

Steel 351

Chapter 351: The Royal Wedding Part II

After the wedding ceremony was held within the confines of the Grand Cathedral, Berengar, Adela, and the hundreds of guests retired to the Palace for the Reception, in the ballroom of the Royal Palace, there was a place set for dancing, where Berengar and Adela were currently waltzing in the middle of the dance floor.

In Berengar's past life, it was a tradition of Germany for the Groom and Bride to waltz, followed by the bride dancing with her father and the groom dancing with his mother. This was a tradition Berengar had already established in Austria, and as such, he was currently waltzing with his new bride. As he did so, Adela began to speak to him with a loving smile plastered on her doll-like face.

"Berengar, my love, you look so handsome in your current attire. Your regal appearance is befitting of a man of your position!"

Berengar continued to smile as he danced with his wife; in doing so, he returned her compliment.

"Adela, my darling, you are breathtaking, I knew you would look exceptional in that dress, but you are the personification of the ancient goddess of beauty and love, Frija."

Though Adela was a devout woman and frowned upon paganism, she could not help but blush at Berengar's remarkable comment. As such, she leaned in and kissed him as they waltzed the night away.

Shortly after doing so, the song ended, and Adela began to dance with her father, while Berengar danced with his mother, Gisela. As he did so, his mother could not help but comment on his appearance just like Adela had done so.

"My son, when you were young, I never believed you would live to see the day of your wedding. I must admit I am quite proud as your mother to say that you have grown to be an exceptionally handsome young man. If only your brother were here to see this..."

When Gisela said, this Berengar began to frown and look away from her sight. Though she was aware of Lambert's death, Berengar and his father Sieghard had decided to hide the truth of the exact details behind Lambert's demise to spare her some heartache.

As such, Berengar had never revealed the truth behind his injury that served as a permanent reminder of his brother's betrayal. With this in mind, he began to switch the subject to something more lighthearted.

"Mother, I thank you for all the support you have given me throughout these years. I know I haven't been the best son, but I assure you that I have done everything for the sake of our family and the Austrian people! If there is anything you need from me, feel free to let me know, and if it is within my power, I shall grant it to you."

In response to this, Gisela chuckled before hugging her son. As she did so, she made a joke about his position.

"It's good to know that I have the King of Austria supporting me! Very well, if I ever have anything I need of you, I will not hesitate to ask, though I do have one question in mind."

Berengar smiled and nodded to his mother's request before responding.

"Go ahead, as long as it is not a State Secret, I will not hide anything from my mother."

Seeing how the King had given her the permission she needed, Gisela began to ask the question that weighed heavy on her heart ever since she first arrived at the new Royal Palace.

"What will become of the old castle? Now that you have a new and luxurious home, what are your plans for the seat of your ancestors?"

Berengar relaxed the moment he heard the question; at first, he thought it was something serious, but it just turned out to be something as simple as this. As such, he quickly relayed his thoughts on the matter.

"It will be preserved for generations to come, as a museum about our family's history. Do not worry, mother, I will never allow our family home to be torn down!"

Upon hearing this, Gisela let out a sigh of relief; knowing her son's rather industrious and pragmatic nature, she was afraid that he would have the castle removed in favor of some new project. It was good to know that Berengar still valued his roots, despite climbing far above the position of his ancestors.

Shortly after this conversation, the dance concluded, and Berengar reunited with Adela as they approached the dining table. As he did so, his father came to him before clapping his shoulder. The man did not age as severely as the last time Berengar had seen him; in fact, he seemed to be in exceptional health. He had even seen to put on a few pounds of muscle. Sieghard had a proud smile on his face as he congratulated his son on the monumental occasion.

"My son, to believe that you would live long enough to marry, it is truly the happiest day of my life. On top of that, you are now a King respected by your people and feared by your enemies. If someone were to tell me such an outcome was your destiny just five years ago, I never would have believed it. Yet here we stand, words can not express how proud I am of you, Berengar."

After saying this to Berengar, Sieghard approached Adela, where he hugged his niece before complimenting her.

"Oh, little Adela, you have grown to be such a beautiful young woman. When I first told Berengar about his marriage to you, he was deeply concerned about being engaged to such a young girl. Time has a way of solving all of life's problems. I am glad that you stuck with my son, despite his lecherous nature."

Adela put on a graceful smile as she curtsied before her Uncle and Father-in-Law before expressing her thanks for his compliments.

"Thank you, Uncle; Berengar may be a bit of a playboy, but he is the man I love, and I assure you, I will put his lovers in their place so that they remember their position in the hierarchy."

When Sieghard heard this, he began to chuckle as he gazed at his son and his lovely bride; as he did so, he expressed his approval.

"You two are a great couple. Alright, I will allow you to be; it is time to eat after all!"

As Sieghard had said, it was a time for celebration, and as such, a massive amount of food had been prepared. Growing up in a German family, Berengar had seen and learned how to make many dishes from the fatherland. He had also witnessed his cousins' weddings and was aware of what was traditionally served at a German wedding.

With this in mind, Berengar had a variety of dishes served in the feast to the hundreds of people who had gathered in his dining hall to celebrate his marriage to Adela; the first course was a traditional German soup known as Hochzeitssuppe. It comprised beef shank, carrots, cauliflower, asparagus, spaetzle noodles, and egg dumplings.

Alongside the soup, a noodle dish known as Hochzeitsnudeln was served as part of the first course. This dish was of Prussian origin and had meatballs, capers, and cream sauce over whole egg-flavored noodles.

The second course of the meal was Tafelspitz which was tender beef boiled in vegetable sud. Berengar had it served with Käsespätzle and Leberknödel as side dishes. These two dishes were the German equivalent of mac and cheese and beef liver dumplings. All of these dishes were served with a combination of coffee and wine. As such, the festivities were quite exceptional.

Berengar and Adela sat at the head of the table, this was natural as Berengar was the King of Austria, and now Adela was the Queen. As such, they entertained their guests as they drank their wine and dined on the delicious food that had been prepared. Sitting on Adela's side were her parents and siblings, and by Berengar's side were his own family.

Further down the table were Berengar's lovers and his children, as well as the foreign dignitaries and high-ranking Austrian Noblemen. Such as the Grand Duke of Switzerland, a position afforded to the previous Count of Chur, the

man known as Rayner von Chur, who had previously sided with Berengar upon his army's invasion of the Swiss Confederation.

Linde and Honoria were quite perturbed that they were forced to sit so far away from Berengar. Despite this, they behaved themselves as they did not want to invoke their lover's ire. As such, the meal at the Reception continued relatively peacefully as the people present enjoyed the exceptional Austrian Cuisine that Berengar had introduced to his realm from the memories of his previous life.

For Berengar, the wedding reception was progressing smoothly, the guests all seemed to be enjoying themselves, and Adela seemed perfectly happy with the result. In his mind, it was indeed the perfect wedding. The meal had just begun, and with it, Berengar would be forced to entertain hundreds of his guests.

Chapter 352: The Royal Wedding Part III

At the head of the dinner table, Berengar sat alongside Adela. A position that had until relatively recently been reserved for Linde. However, now that Berengar was married, it was appropriate for his wife to sit next to him and not his lover.

Berengar and Adela were the primary attraction of the hundreds of dinner guests who had gathered to celebrate their marriage. Among his guests were his two most powerful allies, Emperor Vetrans Palaiologos of the Byzantine Empire and Sultan Hasan Al-Fadl of the Emirate of Granada. These two men had been staying in Kufstein since Berengar's coronation Ceremony, which was only a matter of weeks prior.

Though Vetrans was unhappy that Berengar had married Adela before his daughter, his rage had settled down after witnessing the beautiful ceremony and dining on the exceptional cuisine. He was beginning to believe that Adela made a perfect Queen for Berengar.

Maybe it was because the couple was related by blood and shared many physical similarities, such as the golden blonde hair, the sapphire eyes, and the pale skin. Whatever it was, Vetrans greatly approved of Berengar and Adela's marriage.

He was also astonished by the stature and luxury of the Grand Cathedral of Kufstein and the Austrian Royal Palace. With this in mind, the Emperor of the East began to compliment the Austrian King for what he had accomplished in such a short period.

"King Berengar, I must say that I am thoroughly impressed with the city of Kufstein and all that you have accomplished in under five years. I look forward to the future that you create here in Austria. Allow me to congratulate you on your wedding to your stunning young bride; if your children are half as exceptional as you, then I am certain your Kingdom will flourish for generations to come!"

In response, Berengar lifted his glass chalice, which was filled with wine, and took a sip; after doing so, he made a bold declaration to the Emperor from the east.

"Emperor Vetransis, I thank you for your kind words, but I am only just beginning on my journey as a ruler; within five years, the Kingdom of Austria will be transformed into a marvel of industry. So much so that you will feel as if you have walked into a new world entirely. Mark my words, the Glory of Austria will be unrivaled within a single generation."

When Vetransis heard this, he smiled before responding to Berengar's claims; though he believed Berengar was being grandiose in his statement, he decided to play along with his claims. If such a thing were to occur, then the Emperor would admit defeat and submit to Berengar as the supreme power of the west.

"I look forward to seeing such a sight!"

As for Hasan, he was deeply concerned about his Nation's ongoing war. He had no idea what Berengar's plans were for military intervention in his conflict with his catholic neighbors, but he felt as if it were taking too long.

It had only been a matter of weeks since he discussed such a thing with Berengar, and with each passing day, he felt a growing sense of dread. Despite this, he performed a graceful act befitting a man of his position as he congratulated Berengar on his marriage to Adela.

"King Berengar, I must say that your wife is breathtaking; she is every bit as beautiful as my sister Yasmin. You are a lucky man, and I look forward to working with you further in the future."

Berengar nodded his head in response to Hasan's compliments as he dined on the meal set before him. At the moment, he was working on the first course, which comprised of soup and noodles. He immensely enjoyed the cuisine as he gobbled it down with the manners befitting of a King.

Adela sat next to him and had a wide grin on her face as if she were a kid who had just been given candy. Though in the past, she had always had preferred deserts over dinner. With age, she was beginning to find that food other than sweets could be equally delectable.

As such, she snacked on the food as if it were the most delicious thing she had ever tasted. Berengar noticed the happy grin on her face and smiled in response. It was good to see the girl was warming up to food other than sweets.

The dinner went on for some time as Berengar and Adela entertained their guests until finally all meal courses were finished, and the desert was brought forth. This dessert was a giant wedding cake in the form of the traditional Baumkuchen. This cake was made on a spit and was a complex process to bake. It was finished in a sugar glaze and was more than enough to satisfy the guests.

As such, Berengar and Adela got up from their seats and cut the cake together; after doing so, they fed each other the first bites from their forks. Berengar and Adela gazed at each other passionately as they did so, so much so that Linde and Honoria, who were watching the scene, grew green with envy.

Despite this, Berengar did not take notice; after all, tonight was entirely for Adela. His other women could wait until their wedding nights to feel such bliss. As for Berengar, he sat down in his seat with his slice, alongside his wife, as the rest of the cake was divided up and handed out to the guests.

Adela, in particular, was delighted by the taste of the cake as she moaned in pleasure with each bite. Though she was starting to enjoy food other than

sweets, it would appear that her sweet tooth was not disappearing any time soon. Berengar didn't mind this; if anything, he found it to be adorable.

As such, Berengar and Adela continued to eat the cake alongside one another and chat about their plans for the future. Before long, the clock had struck midnight, and Berengar's guests began to depart. Berengar himself noticed that Adela was quite flustered and dizzy from the amount of wine she had drunk on her wedding night, and as such, he grabbed ahold of her and carried her to the Royal Bedchambers as if she were a princess.

After arriving in the room that would belong to the two of them in the future, Berengar began to strip; as he did so, Adela stared at his chiseled body in awe. Her cheeks grew even redder as she stared at her husband's naked body. It was the first time in her life she had seen such a thing, and after a few moments of observation, Berengar walked over to his wife where he began to kiss her on the lips; as he did so, he stripped her of her wedding gown.

It was not until she was entirely in the lingerie that Berengar stared at her with a shocked expression. He could not describe his young wife as anything other than angelic. Adela grew increasingly embarrassed as Berengar stared at her for some time; as he did so, he grew stiff, which caused great shock to the girl. Eventually, she knelt before Berengar and closely examined his lower shaft before asking the question on her mind.

"Is it supposed to be this big?"

Berengar chuckled with amusement before confirming his wife's suspicions.

"You could say I am blessed."

Adela was hesitant to touch it, but she mustered her resolve and began to service her husband after a while. Before long, Berengar found himself grunting in pleasure as Adela stroked his rod. Where she proceeded to lick it eventually the young Queen began to suck upon Berengar's shaft as if it were the tastiest lollipop. However, her lips did not get far, after all, she was not accustomed to having such a large object in her little mouth.

Eventually, Berengar could take it no longer and lifted his wife into the air before lying her down on the bed; as he did so, he pulled down her panties

and positioned himself at the entrance of her wet cave. A hint of fear-filled Adela's eyes, as she was uncertain if such a thing could fit inside her. Upon seeing this reaction, Berengar kissed his wife upon the lips passionately before reassuring her with his kind words.

"Don't worry; I'll be gentle..."

With this said, Adela nodded silently while biting her lip. It was her wedding night, and she knew she had to consummate her marriage with Berengar to achieve her place as the main wife. As such, she allowed Berengar to take the lead as he slowly inserted his shaft inside of her. As he did so, he kissed his beautiful young wife with passion as they twirled their tongues together.

Blood flowed onto the sheets, signaling that Adela's chastity had been taken. As he did so, Berengar halted his advance before grabbing ahold of Adela's doll-like face and asking her the question on his mind.

"Is it painful?"

To his surprise, Adela shook her head softly and leaned in to kiss Berengar further. After doing so she whispered in his ear

"Maybe it is because of the wine, but it's less painful than I thought it would be."

With this said the couple began to move their hips into one another. Berengar matched Adela's pacing making sure not to cause her any significant pain in the process.

He continued the intensity until Adela was finally brought to orgasm; as she climaxed, so too did Berengar release his seed inside of her. In doing so, he had taken the first step towards conception. Whether or not their love would bear fruit this night had yet to be seen.

After finishing their first experience as man and wife, Adela grabbed ahold of Berengar's face and kissed him once more before expressing her deepest thoughts.

"That was amazing... I have waited so long for this day."

Berengar responded with a gentle smile as he stroked his wife's silky golden hair before expressing his desires.

"You are now my woman... no... my Queen!"

Adela gazed softly at her husband until he asked the question on his mind.

"So... Shall we go again?"

With this said, Adela had finally realized the beast she had married and was thankful that there were other women to share her burden for the first time in her life. Despite this, Berengar and Adela continued their actions well for several hours. After all they had a lot of time to make up for.

Chapter 353: Discussing Plans for the Future

Having spent his wedding night with his new wife, Berengar awoke later than he usually would. After all, he had his fill of food and wine the night before and was in the mood to sleep in. It was not until roughly noon that he awoke to see Adela still asleep by his side.

The young woman was still tired from their joint exercise the night before. As such, Berengar kissed her on the forehead before rising from his bed and getting dressed. He decided to take the day off from his usual fitness regimen and instead approached the dining hall for his morning coffee and breakfast.

As he sat down at the table, he saw Honoria and Linde sitting alongside Henrietta and Berengar's two children. It would appear that they had been waiting some time for his arrival. His two lovers immediately began to inquire about Berengar's night with Adela with wicked grins on their lips. Linde, who was gracefully sipping on a cup of coffee, was the first to speak about this issue.

"So, how is the little Queen doing? I hope you weren't too rough with her."

Berengar chuckled as he sat down at the table; shortly after that, a mug of coffee was brought over, prepared in just the way he liked it. He began to speak about his previous night's conquest with a gaze of pride as he drank from the cup.

"It could not have gone better. She and I are very compatible; maybe it is because we're related? Who knows... anyway, you might have some competition going forward. After all, Adela is now my lawful wife, and though she may be inexperienced, she is a quick learner."

An enviable expression formed on Linde's face as she lightly bit down upon her exquisite lips. The truth was that she did not sleep well the night before. It was the first time in a long time that Berengar was home and yet not sleeping by her side. One could say she was dreadfully uncomfortable. At this moment, a brilliant idea appeared in her head, and as such, A mocking smile appeared on Linde's lips as she began to tease her lover.

"That is fine by me; Honoria and I had a girls' night, it would appear you aren't needed to have a good time."

Berengar gazed up from his coffee mug and into the eyes of Linde as he tried to determine whether or not she was telling the truth. Although he had said in the past that if he were gone and Linde ever felt horny, she and Honoria should entertain themselves, he had never actually expected them to do so. It wasn't until he looked at Honoria's confused expression that he knew Linde was bluffing. As such, a wicked smile appeared on his face as he called his lover's bluff.

"Really? Then I guess I will spend the next week with my wife; after all, I wouldn't want to spoil your girls' nights."

Linde began to panic internally; seeing as her attempt to make Berengar jealous had backfired spectacularly, she quickly thought of a solution to the problem at hand. As such, Linde grabbed ahold of her lover's hand before whispering in his ear.

"You are more than welcome to join us next time, master..."

Berengar chuckled in response to this and fired back in a flirtatious manner.

"Oh? But then it wouldn't be a girl's night, would it?"

Honoria, who watched Linde and Berengar battle each other with their wits, smiled silently as she drank from her coffee. After witnessing Linde's tortured

expression, Honoria couldn't help but get involved in the affair and quickly began to side with Berengar on the matter.

"I honestly don't know what Linde is talking about; I slept in the harem room last night by myself. Maybe she got a little too drunk and hooked up with some random girl at the party, thinking it was me. As you already know, I am always willing to share you, daddy!"

Linde could hardly believe her ears, Honoria and her were supposed to have an alliance against Adela, and yet the bitch had just stabbed her in the back so ruthlessly. As such, she glared daggers towards the treacherous princess, who simply stuck out her tongue in response.

Seeing how the conversation was starting to get out of hand, Berengar decided to end the whole charade and accepted Honoria's request.

"Sure, Just don't let Adela find out; you know how much of a prude she is."

The moment Berengar said this, he heard a voice call out to him from behind and instantly felt a chill go down his spine.

"Oh, I'm a prude, am I? Just what exactly is it that you three are hiding behind my back?"

Henrietta, who was watching the conversation, remained silent once more. She was old enough now to know what Berengar and his harem were fighting about, and as such, she merely smiled as she enjoyed her coffee and her meal. Berengar had dug his own grave by having three women by his side, and now he had to lie in it.

Berengar immediately turned around to see Adela standing behind him with her arms crossed and a pouting expression on her face. He had no idea that she had woken up and snuck up behind him. As such, she smiled awkwardly as he attempted to calm his young wife.

"It is nothing sweetheart, Linde and Honoria were just telling me how they entertained themselves during our wedding night..."

The moment Adela heard this, several thoughts came to her mind, and she instantly began to flush with embarrassment. Berengar's words had worked like a charm because she immediately decided to switch the topic.

"So, what are your plans now that we are married?"

After saying this, she sat down at the head of the table, next to her husband, who was just glad to see that she had voluntarily changed the conversation to something more productive; as such, Berengar smiled as he drank from his mug once more. After doing so, he began to speak about his ambitions.

"Well, now that I have bought our Kingdom some time of peace, I intend to take advantage of it. Industrialization is the path I am bringing forward; with that in mind, I plan to build railways across Austria and Switzerland.

I will set forth a decree looking for the labor necessary to produce a vast network of railways across our Kingdom so that supplies and troops can be rapidly transported to every corner of our realm. It will take several years, but I have no doubt that it will ultimately be successful."

With this said, Adela stared at him with a curious expression; she had no idea what a railway was or what it was used for. As such, she instantly began to question Berengar about the function of such a device.

"What exactly is this railway you speak of?"

Berengar smirked as he took a sip from his mug once more before speaking about the details of his plans.

"A railway is basically what you might call a metallic road; on this road, a locomotive which is a steam-powered device, is used to drag train cars across the railway at high speeds. These train cars can carry supplies or people, allowing rapid transport across the Kingdom.

With this system traveling from Kufstein to Vienna, or Zurich, or Trieste can take a matter of hours instead of days. Thus, we won't need to build long canals connecting the River Inn to the Adriatic Sea. With a railroad, we will quickly transfer goods and people from our ports in the Adriatic across the entire Kingdom, thus stimulating our trade.

Of course, from a defensive standpoint, it is also exceptional, as the construction of railroads will allow us to send troops and supplies to any corner of the Kingdom in a mere span of hours. No matter where we might be invaded, reinforcements can rapidly arrive."

Honorina was the most excited of all to hear about this; no longer would she have to take the route of the black sea to return to Kufstein, she had meant to speak with Berengar about the construction of canals to make her life easier, but this seemed like an even better plan. As such, she could not prevent herself from doubting Berengar's words.

"You can actually make something like this?"

Berengar nodded towards his lover with a smile on his face before responding in the affirmative.

"Absolutely! It will be expensive and require a lot of effort, but it can be done. Luckily for us, we just acquired the Medici fortune and can easily afford such an expense. I have decided that the first section of the railway will travel from Kufstein to Trieste. To connect the Capital to our major port city."

Adela was equally as happy as Honorina to hear about such plans. If the railway truly connected all significant areas of the Kingdom of Austria, she could visit her family far more frequently in the future. As such, she had a broad smile on her face as she heard of Berengar's ambitions. If he was going to work so hard for the Kingdom, and its people, then she too had to help in any way she could.

With this in mind, she began to think about plans for improving the culture within Austria. As she did so, a couple of plates were brought to the table by the servants. These plates contained the breakfasts Berengar had ordered for himself and Adela. After the food arrived, Adela said a short prayer before Berengar and herself began to dig into their food.

As they devoured their food like a couple of ravenous wolves, Berengar thought of ways to begin the construction of his railways. He wanted them to be fully operational when the crusaders invaded his lands. As such, he spent the rest of the meal in relative silence.

Chapter 354: Demonstrating the Rifled Breech Loader

Roughly a month had passed since Berengar's wedding. With it, Ludwig's workshop was fully updated with the steam-powered, precision engineering equipment that Berengar had designed and begun to introduce across Austria.

This did not mean that the entire industrial district of Kufstein was updated, in fact, it still had several months to go before such a feat could be achieved, but it did mean that Ludwig could get to work on some prototype weapons that Berengar had recommended for use in the armed forces.

For Austria to truly dominate on the battlefield, more modern artillery was desperately needed, especially since Berengar had begun to fear that his current artillery was dreadfully obsolete compared with his infantry's weapons.

As such, Berengar had designed a horizontal sliding block rifled breech loader loosely based upon the designs used by the German army in the latter portion of the 19th century. For now, this was the best his factories could manage to produce, as anything further would require an advanced recoil mechanism that his factories were simply incapable of making at this point.

Over the past month, Ludwig had endured substantial difficulties in producing and refining the prototype that Berengar had designed; however, with the help of his team of Engineers, and Berengar's support, the man had finally managed to create several rifled horizontal sliding block artillery pieces capable of undergoing field testing.

At the moment, Berengar and a few of his Generals were gathered at the testing ground, where they witnessed the artillery crew load one of the weapons from the rear. While the crew was busy doing so, Ludwig stood in front of the gathered military officials dressed in formal attire, with the same groomed appearance he had during Berengar's wedding. He began to make a speech as the weapon was rapidly loaded, his voice brimming with confidence.

"What you see before you is the newest innovation in field artillery! This weapon utilizes a 75x200mmR separate loading cased charge shell filled with TNT. It can launch this projectile up to five miles in the distance, with far

greater lethality than the primitive ordinance used by our current muzzle-loading cannons!

In a minute, you will see this weapon tested! With it, I hope to show you the new era of firepower that our soldiers will wield on the battlefield to bring greater glory to our King and Fatherland! Without further ado, feast your eyes on the brilliance of my newest invention!"

After saying this, Ludwig sat down next to Berengar, who tapped him on the shoulder and nodded.

"That was an excellent speech, my friend!"

Ludwig smiled as he heard this before shifting his attention ahead to the weapon on display. He had gone through exceptional lengths to ensure these weapons were correctly manufactured. Without the precision instruments that Berengar had introduced, he would never have been able to create such a complex piece of engineering.

After a few moments, the artillery team yelled their commands as they pulled the lanyard attached to the operating mechanism. The moment they did so, a roaring thunder filled the air as the projectile was launched into the distance.

Approximately five miles out, the shell landed and exploded upon roughly five straw targets contained within sets of full plate armor. After the shell exploded, not a single salvageable piece of the armor or the dummies themselves remained.

Berengar and his advisors gazed through their binoculars and witnessed the sight of the explosion, the moment the shell had impacted the targets, Berengar cried out in joy.

"Wonderful!"

However, the show had not finished there; the artillery crew immediately withdrew the spent casing before loading a separate shell. After doing so, they fired the shell, which landed only a few feet away from their last blast; whatever had remained of the targets was unguled in a fiery explosion.

It did not end there; the artillery team repeated this process eight more times, for a total of 10 shells fired in one minute from a single artillery piece. Such speed, power, and range completely shattered the Generals' expectations as this one cannon had proven capable of outperforming an entire battery of their current issued artillery.

Though this was just a simple demonstration, Ludwig hoped to convince the Generals of the Army to immediately begin extensive field testing of the weapon. As such, he crossed his fingers as Berengar discussed with his Generals about the testing and procurement of such weapons.

Berengar approached his Generals with his arms stretched out in excitement; as he did so, he spoke informally with the men under his command.

"What did I tell you? It is an absolute game changer! With these weapons, we can sell off our old artillery to our allies for a substantial sum, and if they have the nerve to bite the hand that feeds them, we can destroy their artillery with our own before they can even leave a scratch on our army! We have hundreds of the old Model 1417 12 pounders lying around that would fetch a high price from our allies! What do you think? Should we begin rigorous field testing of these new weapons?"

The Generals could not get over their shock by just how effective a single artillery piece of this new design was. If they successfully replaced all 350 of their current artillery pieces with this new design, no alliance in the world could stop their advance. The very idea of their infantry being equipped entirely with needle rifles and their artillery fitted with the new rifled breech-loaders filled the Generals with excitement and ambition.

With this in mind, not a single General declined the idea of immediately beginning field testing of the weapons. As such, they nodded their heads with eager smiles on their faces before complimenting Berengar and Ludwig for their efforts.

"Your Majesty, as always, the weapons you and Lord Ludwig come up with are exceptional. I think I speak for everyone here when I say that we are excited to begin field testing of these magnificent weapons immediately."

Berengar clasped his hands together with a broad smile on his face when he heard this and expressed his agreement.

"Wonderful! Very well, I will allow the Department of Defense to begin the process of testing the weapons; if they prove suitable to field conditions, we will then place an order to begin replacing our obsolete muzzleloaders! Gentlemen, it is the dawn of a new era, and we are leading it!"

After saying this, Berengar turned his attention to Ludwig, where he approached his old friend with a smile on his face.

"Come, Ludwig, let us go for a drink; I feel like celebrating the occasion and discussing some of my ideas with you!"

Ludwig did not deny the King's request, and as such, he followed him into the city of Kufstein, where the two men entered a local pub. The new Fashion designs that Berengar had begun to implement hadn't entirely overtaken Kufstein yet. Berengar and Ludwig were exceptionally well dressed compared to the common laborers who still dressed in largely renaissance attire that dwelled within the pub.

Berengar was currently clad in his full military dress uniform, similar to his wedding attire but in black, with a dark grey collar and sleeve cuffs that were filled with golden embroidery. Every other medal and order he had on his wedding uniform was the same on his military uniform. As such, he stuck out like a sore thumb when he entered the tavern.

Despite this, not a single person in the room looked at him with a sign of greed or envy. When the King entered the pub, more than half of the men jumped up and saluted him. Many of these men had either served in the military or were currently serving in the military, and as such, were well accustomed to doing such a thing whenever they were in the King's presence.

Berengar motioned for the men to be at ease before he sat down at the bar, where he ordered two fingers of whiskey for both himself and Ludwig. As well as a liter of beer to chase it down with. After doing so, he immediately began to discuss some of the arms developments he wanted to introduce in the upcoming years with Ludwig.

"So Ludwig, what do you think about metallic cartridges?"

The moment Ludwig heard Berengar say this, he was pretty shocked. As such, he lowered his voice before answering the King's question with one of his own.

"How did you know I have been working on metallic cartridges?"

Berengar merely chuckled as he heard this and downed the whole two fingers of whiskey in a single go. After doing so, he took a sip of his beer before speaking his thoughts.

"You came up with the needle rifle on your own; logically, the next progression is to build a bolt action rifle that is capable of using metallic cartridges. Or am I assuming too much?"

Ludwig was stunned when he heard this; it was exactly as Berengar had said; the moment he completed the needle rifle, he wanted to replace the paper cartridge due to its inherent disadvantages. However, despite tinkering with the idea of metallic cartridges in his free time, he had not been able to produce a reliable version. Thus Ludwig asked with suspicion on his mind as he dared to utter the words.

"You know the solution, don't you?"

Berengar merely smiled as he drank from his beer, not revealing the truth behind the matter. However, his silence was enough for Ludwig to comprehend the answer, and as such, the older man sighed heavily before asking Berengar the question he had been dwelling on for years.

"So tell me, my King, how do you know so much about... well, everything?"

Berengar smiled as he heard this before deciding to tease his old friend. As he did so, he leaned in and whispered to Ludwig the truth of the matter.

"Would you believe me if I told you I was from the future?"

Ludwig thought about it for a few moments and chuckled before responding to Berengar's wild claim.

"I don't know if you're actually telling me the truth or just messing with me. However, I know one thing that is a better explanation than anything I have been able to come up with to explain your unworldly knowledge..."

Berengar chuckled as he heard Ludwig's response; after doing so, he patted the man on the back before saying.

"Regardless as to how I know these things, I'll help you out with your metallic cartridge problem, send me your designs when you get the chance, and I will gladly assist you with how I think they can be improved."

After hearing this, Ludwig nodded with a smile on his face. Whether Berengar was telling the truth, or he was a man who had sold his soul to the devil for unlimited knowledge. It honestly did not matter; at the end of the day, Berengar's reforms immensely helped the people living in Austria, and to Ludwig, that was the most important thing of all.

Chapter 355: Doomed to Obsolescence

Berengar had been dreadfully busy with work over the past month, particularly in overseeing the beginning phases of his industrialization process, so much so that he had even begun to forsake his duties as a husband and father.

At this moment, he was sitting in his study, overseeing the expense reports for the initial startup costs of constructing a railroad. It was well within his expectations, and as such, he quickly signed his approval on the document with his fountain pen.

At this moment, he heard a knock on his door; as such, he instinctively called out to the person behind it.

"It's open."

After saying this, the door creaked open to reveal his newlywed wife, who was standing before him with a platter filled with food and a mug of beer. Before Berengar realized it, noon had approached, and lunchtime had arrived with it.

After seeing his beautiful young bride standing before him holding a plate filled with sausage, k?sesp?tzle, and schnitzel Berengar's fatigue began to wash away as he stood up from his seat and greeted his woman.

"Adela, is it lunchtime already? I'm sorry I should have met you in the dining hall; I have just been so busy with work."

Adela laid the food tray down upon Berengar's desk and forced herself upon his lap. As she did so, she placed a finger on Berengar's lips silencing him from speaking. She looked into his deep sapphire eyes that she herself had in common before telling the thoughts on her mind.

"I understand you have been busy managing the realm; there is no need to apologize. Without you, I fear to think what Austria would have become. At the very least, allow me to assist you in any way I can. After all, your work is necessary, but skipping meals is bad for your health."

Berengar smiled as Adela lifted the liter mug of beer and brought it to his lips, in doing so forcing him to drink from the hearty lager contained within. After he did so, he began to continue his work while Adela continued to feed him from the plate of food. He was careful not to damage the documents with the fine Austrian cuisine residue.

As he continued to focus on his work while taking short breaks to eat Adela's food, his young wife noticed the documents on the table and the amount of Guldens Berengar was spending on the process of industrializing his nation as such, her mouth gaped in shock before asking the question on her mind.

"Can we afford such expenditures?"

Berengar chuckled before assuring the young woman that they could indeed afford the expense.

"Not to worry, my love, with the assets we have seized from Italy during our War for Independence and the income we receive from all of our businesses, the Austrian Crown can easily afford the expenditure. Besides, this is an investment into the future of our realm. These railways will provide significant economic and tactical advantages over our rivals."

Adela relaxed when she heard Berengar's assurance, and after doing so, fed him a spoon filled with the delicious cheesy dish known as k?sesp?tzle; after doing so, she helped her husband wash it down with a sip of beer.

After finishing approving the distribution of funds to the construction of the railroad, Berengar began to take a look at the metallic cartridge design that Ludwig had struggled to create. The base material for the cartridge was copper, and the older man had attempted to embed a percussion cap in the rear.

Berengar instantly saw the faults with such a design and quickly began to draw the necessary modifications to make a proper metallic cartridge for use in firearms. Though Berengar could introduce smokeless powder, it would take some time to begin producing such a thing, and he currently had a massive stockpile of black powder built up.

With this in mind, Berengar began to redesign the cartridge around a reliable and proven black powder cartridge from his previous life. He began to draft the dimensions based upon the .45-70 govt used by the American armed forces in the latter half of the 19th century.

The bullet itself was a solid piece of lead and its diameter was .458 in or 11.6 mm. The cartridge itself was made of brass, which was more reliable than the copper cartridge that Ludwig had designed. The casing's neck was .480 in or 12.2mm in diameter, with a base diameter of 5.05 inches or 12.8mm.

The rim at the bottom of the cartridge was .608 in or 15.4mm in diameter as for the thickness of the edge; it was 0.70 in or 1.8mm; as for the length of the casing, it was 2.105 in or 53.5mm. For a rifle to properly stabilize the flight of this projectile, it would need a 1-20 rifling, which meant that for every complete revolution that the bullet twisted within the barrel, 20 inches were required to achieve it.

Adela watched in shock as Berengar was hard at work. Before her very eyes, he began utterly overhauling the rudimentary metallic cartridge that Ludwig had devised. Finally, he began to create the most critical point of a functioning metallic cartridge from memory as if it were second nature.

When Berengar began to create the centerfire primer seemingly from scratch, he lamented that he had no idea how to create a more modern Lead Styphnate explosive compound, which was required to make non-corrosive primers. He substituted the mixture with the far more primitive and cheaper to

produce mercury fulminate that his chemists had already created and utilized in the current percussion cap production.

A centerfire primer was something that took decades for Europeans to discover in Berengar's previous life. Still, because Berengar was an engineer and a firearms fanatic in his earlier life, he was well aware of how to manufacture such a thing.

The centerfire primer he designed was a small cup embedded within the cartridge's rear. It utilized mercury fulminate as the charge to ignite the black powder contained in the casing. This effect was achieved by using a firing pin to strike the primer, which would cause the mercury fulminate to spark, thus igniting the black powder and propelling the projectile through the barrel of the rifle and downrange into the target.

After Berengar had finished designing a reliable and functional cartridge, he sat back in his seat and reflected on his previous life with a smile. His family was far from wealthy in his earlier life, and as such, they tended to utilize any firearm they could get their hands on for cheap. One of these rifles was an old Springfield trapdoor rifle.

His father in his past life had purchased the firearm for a few hundred bucks at a pawn shop and had taken Julian hunting with the rifle numerous times. They even hand-loaded their cartridges to use in the gun; as such, Berengar was familiar with all the details needed to make the cartridge reliable and functional.

Adela immediately inquired about the designs she had seen Berengar design out of thin air, based solely on a plan given to him; she had no idea how Berengar had taken a rudimentary concept and improved it effortlessly as if such a thing was natural.

"Berengar, what is this I am looking at right now?"

Berengar looked over at Adela with an awkward smile; he had been so immersed in recreating the .45-70 that he had utterly forgotten his wife was sitting on his lap watching him work. As such, he began to pet her pretty head before revealing his thoughts on the matter.

"This is the invention that will allow our Kingdom to reign supreme over our rivals for centuries. Now all I need to do is design a rifle capable of utilizing it. Of course, I will do such a thing at a later date. It is a pity..."

Adela instantly looked up at Berengar with confusion as she heard the last part of Berengar's explanation.

"What is?"

A smug smile appeared on Berengar's face as he began to explain his thought process.

"Ludwig did an exceptional job creating the needle rifle, and I fear it will only see two conflicts before it is ultimately replaced by a superior design of my own making. It is such a waste..."

In response to this, Adela giggled innocently. She found it cute how Berengar thought so seriously upon such a meaningless topic and began to console her man over his regrets.

"Well, if it helped you win two wars, then it wasn't a waste, was it?"

Berengar smiled bitterly as he heard this; it would appear the needle rifle was doomed to rapid obsolescence in both of his lives. Though it had served as the primary weapon of the Prussian Army for a few decades, in his past life, it was ultimately replaced by the superior Mauser 1871 and its metallic cartridge not long after it had helped win a major war. It would appear that such a fate awaited his needle rifle in this timeline.

Berengar figured he would not be able to mass-produce the new cartridge or the rifle he would have to design around it before his Army intervened in Granada. The Schmidt Needle Rifle would only serve in partial capacity towards the Austrian War for Independence and total capacity in the Austrian Intervention in the Reconquista.

With this in mind, Berengar sat up from his chair and began to stretch his legs, forcing Adela off of his lap as he did so. After moving around for a bit, he kissed Adela on the lips while hugging her. As he did so, he thanked her for her assistance.

"Thank you, Adela, for bringing me food; without it, I likely would have worked until I starved."

Adela smiled graciously as she accepted Berengar's thanks

"No thanks is required; I am your wife; it is my job to look after you."

After saying this, Adela grabbed ahold of the food tray and followed Berengar out of his study. Berengar needed a break from work after putting in so much effort, and he intended to entertain himself with his new wife.

Chapter 356: Hussite Victory

Eckhard stood within the Great Hall of the Royal Palace within the city of Prague. The halls were stained with the blood of the Bohemian loyalists and their allied forces. Their corpses littered the ground and had already begun to rot. The blade of the Austrian field marshal was coated with the sanguine liquid of life.

Though he had not personally slain King Radek of Bohemia, Eckhard had done his fair share of bloodshed in the battle that led to such a result. Standing atop the Bohemian King's lifeless body was none other than Alexej Kaspar, a man revered by the radical Hussite Sects as a War Saint of their faith.

With Berengar's assistance, the Kasparian's and the other Hussite armies had waged a long and bloody war against the Bohemian Crown and their Catholic Allies. However, it was not until Austrian Agents posing as servants of the Bohemian Crown distributed weapons to criminals and brigands that the common people began to take arms against their masters.

With the support of the common people, the Hussite forces steamrolled over the Catholic Armies and brought their vengeance upon the Church for their crimes against Jan Hus and his followers. For the first time in centuries, the Catholic Church had lost a Crusade.

Alexej stared at the bloodstained golden crown lying upon the fractured skull of the once-mighty Bohemian King for several seconds, debating what to do with it. Though the radical Hussites revered him, the moderate factions of his

faith viewed him as a fanatic and a war criminal. Not to mention the many Catholics who lived within Bohemia that had not supported him and his cause.

Even a significant minority of ethnic Germans followed the teachings of Berengar and his German Reformation; one thing was sure the Kingdom of Bohemia was far from united. If he were to place this crown upon his head, it would only invite greater chaos.

Yet without a strong leader, Bohemia would become nothing more than a puppet state of their powerful neighbor to the Southwest. Austria was a behemoth that could swallow Bohemia whole; by a single decree, the Royal Army of Austria could march onto Bohemia and wipe away years of blood, sweat, and tears that the Bohemian people had shed for a proper reformist state.

As such, the man was at a crossroads, should he allow someone else, someone more unifying, to become King of Bohemia, or should he claim the position for himself and negotiate the terms of repayment of their debt to Austria from a place of authority, in doing so creating long term social strife.

Before he could make a decision, a few heavily armored men entered the scene; they were flying the banners of a Hussite Nobleman by the name of Valdemar Zuka; among the moderate Hussites, he was the most renowned.

Upon seeing Alexej standing above the bloodied corpse of the Bohemian King, eying his crown with avarice, Valdemar refused to stand by and began to approach the radical Hussites while flanked by his soldiers. As he did so, he rested his hand upon the hilt of his blade, eying the radicals with suspicion.

"Alexej, you did not think that I would allow you to place that crown upon your head, thus naming yourself King of Bohemia, did you? You have butchered thousands of Bohemian citizens in the name of your fanaticism, and thus you must answer for your crimes!"

As Valdemar said this, Alexej's followers unsheathed their blades in a show of force; as they did so, they stared down the moderate nobleman with fierce expressions. Just like how the moderates would never allow a radical to sit upon the throne, so too would they never permit a moderate to rule as King.

As for Eckhard, he and his Austrian troops were caught in the middle of these two armed groups. Thus the aging Field Marshal immediately attempted to appease both sides and come to a compromise before they began killing each other over minor differences of opinion.

"Gentlemen, stow your blades! We have won the war, and that is all that matters for now. As for who becomes King, it can be decided upon at a later date by all factions involved in this great victory that we have achieved together!"

Alexej and Valdemar gazed at each other with murderous intent; even after Eckhard's plea of reason, they still felt the urge to cut each other's throats on the spot. In Alexej's eyes, the moderates had done too little for the cause, allowing him and his forces to suffer as the vanguard in the war against the Catholics.

While the radicals fought, the moderates hugged the sidelines, waiting for a clear victor to emerge. As such, the radical leader would never allow an opportunistic man like Valdemar to seize the Bohemian crown, not after all the blood he and his comrades had shed to achieve this victory.

Seeing that tensions were only increasing, Eckhard played his final card to make the two men see reason, and as such, he sighed heavily before speaking in a grave tone.

"Word of your victory has already been sent to King Berengar; imagine his surprise when he pays a visit to the Bohemian Court and sees that you fools have begun slaying each other over your slight differences. Stow your blades or face the wrath of your benefactor!"

If it were years ago when the war had begun, such a threat would have been seen as a joke by the two sides facing off against each other. However, after news had reached Bohemia of Berengar's absolute victory over the Holy Roman Empire, nobody present was foolish enough to take Eckhard's warning lightly.

The Radicals were the first to back down as Alexej sheathed his blade; the moment he did so, his men followed suit. He and the radicals owed Berengar

a far more outstanding debt than the moderates. For it was them who Berengar had sent the majority of his aid to.

As for Valdemar, he clutched his blade intensely as he struggled to come to terms with the outcome. Was he going to sit idly by and allow the Austrians to play kingmaker over their realm? Despite his unwillingness to do so, the man ultimately accepted the futility of his situation. If the Austrians could wipe out the Italians and Swiss in a matter of months, what could they do to a divided and battle-worn Bohemia?

As such, the man quickly did as the Austrian Field Marshal commanded him and stowed his blade. Upon doing so, a sour expression formed on his face. He could not imagine the consequences that would befall their realm for allowing Berengar von Kufstein to act as the judge regarding the question of Bohemian Succession.

However, his hands were tied, and as such, Valdemar spat on the ground before departing; as he did so, he left a passing message.

"This is not the end, Alexej; you will answer for your crimes against Bohemia and her people; I swear to God I will make you pay!"

After Valdemar and his cronies had left, Alexej let out a sigh of relief before thanking Eckhard for his support.

"Thank you, Marshal Eckhard; I owe you and your King a great deal. What is it that your master has planned for us going forward?"

Eckhard sighed as he dwelled upon the question; he did not know what Berengar intended for Bohemia, years had passed since he last spoke to the man in person, and Eckhard did not doubt that the young monarch's ambitions had grown once more. As such, he could not honestly answer the question. Instead, his response was cryptic.

"I honestly do not know what Berengar's intentions are for Bohemia; I am sure that he will ask a great deal of you and your people for repayment. I suggest that you remember that he is not the minor noblemen you first approached years ago.

I give you this warning as a friend and a companion who has fought along your side for years. Do not underestimate the man known as Berengar von Kufstein; he is as cunning as he is cruel, and he will find a way to extract the most significant value from your lands, a value that you yourself may not even be aware of.

Most of all, be aware that he is not afraid to use war and violence as a means of diplomacy. If he threatens you during negotiations, do not take it lightly, as he has the means to be back up his claims. While you have spent the last few years waging a brutal war, he has spent it by consolidating his power and advancing his army to unimaginable lengths. I do not know to what degree the Austrian Military has advanced in my absence, but I assure you it is beyond your capabilities.

If you keep all of this in mind, I am sure you will be able to mitigate the damage done to your people during what is to come. Only ruin awaits you if you choose to ignore my advice and cling to your pride. This is all I can say as your friend, for my loyalty is to Berengar and his Kingdom. Good luck, for you and your people, will need it..."

With this said, Eckhard did not wait for a response; he quickly fled the scene with his men following in tail. They had much to prepare for; with a Hussite victory in Bohemia, the timeline was forever altered, and Berengar intended to take full advantage of it for the benefit of his realm.

Chapter 357: Military Parade

Berengar gazed upon thousands of his Infantry gathered before him marching in the streets. Most of these soldiers were standard Infantry. However, there were grenadiers mixed within their ranks. These men were dressed in the newest military uniforms and equipped with the most modern weapons that Berengar and his engineers had devised. They were clad in the distinctly victorian style uniform that Berengar had designed from head to toe.

On their head was a black steel pickelhaube helmet, with brass accents in the form of a double-headed eagle and a brass spike. Their tunics were black with gold trimming and had a single line of brass buttons from the neck down.

However, this tunic was concealed by a thick wool greatcoat in the pattern used by German Soldiers in the Great War of Berengar's past life. The

primary difference being it was black. Over this Greatcoat was a cuirass made of quenched and hardened high carbon steel and painted in the same black lacquer applied to their helmets.

Atop this cuirass was the standard-issue black leather webbing that contained the paper cartridges utilized in the Infantry's needle rifles. As well as a few other forms of essential equipment such as their bayonet sheaths and their field spades.

The pants were rich black wool, with a gold stripe on the sides, the legs were tucked into their knee-high black leather infantry boots. Overall it was a clean and crisp uniform devised for a more modern military. Since Berengar had begun the process of industrialization, he had introduced new attire for his Kingdom, both in the military and civilian sectors.

These men marched in parade formation, with their rifles unslung and held within their shoulders. These needle rifles were unloaded. However, their bayonets were affixed. The crowds of Kufstein were gathered to witness the thousands of soldiers march through the streets to show off the pride of Austria, which was her military.

Today was a special occasion, as it was now January, and with a new year, Berengar decided that it was time to introduce the medals and awards to all of the soldiers who had fought in his wars over the past few years. Without their aid, Berengar would never have been able to achieve everything he had accomplished in such a short time.

As such, tens of thousands of soldiers marched through the streets of Kufstein in the dead of winter, many of which were veterans of the armed forces who had retired and now served in the reserves.

Berengar was dressed in a greatcoat. However, it was open to reveal the luxurious general uniform and its awards beneath. Like all of the men present, he wore a pair of black leather gloves to protect his hands from the cold of the Austrian Alps.

He stood on a stage built above the Parade, where the soldiers who had proved themselves in battle would be called up one by one to receive their rewards. He was surrounded by his newly established Royal Guard, dressed

in specialty uniforms. Their uniforms had the colors reversed; they were white with gold trimming and had a single line of brass buttons from the neck down. Atop this tunic was a gilded cuirass, matched by a gilded steel pickelhaube helmet atop their heads.

The Royal Guard was selected from the most elite, battle-hardened, and loyal of Berengar's armed forces. Many of them had served in either the Jaeger Corps or the Grenadiers. However, others belonged to his cavalry units, such as the Cuirassiers and the Hussars.

Regardless they were the most suited to protecting Berengar and the Royal Family. As such, they stood by stoically as they guarded their King against any potential violent outburst during the festivities.

After the Infantry had passed by the location and circled to present themselves before the stage, the Artillery marched through the streets, with their field guns in tow by the horses that belonged to their units.

Their uniforms were similar to the Infantry, with a slight difference; instead of a spike on the top of their pickelhaube helmets, they had a brass ball affixed to a brass shaft. They also did not wear the steel cuirass as it was simply unnecessary for the Artillery to wear body armor. Though they had no way of knowing it, the new rifled breech-loading cannons were undergoing rigorous military testing before they could be approved for use in the field.

Once these wonder weapons made their way to the field, the Artillery would be so far removed from any form of danger against their medieval foes that it was simply a waste of resources to equip them with body armor.

After the Artillery marched through the Parade and regrouped behind the Infantry, standing in front of the stage, the Cavalry made their way through. There were various forms of Cavalry present. The Cuirassiers were the heavy Cavalry; they wore black and gold cavalry uniforms in the style of the Prussian Cuirassiers from the Franco-Prussian war of Berengar's past life. They had black steel breastplates and cuirassier style pickelhaube helmets.

As for the Hussars, they were dressed in a uniform similar to the legendary "Death's Head Hussars" utilized by Prussia during Berengar's previous life. However, their uniforms were black and gold instead of black and silver. Like

the Cuirassiers, they were outfitted with more modern cavalry sabers instead of the older Heavy Cavalry Swords that Berengar had previously equipped his Cavalry with.

The Uhlans followed after the Hussars had marched through the streets on horseback; these were modernized versions of Berengar's older lancers. They were also dressed in a military uniform based upon the old Prussian 1870s Uhlan uniform. Of course, it shared the same color scheme as the rest of Berengar's Army.

After the magnificent display of Berengar's modernized military had proudly marched through the streets. Berengar finally broke his silence and spoke to all of the men gathered before him.

"Over the last few years, all of you present have followed me into battle. Since the beginning, some of you have been with me, and others have joined my Army as I gained more power. We have lost many of our brothers in arms in combat against our enemies, yet we now stand an independent Kingdom, more significant than any force in all of the Western World.

It was due to your sacrifices on the field of battle that we have achieved everything that we have accomplished. As such, today is a day for all of you, and thus I have decided to give out awards to all of those who have proven themselves and their courage on the field of battle!

For every soldier wounded or killed in the conflicts since the battle of mining town so many years ago. I will be awarding them the Austrian Wound Medal, a symbol of the price they have paid for their King and fatherland!

Now, as I call your names, come forward, and I will give you the awards that I have deemed your service history worthy of!"

Berengar started by calling up the highest echelon of Generals and officers present. Those currently embedded in his proxy wars as military advisors would be given their awards later when they returned to Kufstein.

After getting through the General Officers and those directly below them, Berengar finally made his way to the regular officer class.

"Captain Arnwald Gerwig, step forward, please!"

Arnwald was surprised to hear his name being called; Despite the fact that he had worked his way up from an enlisted position to that of a full-fledged Grenadier Captain. He had not expected himself to be given any significant form of award.

When he finally arrived in front of the King, his heart was palpitating. However, the words Berengar spoke next shocked him to the core.

"It has been some time since I last saw your face. I was beside myself when I heard your friend Bardo had passed away; I am ashamed to admit that it was only after I researched my casualty reports for this ceremony that I realized that one of the men who so bravely stood by my side during that first ambush had passed away in a previous war."

Arnwald struggled to find the words to express his thoughts; he could not understand how Berengar managed to remember his face and name after so many years had passed since that fateful day. The man struggled to choke back the tears forming in his eyes as he listened to Berengar's decree to the crowd.

"For your bravery in protecting your King on the night of the ambush of our forces outside of Schwaz during the war for Tyrol, fighting bravely on the frontlines during the war against Bavarian Occupation, and your acts of gallantry while leading our grenadiers to protect our supply lines during the War for Independence, I at hereby grant you, Captain Arnwald Gerwig, the Knights Cross of the Iron Cross, the Military Merit Order, and the Fourth Class Order of Saint George!"

After saying this, Berengar opened a small container containing the two fabled medals. The first was worth more in prestige than the US Medal of Honor, the second was the most distinguished military honor that Berengar could award, and the third established Arnwald as a Knight of the Austrian Crown.

Berengar proceeded to hang the black, white, and gold ribbons containing the Iron Cross and the Military Merit Order around Arnwald's neck before pinning the white and black, and gold maltese cross of the Order of Saint George onto his chest.

After doing so, he shook Arnwald's hand before saluting the soldier, just as he had done to all of the officers who had come before him. Arnwald responded with his salute before returning to the crowd of gathered soldiers, who began to cheer for him. All citizens gathered outside the venue roared in applause for Arnwald's award.

The ceremony continued for several Hours as Berengar handed out awards to all the men he felt had deserved them. These medals and awards varied greatly based upon an individual's performance.

Among these men were soldiers who had proven their bravery on the field of battle, such as Captain Andreas Jaeger, whose actions as a Jaeger Captain led to the swift elimination of Italian Skrimishers during the War for Independence earned him a First Class Iron Cross as well as Captain Willehelm Krieger whose efforts to put down Brigands in Austria following Berengar's brief Regency over Conrad had earned him the Second Class Iron Cross.

After many hours, the night fell upon Kufstein, and Berengar dismissed the Parade. Among the soldiers of his Army, thousands had been awarded honors, most of which were the Austrian Wound Medal. The event itself was a rousing success, as it increased public interest in the military and was utilized as a propaganda tool in the papers to celebrate Austrian dominance.

This would be the first of many Military Parades that Berengar would arrange during his tenure as a Monarch. The first Generation of Austrian Soldiers had finally been recognized for their efforts on the field of battle, and thus morale was at an all-time high. In the future foreign countries would begin to adopt similar ideas of military awards to inspire their troops to achieve greater glory. However, for now, it was something unique to Austrian military culture.

Chapter 358: Preparing for Intervention in Bohemia

After the military parade had been finished, Berengar was alerted that the War in Bohemia had come to an end, and just as he expected, the various Hussite sects could not agree on who the next King would be.

He began to chuckle to himself as he read the letter written by Eckhard that was currently in his hands. Of course, it would turn out this way. Did Eckhard

expect a bunch of religious fanatics to have a plan for after they had overthrown the legitimate monarchy?

King Radek of Bohemia was dead, so too were his male heirs. Prague was in a disastrous state, and the various Hussite sects had turned on one another in an attempt to put their representatives on the vacant Throne.

If not for Berengar's fearsome reputation being utilized by Eckhard to pressure the various factions into maintaining civil ties, then a new war would have broken out between the victorious Hussites. After spending years backing the various Hussite sects in their war to overthrow the Catholic monarchy, now was the time to lay claim to the Bohemian Crown.

Eckhard had openly invited him into Bohemia, and as such, Berengar would show up with an army at his back. With the Austrian Royal Army behind him, the various factions vying for the Bohemian Crown would have to take him seriously.

As such, Berengar got up from his seat within his study and ventured to the headquarters of the Austrian Royal Army located within the city of Kufstein. After entering the building, the various soldiers who worked as administrative personnel saluted their King as he made his way to the General's chambers.

After entering the room, Berengar saw multiple of his General's gathered. They were discussing the trials of the new field cannons. However, when they saw the King enter the room, they immediately halted their discussion and saluted him in the more modern fashion he had recently implemented among his ranks. After doing so, Berengar returned their gesture before answering the questions he knew they had on their minds.

"The war for Bohemia is over; the Hussites are victorious!"

After saying this, the Generals began to break out into cheers; however, shortly thereafter, Berengar raised his hand, signaling them to be silent. After doing so, he spoke up once more about the current situation.

"The various Hussite sects are ready to turn on themselves in an attempt to put a member of their faction on the Throne. The situation is volatile, and I fear it is necessary to intervene before the Kingdom of Bohemia descends into

further chaos. I want 10,000 men gathered and ready to deploy to Bohemia within 72 hours. I will personally lead them; after all, it has been some time since I have last seen my good friend Eckhard."

The Generals immediately began to nod their heads as they received their order, not a single man among their ranks was willing to anger the King. As such, they quickly began to relay the orders to muster a small division of soldiers capable of stabilizing the situation within the neighboring Kingdom.

Berengar knew the likelihood of violence occurring after the Austrian Royal Army arrived in Bohemia was slim. This was merely a show of force. Thus he returned to the Palace where he began to prepare for his journey.

As Berengar was getting his supplies in order within the royal bed chambers, Honoria snuck up behind him and pounced on him, pinning him to the bed in the process. She had a pouting expression as she gazed upon her lover with a sense of dread.

"You're leaving so soon? It has only been a month since you returned home, and you have spent most of it with Adela!"

Berengar chuckled as he tried to get up from under the young princess. However, she refused to relent and continued to put pressure upon him. With his combatives training from his previous life, the young King could easily escape the princess's mount.

Still, he decided to endure the gesture and instead grabbed Honoria and brought her mouth into his own. Where he began to kiss her passionately. After a few moments, he let her go with a wicked grin on his face. He began to tease the young woman as he removed himself from under her grasp.

"Does that make you feel better?"

However, Honoria did not relent. Instead, she continued to pout as she looked away from her lover. Berengar had not spent nearly enough time with the girl since his marriage to Adela, and she was starting to feel left out. Now all of a sudden, he was going off to God knows where, as such, she would not forgive him so easily.? Instead, she merely began to question Berengar about his plans.

"Where are you going now?"

Berengar smiled as he heard his lover slowly begin to open up; as such, he began to inform her of the ongoing crisis in the neighboring Kingdom.

"The war for Bohemia is over. However, the Hussites are dumber than I thought; every faction among their ranks is currently vying to put their representative on the Bohemian Throne. The only reason blood has yet to be shed is because Eckhard had mentioned that I would be arriving to settle the dispute.

It would appear my neighbors have become afraid of me; as such, I am given a perfect opportunity to claim the Bohemian Crown for myself and annex it into my domain. Who will dare to oppose me after all the pain and suffering the Hussites have caused upon the Bohemian Kingdom?"

After hearing Berengar's explanation, Honoria began to break out into laughter, which was not the reaction Berengar was expecting; as such, he gazed at her with confusion before asking the question on his mind.

"What is so funny?"

In response to this, Honoria wiped a tear from her eye before pouncing on Berengar once more, hugging him tightly as she whispered into his ear.

"A year ago, my man was a lowly Duke; soon he will have two crowns! I knew I chose correctly when I decided to run away from home and into your arms; I dread to think what my life would be without you..."

Berengar smiled as he spent some time in the arms of his lover; the two of them rested there for some time before Berengar finally got up from the bed. He needed to inform the remainder of his family that he would be departing for a short while, and as such, he looked over at Honoria once more before commenting on her career path.

"Enjoy the peace while it lasts; in a few months, we will be forced to intervene on Granada's behalf; when that happens, I want you and your crew to begin

raiding the vessels of the Catholic Iberian Kingdoms. Speaking of which, go visit Ludwig while I'm gone, and inform him to equip your girls with some needle rifles; your current weapons are obsolete."

Honorina smiled as she heard this and nodded her head. After doing so, she hugged Berengar from behind one last time before thanking him for his support.

"Thanks for all your help..."

Berengar chuckled as he patted the girl's head before forcing himself out of her grip.

"Alright, I've got to go inform the others. I won't be leaving for another three days, so you and Linde should meet me in the Harem room later; I'm sure we can find some way to entertain ourselves for the next few days."

After saying this, Berengar left Honorina alone in the bedroom when he sought out his other family members. Interestingly enough, he found them all gathered within Helga's room, playing with his young daughter. As Berengar witnessed the wholesome sight, a broad smile appeared on his face. After watching in silence for a while, he finally announced his entrance.

"Ahem... I have an announcement to make."

After saying this, everyone within the room gazed over at Berengar with shock; they had no idea how long he had been standing there, all of them except for one. Hans was aware of Berengar's presence the entire time; he chose not to say anything as he continued to read from a book about Alexander the Great. After Berengar had gotten their attention, he announced his plans for the upcoming days.

"In three days, I will be Embarking for Bohemia, the situation there is at a critical point, if I play my cards right, I can gain control over the region and all the wealth within it. I won't be gone for long; I just wanted to warn you."

Adela immediately rose from her seat and approached Berengar with a worried expression. As for Linde as the Director of Austrian Royal Intelligence, she had become aware of this matter at roughly the same time as Berengar;

as such, she already expected this result. Thus she stood back with her son and daughter as Berengar consoled Adela.

Berengar held his young wife within his embrace as he stroked her silky hair. She was not in the greatest mood after figuring out her husband was leaving so soon after their wedding. As such, she asked the first question on her mind while giving Berengar a stern gaze.

"When will you be back?"

In response to this, Berengar decided to be honest.

"It will likely be a fortnight, a month at most. I have to stabilize the situation and bring it under my control. As soon as I am able, I promise I will return to your arms."

After saying this, Berengar began to kiss Adela; only after several moments had passed that he released himself from her grip. After doing so, he approached Linde and whispered something in her ear that caused her to blush.

Though Adela noticed this, she decided not to inquire about it. Berengar was likely going to find himself in danger again, and she had been monopolizing his time since their marriage; as such, she decided to let Berengar have some fun with his other future wives.

Berengar and Linde left Adela and Henrietta alone with their two kids as they absconded to the harem room where Honoria was waiting for them. As for what the trio would get up together, that was something only they would know.

Chapter 359: The Man with Two Crowns

Over a week had passed, and Berengar had set out with a division of 10,000 men. This specialized unit was equipped with Infantry, Cavalry, and Artillery. While the Rifled Breech Loaders were currently undergoing field testing, Berengar would have to make do with his traditional muzzleloading smoothbore cannons.

However, the young monarch did not expect an actual war to break out. After all, the threat of this task force and its willingness to use violence to pursue Berengar's goals would be more than enough to deter any idea of resistance.

Like a Conqueror laying claim to a city, Berengar rode atop his trusty steed in his full dress uniform. The gazes of envy from the battle-worn Hussite soldiers as they saw such a crisp and elegant uniform affixed on Berengar's exemplary visage did not go unnoticed by the young King.

Ultimately the area set for discussion regarding the new Monarch of Bohemia was established within the royal castle in Prague. As such, Berengar marched up its steps with his royal guard in tow, without the slightest hint of hesitation or fear in his eye. Instead, an oppressive aura exuded from his figure, filling anyone who witnessed it with dread and trepidation.

After bursting through the doors of the castle and entering the Great Hall where the various factions were engaged in a brutal argument about who should be King, Berengar ignored their shouts, walked past the crowd, and sat upon the Bohemian Throne as if it were the most natural thing for him to do.

After doing so, he crossed one leg over the other and rested his face on his fist with a smug expression. It was only after several moments of silence had passed that Berengar made his decree known to all of the men present.

"All who seek to lay claim to the Bohemian Crown step forward and present your cases, I Berengar von Kufstein, first of my name, and King of Austria will hear your words and choose the most fitting to sit upon this throne."

The moment Berengar said this, the room was filled with shock; Berengar did not hide his intent in the slightest; he had brazenly stated that he would choose the next King of Bohemia as such, Valdemar was the first among the candidates to object to the notion of having a foreigner choose their King.

"Who do you think you are, to come into this Great Hall, seat yourself upon the Throne that belongs to our people, and declare that you shall be the man who determines our King?!"

Berengar's smug expression faltered as he heard the man so brazenly question his judgment; in response to this, the young monarch snapped his

fingers, the very next moment, a Rifle was lowered, and the echo of gunfire resounded throughout the chamber. Valdemar, the favored candidate of the Hussite Moderates, stared in shock as blood began to pour from his chest.

He could not believe that in a single moment, his life had been stripped away by the bullet of one of Berengar's Royal Guards. The surprised expression on the man's face was his last reaction before he collapsed dead on the floor. The various factions vying for the Bohemian Crown instantly began to panic; however, the doors were sealed shut and blocked by Berengar's royal guards. As such, there was no escape to be had.

Seeing that he had garnered everyone's attention, Berengar rose from his seat and gazed sternly upon the men who had gathered before him; as he did so, he began to project the full authority that belonged to him as the only monarch in the room.

"Who am I? I am the man with an army of 10,000 men capable of shelling this city into oblivion. You would be wise to obey my commands, for the lives of you and everyone who remains within this wretched city exists solely because of my decision. I will not ask again; all of you who lay claim to the Bohemian Crown step forward and present your case. Only the man in this room most fit to rule shall be given the authority to act as King!"

After seeing what Berengar had done to Valdemar, not a single man was willing to step forward; after all, it was becoming increasingly clear to the men who wanted to rule what Berengar's plan was. To step forward was to face certain death. As such only silence prevailed in the room for some time.? Eventually, Berengar broke the silence by spitting upon the ground before him in disgust. As he did so, he spoke, his words laced with venom as he chewed out the men gathered in the hall.

"Pathetic... Truly, and utterly pathetic. I know there are men among your ranks who wish to be King, and yet here you stand utterly silent, in fear of what I might do to you. If you do not dare to step forward and press your claim in the face of overwhelming authority, then what right do any of you have to rule as King!?!"

What I see before me are a bunch of cowards from all walks of life. Religious fanatics, opportunistic noblemen, and war profiteers that is what you all are! If

any one of you were to be given the title King of Bohemia, you would lead these lands to ruin in a matter of years. It is becoming increasingly apparent to me the solution to this problem. Since none of you are worthy of being King, then the burden of governance must fall to me!"

After saying this speech, Berengar walked over to the bloodstained crown that lay on the floor of the Great Hall, where he picked it up and placed it on his head. After doing so, he sat down once more upon the throne and gave his command to the various men who had sacrificed everything in their brutal war, only to have the prize stolen before their very eyes.

"I Berengar von Kufstein, first of my name, and King of Austria hereby usurp the Kingdom of Bohemia for myself and my dynasty to rule in perpetuity."

After saying this, Eckhard, who had watched the whole thing, stepped forward and stood by Berengar's right side, where he gave an order to all of the men present.

"Kneel before your new King!"

Though he disapproved of Berengar's way of handling the matter of succession, after all, he had fought and bled alongside most of the men present for the past few years, ultimately his loyalty was to Berengar, and if his King wished to usurp the Kingdom of Bohemia, then he must follow those orders.

Seeing how Eckhard had fallen in line, all hope of resistance within the eyes of the various Hussite Sects and their leaders were thoroughly tarnished; one by one, they knelt before Berengar and proclaimed their loyalty to the man with two crowns. In the end, only one man was left standing, gazing at Eckhard with a degree of shock and humiliation.

Alexej Kaspar thought that he could negotiate with Berengar about repayment of the Hussite's debt to the Austrian crown, yet the discussion had never even occurred. The Austrian monarch had strolled into the Great Hall and had proclaimed himself King without the slightest bit of debate over the matter.

In the end, he only had himself to blame, for he too had not stepped forward when asked by Berengar to present his case for ruling over the Kingdom.

After witnessing Valdemar's sudden demise, he was petrified with fear like the other men present.

It took him a moment to notice that all eyes were gazing upon him, the fierce leader of the Hussite Radicals, who had shed the blood of tens of thousands of lives in pursuit of overthrowing King Radek, and his Catholic backers. If he, too, bent the knee, then the hopes of an Independent Bohemia would be thoroughly crushed.

In the end, Alexej stepped forward and made his decision; after standing in front of Berengar, who gazed upon him with an arrogant expression, he, too, bent the knee to his new monarch. After all, if what Berengar had said was true, then the city was surrounded by the most powerful military in the world, and resistance was futile.

Having seen the various leaders of Bohemia kneel before him, a cruel smile appeared on Berengar's face as he sealed the fate of the Kingdom to the east.

"Very well, if there are no objections, then my first act as King of Bohemia is to rebuild this realm, the damages your people have suffered over the past few years are substantial, and thus to reconstruct this Nation from the bottom up, I will be moving in tens of thousands of German workers to aid in the restoration efforts. As for the family of the previous monarch, are there any surviving members?"

Alexej gazed up at Berengar with a conflicted expression; he did not know what Berengar intended to do with the remaining members of the previous ruling dynasty. As such, he was hesitant to reveal their status. However, before he could decide, another nobleman present quickly declared the reality of the situation.

"King Radek's wife and youngest daughter are still alive, your majesty! As for the rest of his family, they were killed in the sacking of the city..."

The moment the nobleman said this, he received glares from all the Bohemian men present. However, When Berengar heard this, a satisfied smile curved upon his lips before revealing his intentions.

"Very well, bring them to me. I would like to have a word with them. Let it be known that the survivors of the Previous Monarch's family are henceforth under my protection; any harm that has been done to them will be strictly punished! Go forth and do as I command!"

After saying this, the Hussite representatives left the castle, leaving Berengar alone with Eckhard and his royal guard. As such, a friendly smile appeared on Berengar's face as he embraced his closest friend, who he had not seen in years.

"Eckhard, my friend, it has been too long. I am thoroughly impressed with what you accomplished here; when you return to Kufstein, I will award you with the highest honors for your achievements!"

A bitter smile revealed itself upon Eckhard's haggard face; he appeared as if he had aged ten years since the last time Berengar saw him; after a few moments of silence, he sighed before revealing his thoughts on what had transpired.

"With a single shot, you have annexed a neighboring Kingdom; I must admit I never thought you would waltz in here and place yourself upon the throne. I honestly believed you would establish one of those men as King of Bohemia to act as a puppet."

Berengar chuckled before revealing his thoughts on the matter.

"None of those men were fit to rule, I had initially planned to do as you believed, yet they all stood there petrified in fear, not willing to take the final step necessary to claim the throne. Such weakness can not be present in a ruler, even if he is nothing more than a puppet. Come, let us celebrate this great victory!"

With that said, Berengar left the great hall with Eckhard and made their way to the Dining Hall, where he and the veteran Field Marshal began to catch up on lost time. Before long, the former Queen and Princess of Bohemia would be brought before Berengar, where their fate would be left to his decision.

Chapter 360: An Audience with the King

Nearly thirty minutes had passed since Berengar and Eckhard began to drink beer within the castle's Dining Hall in Prague. Berengar had spent this time informing the man of Austria's changes over the last few years. Since Eckhard had been deployed to Bohemia to act as a military advisor to the Hussites, there had been substantial advancements among all facets of life within the Fatherland.

Eckhard himself was shocked by the new fashion trends and military equipment that the men who had followed Berengar to Bohemia were equipped with. It had only been roughly five years since he had first met Berengar, and yet during that timeframe, the young man had risen from the position of a lowly baron's son to the King of Austria and Bohemia.

He also had advanced Austria's technological levels to a degree nobody would ever have believed. The fatherland was at the pinnacle of a pre-industrial society and just beginning to advance into the age of industry. Ultimately Eckhard sighed heavily before revealing his biggest regret of staying in Bohemia all this time.

"It is a damn shame that I missed your wedding. It is a sight I have always wanted to see."

Berengar chuckled when he heard this and patted the grizzled veteran on the back before revealing his plans for the future.

"Don't be so down; you will still be able to witness at least two more Royal Weddings."

Eckhard was confused when he heard these words; as such, he began to ask for clarification on the issue.

"What do you mean? Is Adela not in good health? Do you plan to divorce her? You're going to need to explain this to me!"

Seeing how flustered Eckhard had become only further encouraged Berengar to laugh at his state; after a few moments of fun, Berengar fully revealed what he intended to do in terms of marriage.

"Nothing of the sort, my dear friend; I intend to legalize Polygamy. A man can have up to five wives in the Kingdom of Austria. That will be the law of the land shortly!"

Eckhard was shocked when he heard this; he had no idea that Berengar had strayed so far from the path of traditionalism and instead asked the first question on his mind.

"Are you serious? You're willing to enact Polygamy so that you can marry that mistress of yours and legitimize your bastard?"

Berengar chuckled in response to this; he took a sip of his beer before answering Eckhard's question.

"Not just that, I also have an engagement to the Princess of the Byzantine Empire; a lot has happened since you left, my friend. What can I say? I can't turn away a pretty girl in need!"

Eckhard immediately began to rest his forehead in the palm of his hand as he heard this. He could not believe Berengar was willing to drastically overhaul the social fabric of Austria to accommodate his lust.

Before he could vocalize his disagreement with Berengar's decision, their chat was interrupted by the sight of a stunning and mature beauty who was in her forties. This woman was the former Queen of Bohemia.

She had a petite and slim figure with a relatively small bust. Despite that fact, her proportions were perfect, and she appeared to have aged like fine wine. She did not look a day over thirty. She had long blonde hair and shining blue eyes.

She was dressed in a burgundy dress with gold trimming in the typical style among the higher nobility within the Kingdom of Bohemia during this time. She exuded an aura of regal authority despite the death of her husband and the fact that she was standing before a usurper.

However, it was not this stunning woman that Berengar was attracted to; it was instead the doll-like girl standing hiding behind her. Berengar only got a glimpse of the girl, but it was enough to capture his attention.

The girl behind the Queen was at the cusp of adolescence. However, the part that drew Berengar's gaze was that this girl was had heterochromia. Having two different eye colors was a rarity among humans, and Berengar was intrigued by this development. Though the girl was young, she was as cute as a doll.

The girl had pale skin, with long and wavy blonde hair. Her eyebrows and lashes matched her hair color perfectly. As for her eyes, one was a solid sapphire, while the other was the color of a flawless emerald. Berengar was sure that in a few years' time when this girl physically matured she would undoubtedly be a knockout.

When the sun hit the girl's hair just right, Berengar could swear that there was a slightly pinkish hue to it. This girl had a slender and petite build, much like her mother, despite this, he found it to be fitting, as it matched her cute appearance. She was dressed in a white and pink dress fitting for a girl of her position.

The duo approached Berengar as he sat at the head of their table; while the mother stood proudly with the grace befitting a Queen, the daughter hid behind her before being ruthlessly pulled in front by her mother. It was only after she was on full display, that the girl attempted to kneel before Berengar. However, the moment she did so, she was viciously slapped across the face by her mother, who instantly chastised the poor girl.

"Veronika Brezinova! You do not kneel before this usurper! You only kneel before one man, your father, Radek Brezinova, King of Bohemia!"

The young girl held her cheek which was red with the print of her mother's palm. She choked back the tears in her eyes after her mother had struck her in front of the man who would decide their fates. As such, she attempted to plead her innocence to the woman who had given birth to her.

"But I-"

However, before she could finish her thought, she was slapped again; when she did so, Berengar raised from his seat and shouted at the duo. He could not contain his rage after seeing such a pretty young girl so viciously struck by her parent.

"Enough! I did not have you dragged before me so you could abuse your daughter, introduce yourselves properly; you are standing before the King of Austria and Bohemia!"

The girl known as Veronika gazed at Berengar with confusion; nobody, not even her father, had stood up for her against her mother's abuse. Yet a stranger and the man who had usurped her family's birthright had just done so.? On the other hand, Dagmar snubbed her nose at Berengar; it was only after his royal guards began closing in on the duo that the woman finally introduced herself.

"I am Queen Dagmar Brezinova, wife of King Radek. This is my daughter Princess Veronika Brezinova! You may be the King of Austria, but the title of King of Bohemia belongs to my husband and his sons!"

Berengar was uncertain if the woman was unaware of her family's fate or if she was being obstinate for the sake of it. As such, he responded to her with a smug grin on his face as he appeared in front of the woman, staring down at her with the oppressive aura of a tyrant.

"Tell me, Queen Dagmar, where is your husband now? What about your sons? I would very much like to meet them..."

Dagmar knew the truth about the fate of her husband and children; the fact that she and her freak of a daughter were the sole survivors of the Bohemian royal family was something that she dreaded to the core of her being. Out of all of her children, the one she despised more than anything ended up surviving alongside her.

The moment Berengar's chilling gaze stared into Dagmar's deep blue eyes, her confident facade shattered. The former Queen immediately began to back away from Berengar in fear of what he might do to her; after all, he had named himself King of Bohemia, which meant that he had forced the various sects vying for the throne into submission.

As she imagined all kinds of wicked scenarios that Berengar might force upon her, the man in question shifted his attention to her pitiful daughter. The moment he did so, she was greatly relieved; after all, Dagmar did not care what cruel fate awaited Veronika.

As Veronika saw the usurper approach her with an authoritative gaze, she, too, was filled with an overwhelming sense of dread. However, unlike her mother, she did not back away. Instead, she was paralyzed in fear as she stood there shivering. The moment Berengar softly laid his hands upon her red cheek, Veronika instinctively flinched, gazing at Berengar like a scared rabbit caught by a hungry wolf.

However, Berengar's gaze immediately softened as he stared at her with a solemn look in his one good eye. A bitter smile appeared on his face as he reassured the girl that he was not the monster she was led to believe.

"Do not be afraid, I mean you no harm; you and your mother are now under my protection. I swear that I will not allow you to suffer any injury in the future. Even your mother will not be able to lay a hand on you without my permission. You are my ward, and as such, I will look after you from this day forward."

The moment Berengar said these kind words to the young Princess broke out into tears. Berengar had no idea what kind of inner demons she had been fighting until now, but from the way her mother treated her, he could make an educated guess. It was not uncommon for people with heterochromia to be treated harshly in society.

As such, Berengar held onto the girl as she poured out all of the emotions that she had bottled up over the years into his tunic. Since she was born, nobody had ever been so kind to her as Berengar had this day. As for Eckhard, he had sat in silence as he witnessed the entire display; he gazed at Berengar's actions and sighed heavily while muttering under his breath.

"You really can't turn away a pretty girl in need, can you?"