and attempted to bump into him casually; however, she somehow ended up tripping over the air and fell to the ground. Luckily as she was falling, Berengar reacted and grabbed ahold of her, steadying the young princess on her feet as he did so.

Berengar gazed worriedly into Honoria's mint green pupil's as he asked the question on his mind.

"Are you okay?"

Honoria began to blush as she stared into Berengar's one good eye, his charming face gazing at her with worry-filled her heart with feelings she was uncertain about. Thus she looked away and pulled herself from his grasp, standing on her own two feet.

"I am fine..."

Seeing her embarrassed, Berengar laughed and nodded his head as he expressed his thoughts.

"Good... That's good!"

After saying this, Berengar began to depart, it was about lunchtime, and every day he would meet up with Linde at this time to share a meal. It was what you could call their daily date. However, the moment he began to walk away,

Honorio started to panic and quickly grabbed ahold of his puffy sleeve, stopping him in his tracks.

After doing so, Berengar looked behind him to see what was obstructing his journey to see Honorio's cheeks flushed as red as can be, her eyes fixed to the ground in front of her as she did so. She was holding onto her chest with her free hand and seemed to have difficulty getting the words out.

After a few moments of Berengar staring at her, Honorio finally managed to work up the courage in her heart and quickly voiced her thoughts.

"Will you have lunch with me?"

Berengar thought about this for a few moments before shrugging his shoulders and agreeing to her request.

"Sure, why not?"

He ate lunch with Linde every day; she would not be too upset if he missed a day, would she? Upon hearing this, Honorio's eyes lighted up in response, filled with excitement; she quickly grabbed ahold of Berengar's hands, her heart fluttering as she did so.

"Do you mean it?"

To this, Berengar was taken aback ever so slightly. However, he did not reveal it on his handsome face, and instead, he patted the girl on the head and nodded his head before responding.

"Of course!"

Honorio nearly passed out from excitement upon hearing this. Nevertheless, she quickly got a hold of herself and explained the date she had planned during the previous night. She had stayed up late thinking about it.

"I thought we could go to one of the sandwich shops in Kufstein, I have never tried such food before, and I felt as if it would be exciting!"

To this, Berengar nodded his head in agreement; it was good to eat a sandwich every once in a while; after all, he dined exclusively on top quality

German cuisine while living in the Castle. As such, he responded to her idea positively.

"An excellent idea, I know just the place; if you would follow me, I would be more than happy to escort you."

With that, Berengar offered his arm, where Honoria quickly latched onto it with a happy grin on her face. Afterward, Berengar led her out of the Castle and into the City below. Of course, on the way, he picked up an escort of his guards who closely trailed behind them, watching with careful eyes for any attempt on their sovereign's life.

After entering the City, Berengar led Honoria through the streets until they arrived at the old sandwich shop that Berengar had previously taken Adela to during their first date. The City had grown exponentially since then, and thus Berengar felt great nostalgia looking back on what was merely a year ago a small agricultural town.

As Berengar entered the sandwich shop, he noticed there was an extensive line. Because Berengar frequently visited the shop in the past, it had become quite the popular destination within the town. The owners even purchased ahold of the nearby buildings and rebuilt the shop into a much larger and more delicate destination that employed over a dozen employees.

There was outside dining available for those who desired it, and due to it being the end of summer in the alps, it was the perfect time to do so. Who knew when Berengar would have another chance at such a thing.

As they entered the sandwich shop, the line quickly parted for the Duke and the pretty girl on his arm. The people in line instantly began to comment about the unknown women attached to Berengar.

It was commonly known that the Duke had both Adela and Linde, yet the white-haired beauty latched onto him with a loving smile was an unknown entity for the people of Kufstein. Immediately men began to gaze at the Duke with envy and sigh to themselves. They instantly admitted defeat when comparing themselves to Berengar.



Helga was quite surprised to see Berengar arrive, as he had not been to her shop for some time. It is not as if Berengar did not desire to do so; it is simply a matter of not having the time. If Honoria had not approached him for a date, he would not have likely come to this place any time soon. As such, the woman had a pleasant smile on her face as she greeted the man who was not long ago a Baron's son.

"Your Grace! It is good to see you are doing well! It has been some time; who is this lovely maiden so lovingly attached to your arm?"

Upon hearing that, Honoria could see the gazes of those around her narrowing with curiosity as they too wondered just what kind of girl Berengar had picked up now. The young girl's pale face instantly began to flush as he heard the grown woman speak. In response to this, Berengar smiled as he introduced Honoria by the pseudonym she had given him.

"This is Lady Valeria; she is from the Byzantine Empire and is here in Kufstein for trade. I am simply treating her to some of the local delicacies."

Though Berengar did not introduce her as yet another of his girls, the bystanders refused to believe that Berengar had no intentions of making such a beautiful young maiden a member of his Ducal Harem. After all, he was well renowned as a shameless lecher by the men of Kufstein, on that they all greatly envied.

Helga nodded as she heard this; she too suspected something more serious between the couple, but if Berengar did not want to publicly announce her relationship to the girl, it was far from her position to inquire. Thus she asked a far more appropriate question.

"What can I get you, your grace?"

Berengar immediately responded with what he had on his mind; after all, such food was new to Honoria.

"I would like a basket from of Bierocks and two pitchers of fresh milk."

Hearing this, Helga nodded her head and responded with a smile

"Coming right up!"

After doing so, Berengar took a few silver pfennigs from his coin pouch and handed them over to the woman, where she immediately began to decline.

"Your grace, you do not have to pay! It would be rude for me to ask that of you!"

However, Berengar merely laughed at the woman's response and joked about it.

"How do you stay in business?"

To this, the mature woman blushed, and Berengar forced the coins into her hands.

"I can't have you and your employees working for free just because I am the Duke; you deserve to get paid for your services."

With that, he walked away with Honoria by his side, where they sat at the outside dining area while waiting for their food.

### *Chapter 253: Berengar and Honoria II*

Eventually, the food arrived; it was a tray filled with bierocks and two bottles of fresh milk. The bierock was a Volga-German dish from his past life. In other words, it originated from a group of German immigrants who had moved to Russia during the 18th century with the purpose of farming Russian Land. This occurred during Berengar's past life.

They were allowed to maintain their own culture, and as such, some very unique cuisines originated from the Volga-Germans. Berengar could partially trace his ancestry back to these people and had plenty of their recipes within his brain.

The bierock was a roll stuffed with hamburger meat and cabbage. It may not sound like much, but to Berengar, it was delicious, and it was easy to make. The delicacy had become quite popular as a lunch food within Kufstein and was beginning to spread to the rest of Austria.

After sitting in awkward silence while eating the food for some time, Berengar finally tried to create a conversation with Honoria, and so he asked something simple about her background. Even though she was lying to him, the girl was not very good at it, and he knew anything he inquired about regarding her past would most likely be accurate.

"So, Lady Valeria, tell me about yourself. Do you have any siblings?"

After hearing this, Honoria was snapped out of her daze and caught off guard. She had not thought too deeply about her background and thus opted to be honest; after all, she did not know how to make up a lie on the spot.

"I have three brothers, all of them older than me...."

Berengar nodded his head at this, though she had no way of knowing he was asking simple questions based on what he knew about the Byzantine Royal Family's makeup, and what she had just said acted as another confirmation of his suspicions.

"What is your relationship with your brothers? Do you get along at all?"

Hearing this, Honoria went silent and began to fidget with her hands, not knowing how to respond. She thought about what to say next deeply before responding once more with the truth. After all, she was growing more fond of Berengar by the day, and it was better, to be honest about small stuff like this than make up a completely fabricated background about herself and have to explain her real past later on. Thus she sighed before entertaining Berengar's thoughts.

"I would not say we get along, but we certainly aren't on bad terms either. Growing up, they mainly left me alone, my father was pretty strict since I was his only daughter, and he made it well known to my siblings that I was special. They looked out for me, but honestly, I think deep down they were deeply envious of how pampered I was."

Berengar nodded his head as he listened to her story; by the look on Honoria's face, she did not want to speak of her past anymore at the moment. However, Honoria's following words shifted the conversation out of his favor.

"What about you? Is Henrietta your only sibling?"

Berengar could tell the girl was honest with him, and as such, he decided to do so as well; his fists began to curl as he reflected upon the past; while doing so, he spoke in a grave tone.

"I had a brother...."

After hearing this, Honoria was naturally curious and thus asked the question on her mind.

"Had?"

To this, Berengar sighed heavily before admitting the truth

"He tried to kill me multiple times; you could say he was envious of me, in so far that he wanted what was naturally mine by right. For this, he was disowned and sent to the Teutonic Order."

Honoria could tell there was more to this story and thus asked about this once more.

"And then?"

Berengar's eyes shifted over to Honoria's as he witnessed the inquisitive gaze in her eyes. However, he ultimately decided not to reveal the result of Lambert's death, at least not at the moment, and thus, he calmly replied to her with a determined expression.

"That is a tale for another time...."

Honoria quickly realized that Berengar wanted to shift the conversation. As such, she asked another question about him; after all, her curiosity about the man would not be fulfilled with a single query.

"So I heard from some people around town that all of these magnificent changes that have occurred in Austria over the past year are solely because of you. Where did you get all of these ideas from?"

Berengar smiled and laughed as Honoria commented on this; he decided to mess around with the girl and leaned in class to her before whispering.

"Do you know what reincarnation is?"

Surprisingly to this, Honoria nodded her head.

"One of my brothers once talked to me about it; he heard about it from some merchant from the far east; it is supposedly the idea that when you die you are born into the body of another person, right? What does that have to do with your ideas?"

Berengar nodded his head while he continued to tease the girl.

"Suppose I were to say I was reincarnated, from the distant future, in a world far more advanced from this one. What would you say?"

Surprisingly the girl did not call him crazy or think he was joking; instead, she took it seriously and looked at Berengar with disbelief. She quickly blurted out the thought on her mind.

"Are you serious?"

With this, Berengar knew he had revealed something he shouldn't have. If the girl believed him, that could create some troubles, and as such, he quickly shook his head and denied the reality.

"No, I was just joking, Valeria. You shouldn't take comments like this so seriously."

To this, Honora chuckled awkwardly before responding to Berengar.

"Of course! I knew that!"

After saying so Honoria began to pout; she did not enjoy being made fun of, especially by Berengar. Noticing that she was displeased, Berengar made up some story about how he came to understand these things.

"There's a lot of good information in old books. You'd be surprised what you can find in them. I took their ideas, thought about them for a while, and

deduced the things I created. Without those who laid the groundwork before me, I never would have been able to dream up of what I know."

Honorina bought this line immediately; it sounded far more feasible than being reincarnated into the past from the distant future. Seeing that Berengar was supposedly honest with her, she began to lighten up. Berengar, of course, took advantage of this to push the conversation back towards Honorina.

"So now that I have told you something interesting about me, why don't you tell me something interesting about yourself?"

Honorina froze to this; she did not have anything interesting to say about herself, for she genuinely believed that besides being the princess of the Byzantine Empire, there was nothing remotely interesting about her.

As such, her expression suddenly turned downcast, and Berengar began to change the subject.

"So these bierocks are pretty good, aren't they?"

The moment Honorina heard Berengar voluntarily change the subject because of her sadness, she felt touched and put a smile on her face while sniffing back the tear that had formed in her eye.

"Yeah, they're perfect. I can't believe your people eat such delicacies daily."

With the simplicity of the meal and the burgeoning middle class, such food was relatively inexpensive, healthy, and exceptionally filling, especially when paired with a glass of milk. As such, the bierock had become a standard item in the hands of those who could afford it.

Honorina shifted the conversation to another question on her mind as she ate from her meal.

"So I hear you weren't always this amazing. Some people even refer to you as a completely different person than you were two years ago. However, nobody ever elaborates, as if they are afraid to speak about it. So I have to ask, what were you like when you were younger?"

Berengar chuckled lightly at this answer; he was not afraid of his past before his reincarnation, so he answered honestly.

"Honestly? I was a weak, lazy fool who tended to throw a tantrum whenever something didn't go his own way. Though I am not proud of it, I have thrown more than my fair share of chalices at people because they insulted me. I am amazed I lived as long as I did because of how much of a pompous ass I was."

Honorina was shocked when she heard this; compared to the man sitting before her, she simply could not believe Berengar was once such a man. Unable to contain her curiosity, she asked about it.

"If you don't mind me asking, what changed?"

Berengar sighed heavily as he looked away towards the mountains in the distance with a bitter smile on his face. As if he was reminiscing about something serious, after doing so he responded in a grave tone.

"Somebody close to me poisoned me, I survived it, and I suppose you could say being on the brink of death, I realized how much I had wasted my life and desired to turn it around. I am amazed at the man I have become in such a short time..."

Hearing this, Honorina's mouth fell agape; however, she was relatively sharp and quickly pieced two and two together despite being naive. She had an awkward expression on her face as she asked her next question.

"Was the person who poisoned you your brother?"

To this question, Berengar sighed as he stood up from his seat and reached out his hand towards Honorina with a bitter smile.

"It is getting late; I will have to answer that question some other time..."

She noticed that Berengar did not want to talk about such a painful topic any longer; thus Honorina grabbed hold of his hand where he proceeded to lift the princess to her feet. After doing so, the two walked back towards the Castle,

gazing at each other with affection as they held onto each other's hands like a loving couple.

*Chapter 254: Appeasing Two Women I*

While Berengar was off at lunch with Honoria, Linde had been left behind. The beautiful young lover of the Duke was sitting in the middle of the dining hall in her seat gazing at Berengar's empty spot with a downcast expression. Her doll-like face was resting in her dainty hands as she blew out her mouth, trying to lift her bangs with her breath.

She was dreadfully bored and did not know what was taking Berengar so long. For the past few months, Berengar and Linde had synced their lunch schedules so that they could enjoy a meal together every day as a couple.

Yet, for whatever reason, the man which her heart yearned for was not present.

There was nothing Linde could do about this, and thus she waited patiently like a loyal dog. After well over an hour, the doors to the Castle opened, and Berengar entered the scene. Though he had no intent to go to the Dining Room, Linde quickly found her way to the entrance.

When she noticed that Berengar was holding hands with another woman other than Adela, she instantly began to frown. She gave Berengar the chilling stare of someone about to commit murder. The moment Bernegar witnessed



this perilous gaze, chills were sent down his spine, and he instantly reacted by ripping his hand away from Honoria.

This caused the teenage Princess to pout. No matter what, she could not seem to get one over on Linde. The two young women glared at each other with vicious intent for several moments before Bernegar broke the silence.

"Sweetheart, what are you doing waiting around at this hour? Should you not be at work?"

The moment Linde heard this, her attention snapped from Honoria to Berengar, and she immediately began to pout; in doing so, she turned her head to the side, not even dignifying her lover with a glance. At this moment, Berengar knew that Linde was truly angry with him, and thus he began to apologize.

"I'm sorry, Valeria approached me first and asked me to accompany her; you understand, don't you?"

With this, Linde still did not look in his eye; she was genuinely furious at her lover at this point. Though she was aware Berengar intended to make the girl a concubine or another wife, she honestly did not care.

She was most upset that Berengar was willing to enact Polygamy because this little vixen was quite possibly a princess and not because he loved herself enough to make her a proper bride. Berengar was not wise enough to notice the underlying reason for Linde's fury, and thus Linde did not accept his apology.

Honorias saw this as an opportunity to take Berengar for herself, and she ran up to Berengar and grabbed ahold of his arm, burrowing it deep within her cleavage, in doing so intended to make Berengar aware that she too was well developed.

The sight of this nearly made Linde's eyes pop out, and she instantly began to frown. However, before she could discuss her dissatisfaction, Honorias began to insult her.

"Linde, you are rather unfair to Berengar; all he did was listen to a small request of mine; I mean, it is not like you had lunch plans already. For all you know, we were merely discussing business. There is no reason to be so jealous!"

The moment Linde heard herself be called Jealous, she wanted to grab ahold of Honorias and strangle her; this little brat was taking things too far. However,

she managed to contain her fury and instead approached Honoria and questioned her story.

"Were you discussing Business?"

Berengar tried to interrupt, but Linde merely lifted her hand and shooshed him. In response, Honoria put on a pretty smile and spoke the words that she knew targeted Linde's insecurities.

"Of course not! We were discussing our wedding plans!"

Upon hearing this, Linde nearly started swinging. Meanwhile, Honoria stuck out her tongue at the already outraged Linde while Berengar tried to soothe her. By the time he turned his head around, Honoria had begun the act of innocence.

Though Berengar had not seen the act, judging by Linde's sour expression, Honoria had done yet another thing to provoke his lover. As such, he began to become slightly perturbed by the girl's childish behavior and began to raise his voice as he addressed her.

"That's enough, Valeria; you are taking this joke too far!"

Hearing this, Valeria was shocked she had never been scolded before in such a way and felt heartbroken; it was only a small joke, but Berengar had raised his voice, the authoritative voice of a male who had been scorned was not something a sheltered princess-like Honoria had ever witnessed before, and thus she slowly began to break out into tears.

Before the waterworks could fully erupt, she ran off to her room like a spoiled child. When she was finally out of earshot, Linde merely crossed her arms and looked away from Berengar while pouting. While doing so, she muttered under her breath.

"Shouldn't you go check up on her? A spoiled brat like her has probably never had a man raise his voice to her before."

Seeing the way Linde was looking at him broke Berengar's heart, and instead, he grabbed ahold of her hands and gave his command to Linde.

"Look at me!"

Linde was startled, but she refused to break to Berengar's command; when Berengar saw this, he raised his voice to Linde just like he had done to

Honoriam. While doing so, he yanked her into his embrace and grabbed ahold of her pouting cheeks.

"Linde, I said, look at me!"

Hearing this, Linde's training was triggered, and she obediently looked at Berengar, who had an affectionate smile on his face. Rather than being angry, the gaze in his eyes was filled with love, as she stuffed her head into his chest and gently stroked her silky strawberry-blond hair while whispering in her ear.

"I think I understand why you are angry... You are mad because I said I intend to enact Polygamy to marry her and create an alliance with the Byzantine Empire, aren't you? My silly girl, do you think that I would ever leave you out of such a thing?"

Of course, I intend to Marry you first. I have had this idea for quite some time; you deserve a proper wedding and the title of my wife; even if you aren't the Empress of the Empire that I will one day forge, you will still be my wife!"

Hearing this, tears began to stream down Linde's exquisite face; she was significantly wounded when Berengar said he intended to marry Honoriam and had failed to mention her fate. For too long, she had desired to be with

Berengar more than as just a lover, but due to Berengar's affection towards Adela, she knew she could never fulfill such a place in his life.

When he had stated he might one day enact Polygamy, she was ecstatic but worried at the same time since Berengar did not explicitly state that he would marry her as well; instead, he mentioned Honoria as a potential candidate for a second wife.

Hearing this Berengar express his intent to marry Linde made her happier than anything else Berengar could have stated at this moment. After tugging on Berengar's collar with an embarrassed expression, Linde whispered to him in a voice so low he almost couldn't hear it.

"I love you!"

Before Berengar could respond, she violated his tongue with her own and pressed him against the wall. Berengar was shocked at first but immediately took control of the situation while reversing their positions.

The two began to fondle each other in the middle of the hallway until Linde sighed heavily and pushed Berengar away. This act immensely confused the man. As such, he expressed his doubt towards Linde's actions.

"What is it? Did I do something wrong?"

Linde sighed again before expressing the thoughts on her mind.

"No, it's not that. As much as I want this, I know that little girl is crying up a storm in her room, and I think it would be best that you talk to her before she becomes entrenched in depression. We can always have our fun later tonight."

At this, Berengar began to chuckle lightly, and Linde shot him a glare.

"What is so funny?"

Berengar wiped a small tear from his eye before shaking his head and speaking his mind.

"To think you cared so much about the Princess that you would give up sex so that I can comfort her when she is dejected. It is funny; it is!"

This greatly outraged Linde, and she began to blush once more before pushing Berengar in the direction of Honoria's room.

"If you don't leave now, I really will have you here and now! Go!"

Berengar merely laughed his way down the hall, which made Linde even more furious; once he was out of earshot, Linde sighed once more before a beautiful smile spread across her face.

"Why did I have to fall in love with such a playboy?"

Berengar, on the other hand, walked towards Honoria's quarters and knocked on her door; after a few moments, all he could hear was sobbing, and thus he knocked once more. After doing so a second time, a meek voice could be heard from the other side.

"Come in..."

*Chapter 255: Appeasing Two Women II*

After Berengar had opened the door, he noticed that Honoria was wiping tears from her eyes while trying to put on a calm facade. She was distraught from the scolding Berengar had given her, and despite this, Berengar did not pity her.

Frankly, he found the girl to be spoiled, and he wondered how on Earth she was raised. Berengar was not the type to tolerate a woman's shit if she stepped over the line, and as such, he had no intention to apologize.

Honoria looked at Berengar from the corner of her eye, refusing to stare directly into his cold gaze. After a while, Berengar sat down next to her on his bed and began to lecture the girl about her behavior, albeit in a much gentler tone.



"You do realize you were out of line back there. I don't know what kind of conflict you have with Linde, but you should not purposely antagonize the girl."

To this, Honoria began to pout without responding. She was greatly displeased that Berengar had come to lecture her instead of apologizing.

However, she did not make her thoughts known. Instead, she sulked in silence. Berengar knew full well what she was thinking and elaborated on his thoughts.

"I am not going to apologize to you for raising my voice. From what I understand, you have been pampered and spoiled your entire life, and the fact that you expect me to get on my knees and profess my guilt is a sign that you were poorly raised growing up.

As long as you are under my care, I will properly discipline you when you step out of line, something your father should have done a long time ago."

When Honoria heard this, she began to frown bitterly; her entire life, she had been doted upon by her father, and it was part of the reason why she acted like such an entitled brat. However, Berengar would not tolerate that behavior; if this girl was Princess Honoria, she needed to be molded into a proper young lady.

The fact that Berengar had to become a father figure to this naive, pampered princess was exhausting in its own right, but since her father had utterly failed in that regard, Berengar supposed he could step up to the role.

Eventually, Honoria looked over at Berengar with a sheepish expression, hearing Berengar so boldly declare that he would take care of her bad habits left a favorable impression upon her. The young princess fiddled with her fingers for a few moments before expressing her thoughts.

"I am sorry... You spend so much time with Linde and give her so much attention; seeing her jealous for once made me want to boast."

Berengar immediately responded to this with a stern tone.

"I am not the one you should be apologizing to. What you said to Linde was vile and mean-spirited. You intentionally targeted her insecurities in an attempt to hurt her, and I will not tolerate such behavior. If you continue to act in such a manner, I will have no choice but to send you back to the Empire."

Upon hearing this, Honoria instantly froze, and tears began to fill in her eyes as a pleading expression took hold of her flawless face. The princess latched onto Berengar's hands and began to beg for forgiveness.

"Anything but that! Please, I will do better! Do not send me back home!"

Hearing this, Berengar began to chuckle; the look on the girl's face was priceless, and as such, he flicked her on the forehead before responding.

"Then you better go apologize to Linde and hope she accepts it. Ultimately it is up to her whether or not you are allowed to stay in Kufstein."

Of course, Berengar did not mean such a thing, but Honoria had no way of knowing this. Thus she quickly got up from the bed and ran out of the room, looking for Linde. Leaving Berengar by his lonesome in the quarters the princess was staying in, he began to sigh and express his thoughts.

"I should have stuck with two women; balancing a trio of bitches will be the death of me..."

After saying this, Berengar began to dust himself off as he stood up from his seat and looked towards the entrance that Honoria had run past not long ago.

A wry smile appeared on his face as he voiced his thoughts aloud.

"Well, it is too late now, I don't know how she managed to do it, but that little brat has somehow managed to burrow her way into my heart. Hopefully, something good can come from this..."

Berengar moved for the door, where he followed Honoria's steps until he arrived at a scene of the girl prostrating herself before Linde as she

apologized for her previous actions. Linde was snickering as she gazed at the princess, lowering herself to a simple concubine.

"I am sorry for my cruel words and childish actions. I promise I will behave myself in the future!"

After listening to Honoria's apology, Linde feigned indifference for some time; this caused a sense of worry to fill Honoria's heart. However, the girl waited with her head bowed until Linde forgave her.

After a few minutes of awkward silence, Linde sighed heavily before resting her forehead in the palm of her hand.

"Fine... I accept your apology. However, if you purposely try to invoke my ire in the future, I will surely have you shipped back to Antioch!"

Honoria felt chills down her spine as she heard this, and as such, she quickly raised herself from her kneeling position and nodded her head. Afterward, she said nothing more. Meanwhile, Linde ignored the young princess and went over to Berengar, wrapping her arms around his back and pressing her mighty bosom against his chest. As she did so, the young beauty whispered in Berengar's ears.

"Why don't we leave this little brat be and go enjoy ourselves?"

A devilish smile appeared on Berengar's face as he grabbed ahold of Linde's plump behind in front of Honoria; this was the punishment that Honoria deserved for her actions; it was now her time to be jealous.

Of course, it did not quite work as Berengar had planned, as the couple's flirtatious actions made Honoria flush with embarrassment and cover her eyes. She was far too young and innocent to be witnessing the intimate display between Berengar and Linde as they violated each other's mouths with their tongues.

After making out for a few moments, Berengar took Linde's hand and led her away towards their bed chambers; as the two left the room, Linde smirked at Honoria and blew her a kiss before departing with her lover.

It would be some time before the two returned from their joint exercise. After doing so, they noticed Honoria sitting in the dining room with a flustered expression. The girl was too embarrassed to move from her seat and was staring off into space.

Seeing how it had been well over an hour, and the girl was still shocked by his lecherous behavior, Berengar decided to play a prank on the girl. Thus he snuck up behind her and whispered in the girl's ear, snapping her out of her daze as he did so.

"Are you perhaps jealous?"

Feeling the warmth of Berengar's breath on her ivory ear, the girl quickly jumped out of her seat and gazed at Berengar like a frightened rabbit in front of a big bad wolf. Seeing the defensive look on her face was outright adorable, and as such, Berengar merely shook his head before responding to the girl.

"I am only joking, Valeria; you do not need to be so terrified. Sit, enjoy some food and wine."

Hearing this, Honoria began to settle her racing heart and sat in her chair while Berengar and Linde sat beside one another at the head of the table.

Eventually, Henrietta arrived and sat in her spot as well.

Thus Berengar drank from his skull chalice once more; after taking a sip, he exhaled heavily before peeking over at Honoria, who still seemed to be a bit flushed from the passionate display he had shown her with Linde. Thus he used this opportunity to inform the girl of the upcoming events.

"Valeria, the sailor I have hired to teach you will arrive in Kufstein tomorrow. It would be best to awaken bright and early to receive your training. I do not want my kindness to go to waste."

After hearing this, Honoria's appearance began to return to normal, and she nodded her head slowly and silently. It had taken some time for her to get accustomed to the sight of Berengar and Linde kissing passionately in the open. Despite being inexperienced; she knew enough to understand what Berengar and Linde had gotten up to after leaving her behind.

In a way, she felt defeated by Linde once more. Though she was interested in Berengar, it was not until she saw him locked in another young woman's embrace that she began to understand her feelings for the man.

Inside her heart was a mix of emotions she was trying to work through, and as such, she merely ate her meal in silence while the other three members sitting at the table discussed various topics. She began to ponder the possibility that the reason she was jealous of the attention that Berengar showed Linde was that she had fallen for the man.

After eating her meal, Honoria returned to her room, where she prepared herself for sleep. While waiting for her weariness to overtake her, she had thought long and hard about what complex emotions she had felt throughout the day.

### *Chapter 256: Honoria's Request*

Today was the day that the sailing instructor from Venice had arrived in Kufstein to teach Honoria how to sail. Honoria had awoken bright and early to begin her instruction and had not taken Berengar's kindness for granted.

She was currently learning to sail a Caravel, a simple sailing vessel used by most nations in the Mediterranean. Berengar had already purchased a few of these vessels for teaching his naval draftees how to sail, and as such, he had more than one available for her to train with.

Today was a special day for Honoria; Berengar took the day off from work to observe her progress and see if she was using the time and resources he had given her wisely. To his surprise, she was already partially knowledgeable in the art of sailing.

Even though her instructor was not pleased with teaching a woman how to sail, he never complained; after all, he was being paid an absurd amount of money to teach this young maiden to sail. Instead, he did his best to equip Honoria with the knowledge necessary to do such a thing as such.

Berengar stood next to Heraclius, who was perched on a post next to him, as the two of them observed Honoria's actions. The pretty smile on her face was one of genuine happiness as she began to rig the sails as instructed.

Seeing this, Berengar and Heraclius both looked at each other before gazing back upon Honoria. The moment their eyes made contact, there was a slight nod of their heads, as if they were thinking the same thing. Which was

'this girl is too precious.'

After sailing down the Danube for a bit and back to Kufstein, Berengar, Honoria, and Heraclius departed the vessel where Berengar handed the instructor a sack filled with silver coins before thanking the man.

"Thank you for this, I know about your reservations, but you have helped me a lot."

The man quickly snatched the pouch from Berengar's hands, where he began to count the coins to ensure the proper amount that was agreed to was still



there. After doing so, he spat in the river before addressing Berengar's statement.

"I don't like it; a pretty young thing from her should not be sailing; she should be at home making babies. However, you are the Duke of Austria, and if this is what you like to do with your playthings, far be it from me to complain...."

Hearing this, Berengar merely scoffed; he could not care less what this sailor thought of him. He was simply a means to an end. After confirming the payment, the sailor departed to the City of Kufstein for the day. Like every night, he would spend the silver he gained from Berengar on wine and wenches.

As for Berengar, he escorted Honoria back to the Castle as he began to ask her about her day.

"I see you are not wasting my charity; that is good. Tell me, now that you have some experience sailing, how do you feel about it?"

Honoria thought about Berengar's questions for a few moments before responding with a bitter smile.

"I enjoy it. However, something feels off. It is not like when I was sailing with Agnellus...."

Berengar thought about this for a few moments as he began to address her concerns.

"I can think of two potential reasons for that. First, you have feelings for Agnellus, and you were more interested in spending time with Agnellus than you were sailing."

Hearing this, Honoria began to laugh at Berengar's speculation before teasing him.

"Why, Duke Berengar, are you perhaps jealous of my relationship with Agnellus?"

To this, Berengar scoffed before replying

"You greatly overestimate your importance."

When Honoria heard this, she instantly pouted, and the two walked in awkward silence for a while. After they had walked for a few minutes, she asked Berengar about the second possibility he had mentioned.

"What was your second idea?"

Berengar seemed to be knowledgeable and worldly. As such, Honoria highly valued his opinion. After hearing the princess's question, Berengar scratched his chin for a few moments before saying the second thought he had on her reasoning for not enjoying sailing as much as she used to.

"The second reason could be that the thing you loved most about sailing was the freedom you experienced, and because I have you in a controlled setting as you learn how to sail, you feel as if that liberty you once felt is missing."

The moment Berengar said this, Honoria's eyes flashed, and she looked at Berengar with a complicated expression; after doing so, she smiled bitterly and revealed some of her past to Berengar, completely forgetting her cover story as she did so.

"You are right... Growing up, I was never allowed to leave the Palace. My father was strict and overprotective and did not even allow me to associate with other nobles my age. Though he doted on me for the most part, the reality is that the only company I had was my siblings, and they all treated me like a doll in a glasshouse.

I used to gaze down from my window into the harbor every night as the sun began to set, imagining what life would be like if I were just to run away and hop on a ship sailing to parts unknown—going on a grand adventure, discovering new lands, and meeting new people!

When my father tried to marry me off to the various princes, I was too shy to talk with them. Of course, I was too proud to admit that and merely told myself that they were too lazy, skinny, fat, ugly, unambitious, drunk, or any other excuse I could think of to justify in my mind that I was too good for them. As such, I rejected every suitor ever brought to me, resulting in me being betrothed to the worst of them all...."

Hearing the girl's story, Berengar was fully convinced that she was Princess Honoria, as her background was the same as what he knew about the princess from the Eastern Empire; not only that, but she had used a term like Palace to describe her family home instead of Villa which was an obvious indicator of her real identity.

However, Berengar did not spoil the moment and merely decided to pet the girl on the head and comfort her. This caused Honoria to look up at Berengar in shock, where she saw his charming smile before he said the words.

"I am sorry you had to go through that; it must have been terrible... I too know what it is like to live a life of loneliness, without a single friend to call my own."

Berengar was genuine when he said this; in his past life, he had spent most of it alone, both of his parents worked all day, and he was forced to endure a life of solitude in an empty house. When he was at school, he was always reading some books, thus causing the other kids to ignore him often.

From the day he was born until he died, he did not have a true friend, merely a string of acquaintances that came and went from his life as time passed. At one point, he, too, had put on a confident facade.

In doing so, he convinced himself that he was better than everyone else and that no woman was good enough for him. Because of this, he could partially understand Honoria's feelings about her lonely past, as he experienced a similar childhood.

Hearing Berengar expresses his sympathy as a kindred soul; a tear began to form in Honoria's eye, which Berengar quickly wiped away with his finger and grabbed ahold of the girl forcing her into his embrace as he stroked her silky white hair while speaking words of comfort.

"Don't cry; you have something that I never had!"

Honoria began to sniffle as she looked up at Berengar's gleaming sapphire eyes with curiosity in her minty orbs before asking Berengar what he meant.

"What's that?"

Berengar then glanced up at Heraclius, who was flying in the sky above, watching over his master like a guardian angel. While doing so, Berengar spoke his words.

"You have a loyal companion in Heraclius; at the very least, that gives you an advantage I never had...."

Hearing this, Honoria began to break out in laughter; it was true; she was incredibly blessed to have such an intelligent and caring pet. The more she laughed, the more her sorrow in her heart began to fade until finally there was silence.

After two stopped outside the Castle's gates, Honoria looked back at Berengar with a gentle smile on her face before making a request of him.

"Promise me something, will you?"

Upon hearing this, Berengar merely smiled and nodded his head before responding, not expecting it to be anything serious.

"Sure, what is it?"

After getting Berengar's assurance, Honoria spoke her conscience

"When you next find yourself troubled by your lonesome past, seek me out, and talk to me about it. In return, I promise to tell you everything there is to know about me."

Berengar was stunned about this; however, before he could respond to Honoria's request, she wrapped her arms around his neck and kissed him on the cheek. As she did so, her cheeks began to flush as she boldly announced her feelings.

"I think I am starting to fall for you."

With that, Honoria ran off into the Castle, too embarrassed to face Berengar any longer. Berengar merely stood in the doorway to his Castle while stunned, utterly unaware that Linde had seen the entire display from the tower above the courtyard with a frown on her face.

### *Chapter 257: Legal Reforms*

After getting a good night's sleep, Berengar awoke the next day, and after having his morning tea, he immediately thrust himself into his work. For starters, he had begun to refine the legal system of the Duchy of Austria. Berengar was of the mindset that crime could not be tolerated, whether from the perspective of the law or within a community.

To Berengar, the level of crime that existed within a community was whatever the people within it were willing to tolerate. He planned to expand legal reforms and included propaganda to inspire communities to report crimes to their nearest official.

As such, he was in the process of designing comprehensive legal reforms. Though crime in itself was rare in Tyrol and especially within the city of Kufstein, it had begun to become widespread throughout much of Austria, and not just minor offenses either.

The devastation caused in the wake of the Bavarian Occupation resulted in thousands of peasants fleeing to the cities' sanctuary. In their desperation, these peasants turned to crime to survive, which in turn led to the creations of Criminal Syndicates that had begun to pop up across the more impoverished regions of Austria.

Because of this, Berengar had started his legal reforms with strict countermeasures to Organized Crime. Any person convicted of a crime who was determined to be associated with a Criminal Syndicate recognized by the Department of Intelligence's Internal Service was to be sentenced to death by firing squad.

The Criminal Syndicates were still in their infancy. Thus they had yet to entrench themselves in the critical sectors of society. Berengar fully intended to route them out and destroy them from the roots to the stem. He refused to allow businesses and politics to tie themselves to criminal syndicates like in his previous life.

Thus even if someone committed a non-violent misdemeanor like fraud or theft, so long as they had ties to any known Criminal Syndicate, they would be sentenced to death. It was cruel, but Berengar had seen the rise of Narco

States in his past life and desired to end such a possibility before it had a chance to become a reality.

Gangsters were the first among the people who would be sentenced to death under this new system; other heinous crimes such as Murder, Kidnapping, and Rape were also deemed worthy of such a punishment.

As for Child Molesters, Berengar had a special hell intentionally designed for them; they would be castrated and then sentenced to indentured servitude. They would engage in hard labor for the remainder of their miserable existence. If they dropped dead from over-exhaustion, Berengar did not care; that was just one less mouth to feed.

To make his stance clear, a strict federal age of consent was applied at the age of 16; any adult caught having sexual relations with a minor would be tried as a child molester, and if convicted, sentenced to the punishment mentioned above.

Every other violent crime had a sentence varying from 3 years to life in prison, depending on the severity of the crime. Berengar intended to construct labor camps to act as the prisons in his society.

The convicted criminals would pay off their debt to society with physical labor, usually in the form of dangerous jobs that provided significant risks to the civilian population or monumental projects like canals and road building.

There was a three-strike rule in place for this system when it came to felonies of all kinds. If convicted three times of a felony, they would be sentenced to death, just like the gangsters, murderers, kidnappers, and rapists.

In this court system, if one were sentenced to death, they would be allowed a single appeal to the courts. In doing so, the crime would be re-investigated, and if the criminal were found innocent of the crime, they would be released from their sentence.

However, if determined guilty after a single appeal, they would immediately be executed by firing squad. Berengar had seen taxpayers' money wasted on keeping criminals who were clearly guilty but awaiting their seventh appeal alive during his past life.

To him, a second chance at a trial was fair enough; after that, if they were still determined to be guilty, there was no point keeping such monsters alive; it was an absolute waste of resources. For Berengar, mismanagement of the finite resources on this Earth was a grave sin, and he had no desire to provide food and water to a criminal while it could be given to a starving child instead.

As for non-violent crime, it would entirely depend on the crime that had been committed. For example, if one were to be convicted of theft, they would lose the hand they used to steal the item. Others included imprisonment for a limited duration, assuming they survived the backbreaking work given to prisoners. They would either fear going back to such a hell or become a repeat offender, thus adding to their three strikes.

Anyone convicted of a felony was illegible to vote in the future. As such, they were also losing their say in how society was run, assuming they met the qualifications to be a member of the electorate in the first place.

Though the system was harsh, it also had its fair points. For example, it was based on the American principle of "Innocent until proven guilty," and the burden of proving guilt fell upon the prosecutor. The determination of guilt was left up to a jury of the suspect's peers.

Berengar also declared the need for public defenders and the need to pay these public defenders well so that it is considered a desirable position by talented lawyers. Like all of the other reforms Berengar had begun to make, a date as set for transition, which was twenty-five years, this date could be renewed if there were not enough Lawyers that existed to fulfill the needs of the criminal justice system.

The law enforcement system would be partially based on the United States of America from Berengar's previous life. Small towns and villages would fall under the jurisdiction of Sheriffs that were local to their community. There would also be State, and Federal agencies, including a dedicated department of border guards. Ensuring the migration of people into Austria was through a legal and safe manner.

As for cities and larger towns would have dedicated police departments comprised of volunteers; these had to be Austrian citizens who did not possess a criminal background. They were authorized to use lethal force in

self-defense and in scenarios where a perpetrator was fleeing the scene of their crime.

Torturing criminals for a confession, or intelligence was outlawed, so long as they were Austrian citizens. While advanced interrogation methods were legal to be used on foreign agents, and criminals, the more barbaric practices were outlawed altogether.

To outfit these upstanding men of the law, Berengar would supply them with breastplates, gorgets, burgonets, and revolving flintlock pistols; these pistols were rifled for greater accuracy and fired a smaller caliber variant of the mine ball for more significant effect.

They also had a rifled flintlock cavalry carbine; this carbine could have a bayonet affixed if necessary. These officers would be trained in the skills needed to fulfill their duties to the best of their ability, including horseback riding.

Unlike the Grand Army of Austria that wore black and gold Landsknecht attire beneath their armor, these police officers wore blue and black Landsknecht attire beneath their blackened steel cuirasses. NCOs and Officers armor was trimmed with a mirror polish that slightly resembled silver.

The reason for this was twofold; firstly, it was to protect the officers from potentially violent criminals. More importantly, it was established so that it was easy to distinguish law enforcement from military officials.

Until now, Berengar's cities were garrisoned by military personnel who also acted as law enforcement agents. Because of this, there was a feeling of oppression in the air of many of the regions whose lords had previously rebelled against his rule. By establishing dedicated police forces from among the locals, he attempted to appease the masses by allowing them to be policed by their own people.

Berengar had worked the budget around to fund all of this, and due to his business that would soon start production, Berengar knew he could easily afford it. He had to stamp out the new wave of crime as quickly and efficiently as possible; until such law enforcement agencies could be drafted, the garrisons would have to fulfill their duties according to the new laws.



Berengar did not need prisons, but labor? One could never have too much of that as such dedicated prisons like those that existed in his past life would practically be nonexistent in his State. However, detention centers for those awaiting trial would be constructed shortly.

Compared to the medieval ideas of justice, this system was the fairest and most righteous treatment of suspects and criminals that anyone had ever imagined. Though many from Berengar's past life would label it as cruel and inhumane, it was a significant step forward in progress.

Besides, those people did not exist in this world. As for those from the future of this timeline hopefully, they would one day look back, and be intelligent enough to realize that everything Berengar did was to modernize the medieval German world. Sometimes harsh methods were necessary to do so.

#### *Chapter 258: Venetian Response*

Weeks had passed since Berengar had begun production on the first glass factory, and at the moment, it was partially functional. Using Agnellus' trade connections, Berengar had started selling the new crystal glass in limited quantities to the wealthy noblemen of the Byzantine Empire.

His plan was simple, create a demand for his luxurious glass products and then increase production at a rate capable of overtaking Venetian business. The crystal glass had become extensively popular in the east after the first batch was sold at a high price.

As Berengar eyed the Republic of Venice's glass monopoly, they too had begun to observe his actions, especially regarding the shipyards being constructed in the region known as Istria. The construction of three large shipyards far larger than the ones which Venice owned was of great concern to the Venetians.

In response to this, the Venetian Doge sat in his office surrounded by members of his Admiralty. These Admirals were the greatest of his Naval Commanders, and they had gathered to discuss the potential rise of a Grand Austrian Navy and the threat such a thing posed to Venice.

One of the Admirals stepped forward and immediately presented a sizeable transparent glass bowl. This absurdly clear glass was shocking to the

president, and he gazed upon it with wonder as he pondered where such a marvel had come from.

The Doge was a position similar to that of President from the United States of America in Berengar's previous life; he was the de facto head of State for the Venetian Republic, which was a vassal state in this timeline of the Kingdom of Italy.

With the unification of Italy in this timeline and their current Monarch being the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, the Venetian Republic and the Genoans were allowed certain autonomy in regards to how their local governments functioned. If anything, they were closer to protectorates than they were to Vassals.

The Venetian Doge was shocked when he saw such high-quality, transparent glass and began to question his eyes.

"Is this glass? Who created such a masterpiece?"

Without hesitation, the Admiral responded to the Doge's statement with a frown on his face.

"That would be the Austrians...."

While the Doge initially smiled, his face immediately turned sour when he heard this news. This immaculate crystal glass was a threat to Venetian dominance of the market, and as such he had to make sure his ears were not lying to him.

"Are you telling me that bastard Berengar has created such pristine glassware? Does he seek to seize our monopoly on the glass trade?"

The Admirals looked at each other silently before the head Admiral placed a document on the Doge's desk with a grim look in his eye before summarizing its contents.

"That is not all; there are reports that he is building three shipyards, far more significant than our own. We can't even fathom what kind of monstrous

vessels he seeks to create within them, but needless to say, it does not bode well for us.

If Berengar seeks to challenge not only our monopoly on the glass trade but also our authority on the sea, then we can not simply stand by and allow him to build a Navy capable of competing with us! Something must be done!"

After hearing the Head Admiral's concerns, the Doge nodded his head. However, he was not as concerned as the admirals, for how could Berengar challenge their might?

They had hundreds of naval vessels; some of them were even armed with bronze cannons; it would take years for Berengar to build a navy capable of challenging the Venetian Republic, or so he believed. As such, he was much calmer than the men gathered in his room.

"I understand your concerns. However, we can't just take action against the Austrians, our Navy might be superior to theirs, but their Army could easily invade our lands and cause us serious trouble. We should wait and observe.

At least until we know what kinds of ships Berengar is manufacturing, there is no way he will be able to compete with us, it will take him years to build enough ships to challenge our authority. Even if he were to somehow use the methods we have achieved to rapidly produce vessels. It is not something to be worried about, we can always declare war on him and sink his ships before he can produce enough to be a threat.

For now, we should focus on building our Army and strengthening our ties with the Emperor; if all of Italy unites behind us, there is no way for Berengar to defeat us in a war. For now, we should bribe pirates to seize the glass he seeks to sell across the Mediterranean."

Hearing this, the Naval officers gathered had awkward expressions on their faces, which spurred the Doge to question their glances.

"What is it? Is there something I am missing?"

One of the Admirals who was standing at attention immediately presented his report.

"It would appear that Berengar is currently trading what little glassware he has produced so far to the Byzantines, using their merchant's vessels. If it were revealed that we were sponsoring pirates to rob Byzantine ships, it could ignite a conflict with the Empire to the east!"

When the Doge of Venice heard this, his expression sank. Even if it was a slight possibility, they could not risk a war with the Byzantines; after all, that was one of their most significant trading partners. As such, he was left at a loss in how to handle the scenario he was facing.

This crystal glass was infinitely superior to the quality of glass they produced in Venice and could quite easily put them out of the glass business, which was one of their biggest trades. The blow to their economy that such a thing could cause would be disastrous.

Berengar had risen to power too quickly for anyone to predict what he was fully capable of accurately. It seemed like every time the man's name was mentioned, he had either achieved another overwhelming victory in warfare or invented something new that was worth a fortune.

To many observers, the rise of Austria as the preeminent German State was a certainty, however, if they were allowed to possess a powerful Navy and Merchant fleet on top of their overwhelming Army. Then they were destined to rise to a status that could rival the greatest Kingdoms and Empires within Europe and the Mediterranean; such a thing could not be allowed, especially since Austria had become the heart of the German Reformation.

As such, the Doge of Venice came up with only one solution to halt the progress of Austria.

"Contact the Pope, and offer him our unlimited support in his upcoming crusade against the Berengar Heresy. Berengar von Kufstein must die!"

Since infiltrating Kufstein and assassinating Berengar was not an option due to Berengar's effective counter-espionage network, the only solution was to throw the weight of the Catholic world against him and pray that he fell.

As such, the Admiralty saluted as they announced their support for the Venetian Doge's decision.

"Yes, your Eminence!"

With this, all Admirals except for one, the Head Admiral, had left the building and begun to prepare for the upcoming conflict. The Admiral who remained looked at the Doge with a grim expression on his face before asking the question on his mind.

"I hear he has cannons capable of launching explosive projectiles. Do you think he will mount such fearsome weapons on his vessels?"

In response to this the Doge was silent, the confident facade he had shown the other Admirals instantly crumbled. As such he reached for a glass out of his cabinet and began to pour the wine.

This glass had a deep blue color and was not exactly the most transparent material. After pouring wine into the blue glass, the man handed it to his Admiral before pouring another drink into the crystal glass Berengar had created.

After carefully observing the merlot liquid within the container, the Doge began to frown. He could quite easily see the deep red color of his wine, and this infuriated the man. After seething in rage for a few moments, the Doge finally answered the Admiral's question.

"Without a doubt, I have no idea what kind of effect such mighty weapons will have on our ships, but it most certainly will be disastrous. Even if he manages to create a few dozen vessels armed with those weapons, it could cause us some trouble.

Thus in response to this threat, I want our Armada expanded. I want a total of 1,000 naval vessels, each armed with a minimum of four guns created within the next five years! I don't care how you have to do it; just make it happen!"

To this, the Admiral sighed, at the moment the Venetian Navy had between 300 and 400 ships. If they were to gain a total of 1,000 in five years, they would have to produce over 600 ships in that time. It was simply outrageous, yet he would try his best. As such, he responded by saluting the Doge.

"Yes, your eminence!"

After doing so, the Doge merely sneered before uttering his next word.

"Dismissed!"

Afterward, the Admiral left the office of the Doge, where the man was left to his lonesome. He quickly downed the contents of his glass before swiping it off his desk in a fit of rage, shattering the perfect piece into thousands of tiny shards.

After doing so, the Doge began to curse in the air.

"Make no mistake Duke Berengar von Kufstein; I will make you regret sticking your nose in my business!"

#### *Chapter 259: Fourteenth Birthday I*

Weeks had passed, and finally, Adela's birthday was nearing the corner as such Berengar had already left the Castle in Kufstein. Much to his surprise, Linde was invited to come with him; he supposed his two women were beginning to get along, which was a good sign.

He had no idea that the reason for this was because the two women had conspired behind his back to meet up and convince him together to end his newly formed relationship with Honoria. As such, he was in a good mood as he sat in his carriage, which drew him closer to Graz, with his arm wrapped around his lover, holding her tightly.

Linde was frowning heavily at the moment; despite the affection Berengar was showing her, there was an unwanted person in this carriage, and it was not Henrietta. Though the little girl was also present, the person who had so thoroughly ruined the mood was none other than Honoria.

To be Frank, Berengar did not trust the girl by her lonesome; she was a spoiled, entitled brat, and though he was beginning to take measures to correct this behavior, he had ultimately decided to take her with him to Adela's birthday, rather than allow her to cause trouble in Kufstein while he was absent.

Even though Honoria had apologized for her rude behavior, Linde was still unhappy with the girl's presence. Though she was aware that Berengar's

intentions for the girl mainly were political at this point, she was still worried that Berengar might fall for the young, naive princess.

Thus there was an awkward silence in the carriage as Berengar, and his companions waited to arrive in Graz. After most of the day had passed, the caravan finally arrived in Graz, and they were not the only visitors.

Count Otto held an esteemed position in Berengar's government; he was on the Duke's Council and, as Count, was the de facto governor of Steiermark. This was thanks to his daughter, Adela, who was Berengar's fiancée. However, Otto had made a name for himself in Berengar's campaign against the Bavarian occupation and, as such, was held in high esteem by the other Counts.

As Berengar and his carriage entered the Castle's courtyard, they were greeted by Count Otto and his family. Berengar was the first to step out of the carriage, followed by Linde, then Henrietta, and finally Honoria.

Adela needed one glance to tell that this beautiful young girl was her competition and highly likely to be Princess Honoria. Ava, who was well aware of Adela's grievance, had a wide smirk on her face; she could tell instantly that the girl harbored feelings for Berengar by the way she glanced at him.

Count Otto also noticed this and felt slighted; Berengar had not just brought his lover but another young woman to his fiancée's birthday celebration. Regardless of this, Berengar approached the Count and greeted him.

"Uncle! It is good to see that you are still in such good health."

Count Otto merely nodded, his gaze never shifting from Honoria's presence. Henrietta, on the other hand, sheepishly greeted her uncle.

"Uncle..."

The little girl hid behind Berengar as she said this; she was shy by nature, and though she had begun to make friends, often at the expense of her brother's reputation. She was still nervous around unfamiliar people; after all, Count Otto was seldom a part of her life. Finally, Count Otto could not contain his curiosity and asked the question on his mind.

"Who might this beautiful young woman be?"

To this, Berengar glanced over at Honoria before returning his gaze to his uncle. He smiled while answering his question.

"This is Lady Valeria; she is from the Byzantine Empire and is a guest at my court for the time being. I did not trust her to behave herself by her lonesome in Kufstein, so I brought her along with me."

This was the truth of the matter, but for some reason, Count Otto expected there to be more to their relationship than this. As for Honoria, she pouted when she heard this; she was not necessarily a troublemaker, aside from getting on Linde's nerves for the fun of it.

However, after being threatened with removal from Berengar's court, she had halted such actions in fear that Berengar would go through with his threat and ship her back to the Byzantine Empire. As such, she had been behaving herself for the last few days. Honoria greeted Count Otto by bowing respectfully.

"I thank you for your hospitality, Count Otto."

To this, Otto merely nodded before shifting his attention back to Berengar

"Welcome to my home, your Grace; I trust that my daughter's birthday celebration will be to your liking!"

Berengar nodded when he heard this and followed Count Otto and his family inside. While doing so, he approached his little fiancée and grabbed ahold of her hand. However, to this, she merely ripped it away from his grasp and pouted.

She was already displeased that Berengar had taken a liking to yet another girl, yet he had the gall to bring her to her birthday celebration? To this, Adela felt insulted. Seeing that his fiancée was upset, Berengar sighed heavily before expressing the thoughts on his mind.



"You look beautiful, Adela; it has been some time since we last met. Did you miss me?"

Adela pouted in silence, not bothering to speak with Berengar. After seeing both Linde and Honoria clinging onto her fiance, Adela had grown quite self-conscious. Not only in regards to her position in Berengar's life but also in terms of her appearance.

Though she was still growing, she felt as if her charm did not match that of an exotic princess from the East like Honoria, nor did it match the sex appeal of a buxom beauty like Linde. As such, she simply sulked for the time being.

Eventually, Berengar was led to his quarters, where Linde was separated and given her room. It would be disrespectful to Count Otto and his daughter for Berengar to have carnal relations with his lover while under their roof.

After a while, Linde regrouped with Adela and hugged the girl before stuffing her into her bust, nearly suffocating the girl in the process as she stroked Adela's golden hair.

"Oh sweet little Adela, I understand how you feel; if you need to cry, let it all out. I am here for you!"

An unlikely alliance had formed between Linde and Adela, who were usually at each other's throats. For the time being, they were united against Honoria in this awkward trio that had been formed around the man they loved.

As women, they naturally needed comfort when they were upset. Thus they provided it for one another. Adela began to break down in tears as she tried to break free of Linde's large bust and sobbed heavily while expressing her thoughts.

"I didn't expect him to bring the girl here! I am so envious!"

To this, Linde sighed as she tried to comfort Adela

"Berengar doesn't love the girl, at least not yet. He sees her as a political tool to be used against those he deems his enemies. For whatever reason, he is

confident he will be fighting France in the future and wants to do everything in his power to break the alliance between them and the Byzantine Empire.

Besides, now more than ever, he needs a powerful ally, and as such, he will likely enact Polygamy to marry the three of us. Despite this, he wants to make you Empress, so that should show you how much he cares for you and your position as first among his future wives!"

Upon hearing this Adela began to wipe the tears from her eyes as she slowly sniffled. After she had calmed herself down, she questioned the legitimacy of what Linde had just said.

"Really?"

Adela did not know how to feel about this, her worries about her spot as the wife being taken had become realized, in the sense that Berengar intended to become a Polygamous Monarch, but she still held the position of his Empress, and first wife, which meant that Berengar still had feelings for her.

Linde nodded her head and smiled as she stroked Adela's hair. To this, Adela replied with a bitter smile as she came to a sudden realization.

"There's no convincing him otherwise, is there?"

Upon hearing this, Linde's smile also turned bitter as she shook her head. Though the two had initially conspired to bring an end to Berengar's budding relationship with Honoria, Linde had realized during the time since then that Berengar would not be dissuaded because he knew that neither Linde nor Adela were willing to leave him over such an issue.

Thus, instead of convincing Berengar otherwise, Linde decided to convince Adela that it was simply not worth the effort and that Berengar still considered her first among his women. After all, Linde had gotten what she wanted in all of this, she would one day be an official wife of Berengar, and that was enough for her.

Seeing the look on Linde's face, Adela sighed before she broke away from Linde's grasp and expressed her acceptance of the predicament she found herself in.

"Fine... I accept it, but that does not mean I will not fight for his affection!"

### *Chapter 260: Fourteenth Birthday II*

While Linde and Adela were comforting each other, Berengar was preparing for the upcoming celebration. The gift he had gotten Adela was a white Arabian Stallion, it was quite costly to obtain, but it was well worth the price.

While he was making sure the gift was ready for its new master, Honoria played with Heraclius, who she had brought along for the journey. The mighty eagle flew outside the courtyard where Honoria played about, waiting for the celebration to begin.

As such, the day passed before the guests had fully gathered, and night had begun to descend upon the city of Graz. As it did so, the various nobles of Austria gathered for the birthday celebration of the future Duchess of Austria.

Berengar was flanked on all sides by three beautiful women as he stood at the center of attention. Adela was latched onto Berengar's right arm, while Linde was clutching the left in between her mighty bosom. Honoria was behind him slung around his shoulder. The three girls were greatly intoxicated by the drinks provided at the party, and as such, they openly fought for Berengar's attention.

Though many of the men envied Berengar for the love of three beautiful young women, he was having a hard time maintaining his composure. The three girls began to fight among themselves over his affection the moment the alcohol had entered their bloodstream, thus he was trying his best not to chastise them for their unruly behavior.

Adela put on doll-like expressions as she began to rest her head onto Berengar's chest. Her face was flushed red from the wine she had drunk, and she began to speak slowly.

"Berengar... I can't wait for our wedding!"

To this, Berengar petted the girl's silky golden hair before nodding his head silently. He felt like if any words escaped his lips, he would not maintain the calm facade he had created. These three girls were clinging to him like cats to catnip, and he was not even able to drink away his discomfort.

Count Otto merely laughed as he drank with his wife Wanda; though he was initially unsure about Berengar's little harem, he now felt great joy watching the young Duke's displeasure; it was undeniable that he was not happy with the way the girls were behaving.

As such, Otto merely sighed before addressing the curious sight.

"Well, all I can say is his grace brought this upon himself. He should not have been so greedy!"

To this, Wanda smiled; seeing her husband in such a good mood about the awkward scenario displaying itself was a good sign. It was so uncomfortable that none of the nearby nobles approached Berengar or the girls and maintained their distance while commenting among themselves.

Linde forced Berengar's hands onto her breasts as she boldly displayed her feelings. When she was intoxicated, it was common for her to forget her manners and act on impulse.

"Darling, I missed you in bed last night. Maybe tonight we can have some fun?"

Berengar immediately withdrew his hand and looked away; when he did so, he noticed that Adela was pouting, like usual, the girl could not handle Linde's suggestive comments. One could tell by looking at her that she was incredibly envious.

Of course, what came next shocked Berengar, he felt a slight nibble on his neck, and when he went to address it, he noticed that Honoria had sunk her teeth into him ever so slightly out of jealousy. Even though it was harmless, Berengar would not tolerate such violent action, and as such, he quickly shoved Honoria off of him and flicked her on the nose.

"Behave yourself, missy, or I swear to God I will drag you back to Kufstein myself and put you on the first boat back to the Empire!"

Seeing Honoria scolded so fiercely, the other two girls began to laugh at her misfortune, and Berengar felt degraded. Though he was not the slightest bit

embarrassed, he had since grown used to such large social gatherings and was accustomed to the way people stared at him.

Honorina, of course, began to pout, and her adorable face as she did so caused many young men in the audience to clench their fists with envy. The three most beautiful women in the room were all clinging to one man, openly displaying their affection for him.

It was enough to drive any sane man insane, yet Berengar calmly reacted to this before deciding he had enough of the girls and their actions. Thus he clanged his glass before making an announcement.

"I have an announcement to make, though I wanted this to be later in the night; I figured now is as good enough time as any. I will show off the splendid gift that I have gotten my future wife for her fourteenth birthday."

After saying this, the servants left the room before shortly returning while leading a solid white Arabian stallion by the reins. Its saddle was made of the finest black leather and the blanket of the finest silk. The metallic components were made of gold, and it contrasted with the white fur of the mighty beast perfectly.

Upon seeing this, Adela nearly lost control of the crystal glass in her hand provided by Berengar. However, she maintained a firm grip and merely covered her gaping mouth with her free hand.

After doing so, she ran up to the horse and began to pet it while staring deep into its dark eyes. The moment the rider and horse met their eyes together, they knew that fate had bound them together. As such, Adela hugged the horse before deciding on a name for it.

"I will call you Siegfried! After the dragon slayer!"

Hearing this, Berengar smiled; Adela seemed to have a similar naming convention to him. After playing around with the horse for a while, Adela jumped into Berengar's arms and pecked him on the lips as a token of her gratitude.

"Thank you, Berengar; I love him!"

Berengar merely took a drink from the glass of wine he had procured while Adela was playing with her horse and smiled before making a joke.

"Hopefully not as much as me, right?"

In response to this, Adela merely smiled and stayed in silence. Afterward, the horse was led out of the Great Hall and back to its stables, where it would be resting from then on. Berengar, on the other hand, began to chat with Linde while the rest of the gifts were brought in.

Adela revealed their contents like a kid on Christmas and thanked everyone for their support. However, nothing triumphed the mighty stallion from the east that Berengar had procured for his little fiancée.

After Adela had opened her presents, she found a way to sneak off with Berengar to the balcony, where the two began to talk alone. Berengar sighed heavily as he drank from his glass, waiting for Adela to ask the question on her mind.

After a few more sips of wine, Adela finally managed to get the courage to ask her future husband about her concerns.

"Do you love her?"

To this, Berengar made a snide remark

"Which one?"

Adela began to pout once more as Berengar was being purposely obtuse. She did not want to ask the question outright. Nevertheless, Berengar forced her to say it.

"Honoriam!"

When Berengar heard this, he nearly spat out his drink. However, he managed to choke it down and regained his composure before responding to Adela.

"Linde told you, did she?"

It only took Berengar a moment to figure out that Linde was responsible for Adela knowing the truth behind Honoria's identity. As such, he placed down his glass and looked off into the full moon in the sky above before answering honestly.

"At the moment, no, at least not to any severe extent. I will admit that I find her attractive, and sometimes she can be charming. That is when she isn't acting like a spoiled brat. What is important is that she has already begun to fall for me.

I have no intentions to rush a relationship with our little runaway princess. I will take things slow and build a relationship with her step by step. After all, she has a part to play in my grand ambitions.

Whether she finds her way into my heart as anything more than a passing fancy is up to her efforts to improve herself. Regardless of how I feel about her, that does not change what I have to do. An alliance with the Empire is too valuable to give up over personal feelings or a lack of them."

While she was hearing this Adela sighed before grabbing ahold of Berengar's hand and holding onto it firmly. After doing so, she looked him in the eyes with a solemn gaze before announcing the words she had in her heart.

"Even if you become a Polygamous Scoundrel, I will support you until the end. Just promise me that I will be your first wife and that you will never leave me!"

Seeing the sincere gaze that Adela was giving him, Berengar grabbed ahold of her and dragged the girl into his embrace before wiping a tear from her eyes. As he did so, he whispered in Adela's little ear.

"I swear on my life that I will never leave you!"

With that said, Berengar kissed the girl on the lips before releasing his hold over her. After doing so, he lifted his glass of wine and drank its remaining contents. The remainder of the night was spent in celebration, and Berengar would depart for his territory within the next day after all the work of a Duke was never finished.

