

Steel 391

Chapter 391: High Times

Berengar laid against a sofa in his penthouse dressed in only his underwear; the thinly spun hemp fibers that took the form of a pair of boxer briefs left little to the imagination. He was currently sitting atop a cushion, smoking a mixture of hashish and herbal shisha out of his finely crafted hookah.

Sitting across from him was none other than his little sister Henrietta, who had no top on aside from her bra; below the belt, she still wore a skirt, albeit a relatively short one, knee-high socks, and a pair of white lace panties which matched her upper garment.

On her pretty face was an expression that was a mix of embarrassment and intoxication. As Berengar gazed upon his little sister's inappropriate appearance, a brief moment of clarity entered his otherwise stoned mind; immediately, he looked around to see what was going on, as he did not remember how he had entered this strange situation.

From what he could observe, alcohol, drugs, and a deck of cards were involved. For whatever reason, his kingly attire was strewn across the floor in a mixture of whatever garments Henrietta was wearing before taking them off.? His gaze immediately returned to the hazy azure eyes of his little sister, where he asked the question on his mind.

"Wait a second... What exactly are we doing right now?"

Henrietta immediately began to hiccup as a brief sense of clarity returned to her azure eyes. However, it was snuffed out in the next moment as she took a sip from the beer in front of her. As she re-entered her fugue-like state, she began to chuckle before informing Berengar just what exactly they had gotten up to while under the influence of drugs and alcohol.

"Duh! We're playing poker, remember? Now, are you going to play your hand or not?"

Berengar nodded his head in silence as he fumbled around with his cards. As he did so, he instinctively took another hit from the hookah; after all, it was not as if more hash would harm his cognitive abilities any further, right?

After inhaling the substance and spewing out a puff of smoke that was briefly contained within his lungs, it suddenly hit him. There was a reason he was sitting here playing strip poker with Henrietta instead of his girls, and it was pretty obvious when he thought about it.

However, the moment those thoughts crossed his mind, another question presented itself sidetracking him from the main point. Why exactly was he playing strip poker with his little sister? Wouldn't regular poker have sufficed? As he worked his brain around why exactly this was happening, he instinctively showed his hand with a smug smile on his face.

"Four of a Kind!"

The moment Henrietta heard this, she began to pout before placing her cards down upon the table; it was a three of a kind, which meant Berengar had won this round. Now that they had finished that, Berengar instantly began to take a sip from his beer and try to get back to his train of thought.

However, what came next surprised Berengar as Henrietta slowly removed one of her knee-high socks before throwing it at his head, where it landed perfectly. After she had done so, she crossed her arms and pouted. This scene immediately reminded Berengar of his initial train of thought. As such, he finally managed to ask the question on his mind.

"Henrietta, my dear sister, can you explain to me why we're playing strip poker?"

Henrietta's expression immediately changed as she began to ask for clarification on what Berengar had said.

"Strip Poker? What's that? I thought this was how you played poker?"

Berengar was immediately enraged when he heard this; he could not possibly fathom where she had gotten such an outrageous idea; as such, he immediately began to inquire about the bastard who was tainting his precious little sister's pure mind.

"What kind of sick pervert told you that!?!"

A dumbfounded expression etched itself across the girl's face as she stared at her older brother in disbelief; it took her a few moments, but eventually, her bewildered expression shifted to one of embarrassment and finally white-hot rage. Afterward, she informed Berengar of just who the sick pervert was who taught her how to play strip poker.

"You did!!! I knew this was not normal! Stupid brother!"

After saying this, she instantly tried to stand up, but when she did, she lost control of her legs due to how much alcohol and cannabis she had consumed. The teenage girl immediately faceplanted on top of her elder brother with an exceptionally flushed appearance.

Berengar could not tell if she wanted to hit him or run away, but one thing was sure, he had done something foolish. When Berengar tried to lift his sister off of him, he accidentally grabbed somewhere that he shouldn't have, which caused the girl to react violently by slugging him in the face before struggling to her feet, where she somehow managed to shuffle away from the penthouse.

As Berengar was lying dazed and confused, he entered a state of epiphany and recalled all of the events that had led up to this point. It was an average spring morning, yet he had a day off for once in his busy life. As such his only desire was to sit around, relax, and do nothing.

However, as usual, his three wives wanted him to do something with them. Ultimately he was dragged around the city for half of the day doing various stupid tasks, like shopping. Seriously, why go out shopping when he could have a servant buy all of the items the girls wanted and bring them back to the palace? Nevertheless, by the time he finally got home Henrietta had a smug expression on her pretty face and openly taunted him.

Feeling enraged by his sister's mocking behavior, Berengar felt like making her pay for her actions. As such, he coerced her into entering the harem room, where he introduced her to hash and alcohol while partaking of the substances himself. At some point, he pulled out a deck of cards and convinced her to play strip poker, hoping to humiliate the girl and teach her a valuable lesson about insulting her big brother.

However, it backfired when he got so stoned that he could not remember what he was doing or why. He supposed it was a good thing the game ended before it got any worse; after all, he was on the losing side and was left with only one item of clothing still attached to his body. If lady luck had not blessed him with a good hand on that last round, he would have ended up humiliating himself instead.

Berengar sighed heavily as he thought about all that had transpired. Of course, one thing was certain in this whole mess; he had to find another way to punish Henrietta; after all, she had just struck the King, and that was simply unacceptable.

It was with this in mind that he crawled to his knees, where he continued to struggle to his feet. After a while, he managed to stand where he slowly and carefully walked down the stairs. Upon reaching the lower level, he followed the trail that he suspected Henrietta had wandered off to.

He did not know how much time had passed from the moment Henrietta ran off to when he finally found her. However, when he did, she was lying face down and curled up on her mattress, where she was likely passed out. This created the perfect opportunity for Berengar to punish his little sister for her previous actions.

However, the closer he approached, the more he heard a slight whimper. Initially, Berengar thought the girl was crying, thus causing him to doubt his actions, yet in the very next moment, that whimper turned to a moan, followed by a single phrase.

"Big Brother!"

Having heard this, Berengar could only think of one thing that Henrietta was doing and found himself in an incredibly awkward situation. It took him a few moments to regain his thoughts, and when he did, he proceeded to slowly and quietly abscond from the scene. Before long, he found himself hidden away inside the harem room, where he began to freak out.

He tried to convince himself in his mind that he must be misunderstanding the situation, or maybe he heard wrong. After all, he was as high as a kite at the moment and could barely stand. Hell, for all he knew in reality, he was passed

out and dreaming about all of this. Then again, what would that say about his subconscious if he were to actually fantasize about such things in his sleep?

Berengar knew only one thing to be true in his mind right now, and thus he quietly expressed that single thought.

"I need a drink..."

After saying this, he wobbled over to the Counter, where he poured himself two fingers of whiskey before sitting down where this craziness had all begun. He was starting to seriously consider finding a proper husband for his little sister. If what he had just witnessed was real, she would need to spend some time with a man unrelated to her.

As Berengar thought about what to do about this whole debacle, he slowly drifted into sleep, forgetting all of the foolish things that he had done during the high times he shared with his sister. When the young King finally woke up the next day, he would not remember any of this.

Chapter 392: Naval Innovations

With the experimentation of new grenades and smokeless powder underway, the introduction of the 1422 Service Revolver, and the use of the 1422 7.5 cm Field Gun, Berengar had found that his arms development was sufficient in accordance with his five-year plan if you consider the equipment that would be fielded to his Army.

However, another matter needed to be attended to; while his Army was rushing headfirst into the Industrial Age, his Navy was still operating with Frigates powered by Sails. Berengar had invested a substantial cost into these mighty vessels, but already their time was coming to an end, at least in service to his Royal Navy.

The Berengar-Class Frigates still had many years left of service before they needed retrofitting. Austria could quite easily sell the ones they had manufactured to their allies after replacing them with something more modern.

Berengar gazed at the documents piled on his desk with a bitter smile. He honestly had no idea that by the time he had managed to gain the capacity to

make large Ships of the Line, he would already have the ability to manufacture something superior for his use.

As such, the blueprint of the Linde-Class Ship of the Line he had designed years ago was now utterly useless. Perhaps he would rename the vessel and sell it to his allies in Granada and Byzantium at a future date.

For the time being, Berengar needed to invent new ships, designs that were far more worthy of being named after his wives. With the current rate of steel production and the industrialization of his major cities underway, it was only a matter of time before he could produce all-steel steam-powered vessels.

With this in mind, Berengar thought of developing ships that could be improved upon through retrofits later when new technology was invented. At the moment, the best power source he could design within the next five years would be a vertical triple-expansion steam engine that utilized water-tube boilers.

A triple-expansion steam engine was a compound steam engine where the steam was divided into three separate stages. In essence, the steam would build up in a high-pressure cylinder before losing pressure and exhausting directly into two more large-volume low-pressure cylinders where it extracted more energy from the steam.

As for the high-pressure water tube boiler, it functioned by circulating water in tubes heated externally by the fire, fuel such as coal burned inside the furnace, creating hot gas and boiling water in the steam-generating lines.

With this in mind, a bunch of ship designs he had read about during his brief time in the libraries of the US Naval Academy came to mind. Everything from ironclads to light cruisers and even early battleships. The fundamental question that came to Berengar's mind revolved entirely around the nature of how he would utilize his vessels and the enemies he might face.

Though giant battleships such as dreadnoughts were beautiful weapons of war, ultimately, he was in an era where at most, his Navy would be facing wooden sailing ships with a few muzzle-loading cannons. To build a dreadnought in this medieval era would be utterly ridiculous to even think

about. The number of resources required to construct such a massive beast was no small sum.

His current frigates were already more than enough to decimate any naval power in the world. They could even be used for decades to guarantee Naval Dominance. However, there were some drawbacks to such designs.

A wooden sailing vessel was far more likely to sink than a steam-powered steel warship on the high seas. It was also entirely reliant on the wind and was much slower than several of the designs he could think of.

Berengar's purpose for building a powerful Navy was not to dominate the Mediterranean like he was currently doing but to secure a vast global Empire that he would one day establish. To fulfill this, his vessels needed to be swift and sturdy.

With this in mind, Berengar finally realized the exact classification of the vessels he would need to achieve his goals in the most efficient manner. The Light Cruiser was wholly armored while being relatively compact. This meant that the ship required a much smaller crew complement to operate while having speeds well over 20 knots.

Berengar searched through his memory to find the perfect ship to create to fulfill this role. Ultimately he stumbled upon a design that utilized the technology he had in mind, with relatively decent armor, armament, and most importantly, speed.

The Königsberg class Cruiser of 1905 from Berengar's past life was essentially the pinnacle of Light Cruisers that utilized the Triple Expansion Steam Engine and Water tube boilers. It had two engines, two screw propellers, and 11 boilers. It was capable of a speed of 23 knots and had a decent size crew complement of 14 officers and 308 Enlisted men.

It utilized ten 10.5 cm guns and two 45 cm Torpedo Tubes. At the moment, Berengar did not have reliable torpedo technology, so he would construct the vessels with the tubes, but he would not outfit them with such weapons until a time where they could be built.

As for the armor on the vessel has 80mm thick steel across its deck and 100mm of steel protecting its conning tower. The ship had a length of 115.3m, a beam of 13.2m, and a draft of 5.29m. The vessel itself was capable of a range of 5,750 nautical miles before it had to resupply on coal.

Berengar intended to call this vessel the Adela Class Cruiser and did not intend for it to go into production immediately; after all, it would be years before his port cities could update their facilities with enough advanced manufacturing equipment to create such a steel behemoth. Yet by the time he defeated the Crusaders in five years and began his wars of unification, he believed that he would be able to begin construction of such monstrous ships.

Berengar hoped that he would be able to set sail to the new world and begin his colonization efforts by his early thirties. He could only imagine the looks on the native's faces when the German Army showed up in Light Cruisers, armed with bolt action rifles and heavy machine guns. The very idea made him chuckle, such a thing would truly be utterly unfair, but then again, nothing about life was fair.

Reflecting upon this notion, he began to take a sip from his cup of coffee; one thing was certain, he would be the first white man to step foot on the new world in this timeline. That was something he greatly desired to achieve. As he thought of such things, something dawned upon him, he would need new cargo ships and troop-carrying vessels, and he had the perfect design in mind.

During the Second World War of Berengar's past life, the United States had built thousands of Cargo ships known simply as "Liberty Ships." These ships brought an unprecedented amount of supplies across the Atlantic to aid the allied powers. At one point, several hundred of the boats were even modified for use as emergency troop transports.

Berengar decided to name the ship classification as Dominion, as its purpose was to secure Germany's dominion over its future Global Empire. The ship was, of course, made entirely out of steel, thus making it impervious to all weapons used by foreign naval powers within the current era. It was powered by a single triple-expansion steam engine and a single propulsion screw. The original utilized two oil-fired boilers, but Berengar could very easily swap those out for water-tube boilers.

It had a displacement of 14,474 tons and a cargo capacity of 10,856 t. The ship was capable of a range of 20,000 nautical miles making it easily capable of traversing throughout the globe with a single refueling session. It had a length of 134.57m, a beam of 17.3m, and a draft of 8.5m.

As for armament, the original had a 4-inch gun on the stern and aft, which Berengar could replace with a 10.5 cm naval gun of his design. Thus making this cargo ship more than capable of annihilating any hostile vessel foolish enough to attempt to wrestle control over it.

Having designed the first two vessels responsible for his future expansion as a global Empire, Berengar was incredibly pleased with himself. After putting the blueprints aside for later use, he began to get back to work. As a monarch, he had much work to fulfill, and thus he was as busy as ever.

With a heavy sigh, Berengar relaxed in his leather recliner before taking off the cap of his fountain pen. He began to write his signature on the approval of several documents pertaining to the spending required to outfit the factories in the various cities across his Kingdom. Luckily for him, he had acquired the Medici fortune during his war of independence and could easily fund the industrialization process of his realm.

Chapter 393: Improvements in Food Production and Preservation

Over a month had passed since Berengar had drafted his plans to improve his Naval Armament over the next few years; however, he had not been focusing on military matters throughout this period. Instead, he had begun inventing certain critical pieces of machinery for food production.

With the development of the steam engine, mechanized factories were starting to become a reality, and with it, food production would undoubtedly be affected. Until now, it took substantial effort to make bread, which was the staple of the diets for most people. However, with the plans Berengar had drafted over this last month, the struggles in manufacturing bread would become a thing of the past.

In the middle of the Kufstein Industrial district, an enormous warehouse was constructed in years past but was never filled until relatively recently. When Berengar first created his industrial district, he designed it with future factories

in mind; many of these empty warehouses were now being filled with equipment and employees.

This warehouse, in particular, was converted into a bread factory. The machinery that Berengar had so painstakingly manufactured over the past month was now in place. A steam engine connected itself to hemp belts which hung from the rafters and attached themselves to the equipment within the factory thus powering the devices.

One of these critical pieces of equipment was a mechanical kneading machine. The fundamental principle of the device was that it was designed with hand cranking in mind, where employees would fill the bowl with water and flour, and from there, they would crank the device until the dough was kneaded correctly.

Once kneaded, the machine would then cut out a portion and fill a baking pan which would follow on a conveyor belt until it reached the oven. After it was fully baked, it would then be removed by a baker, who would then use a device to cleanly cut the loaf into slices where it would be packaged and shipped to the market.

However, with the invention of the steam engine, the hemp belts could be attached to the handle, and the steam engine would power the device without the need for a human to crank it. As such, the cost of bread was about to decrease substantially, allowing people to spend more of their hard-earned money on other items.

Gunther gazed upon the efficiency of the Bread factory with a satisfied smile on his face. Since he had opened his hemp paper factory many months ago, he had gained significant profits and had begun to invest in other business ventures, such as Kufstein's first bread factory. In fact, the waxed paper used to package the bread came from his other factories.

Standing next to him was the first health inspector of the newly established Federal Administration of Food and Safety, also known as the FAFS. It was the job of government bureaucrats like this man to ensure that the various food processing plants across Austria followed proper protocols to ensure a clean and healthy product was delivered to the markets.

The man had just finished his search through the factory and was signing off on a document with his fountain pen. With a smile on his face, Gunther, who was once nothing more than a lowly serf, asked the government bureaucrat the question on his mind.

"So? How did we do?"

The bureaucrat looked over the paper before signing off his signature one final time. After doing so, he reached out his hand to congratulate Gunther for passing the first inspection.

"Mr. Gunther, I am proud to announce that you have passed the initial examination; if you and your employees continue to operate the facility with such hygiene, then I am certain that my future visits will be a pleasant one."

Upon hearing this, Gunther sighed heavily in relief; he was worried that he might be shut down before he had even begun production. Luckily that was not the case, and he passed the inspection. As such, he grasped ahold of the bureaucrat's hand and shook it with a wide grin on his face.

"Thank you very much; I will ensure to maintain this level of cleanliness in the future so we won't have any problems!"

After hearing this, the bureaucrat pulled back his hand and returned to a stoic gaze as he made one final comment before departing.

"Be sure that you do! Now, if you will excuse me, I have to go check on a meat processing plant that has opened up nearby."

After saying this, the bureaucrat left Gunther behind and continued his work at the meat processing plant. By the time this bureaucrat arrived at his destination, he was astounded to see the clean environment that was in the facility.

Because people had now become aware of germs, they were taking every safety precaution available to them to ensure that the equipment they operated on was sterile. Especially now that there was a government department whose sole purpose was to ensure such protocol was followed.

Berengar was a stickler for healthy food; he did not want to see his people getting sick from what they eat, nor did he want companies to sell the rotten products. As such, he had established severe penalties for knowingly violating these laws.

If a company wanted to cut costs by selling rotten food, the owner would face up to life imprisonment within a labor camp, though generally, such a stiff sentence would only be carried out if someone died from the tainted product.

The meat production facility followed a relatively modern process of food production. Berengar knew so much about the safety and presentation of food because his father from his past life worked in a cannery. He was filled with stories in his childhood of how it all functioned.

The meat arrived fresh from the farms at the factory, where skilled butchers trimmed the excess fat off. After the trimming was complete, the meat was brought to a dicing machine, which cut it into one-inch-thick cubes, from there, it was sorted into tin cans, where the only additive to the process was a single cube of sea salt.

After this had been completed, workers carefully added or removed pieces of meat to ensure that it reached the required weight. From there, the cans entered a conveyor belt, where they were led to the cook room.

After this, the cans entered a pre-heater which blasted them with steam for 20 seconds, removing any trapped air between the cubes. From there, they were led to the pressing machine, which compressed the tin lid onto the can with a proper headspacing that created a vacuum on the can to draw out any remaining air.

From there, the cans were led to a machine that sealed the cans with a process known as double seaming. The process rolled the rim and lid together, forming an airtight seal. From there, the cans were lowered into a commercial-size pressure cooker. After the cans had been thoroughly cooked, they would then be set aside to cool and dry for roughly an hour.

This process resulted in preserved, salted meat that could last up to five years of shelf life. By doing this, the price of meat decreased drastically, and the

people of Austria could have food on their shelves that could be eaten at any time.

Having observed the entire process; the bureaucrat signed off on the meat packaging plant as just one of the multiple food processing plants on his list of inspections. The man and his colleagues had much work to be done; as Kufstein further industrialized and the other cities trailed behind it, these inspections would become increasingly necessary.

The industrial revolution was not just about military buildup but the betterment of society as a whole, or at least that is how Berengar perceived it. After all, just five years ago the people of Austria were living as serfs, breaking their backs on the farms. Now Austria had become a bastion of wealth, and prosperity that all other countries had begun to envy.

Eventually, the reports from these bureaucrats would make their way to Berengar's desk; luckily for him, he would not have to do anything but smile every time he saw another food processing plant receive a proper grading for their inspection.

As for the ones who failed their examination? That was a problem for the Federal Administration of Food and Safety to solve. Berengar had set up a robust government branch to handle that for him. If he genuinely needed to intervene, it would be some form of disaster that he did not even want to think about.

Thus everything progressed smoothly as Austria rapidly transitioned into the Industrial Age. Under the guise of King Berengar von Kufstein, the Kingdom of Austria entered a new era of prosperity and growth the likes the world had never seen before.

Chapter 394: Shipping Off to Granada

The time had come, in a few days, the day that Berengar had pledged to provide military support to his ally in the Iberian Peninsula will have arrived. After months of preparation, the First Division was ready to ship off to Granada, where they would fight against the Catholic Armies until every single inch of Iberian Land was under the control of Al Andalus once more.

Berengar stood in front of his army dressed in his field uniform, which was based upon a Field Marshal's variant of the M40 Uniforms worn by the Wehrmacht during the middle of the Second World War from his previous life. There were a few minor differences between the uniform currently worn by Berengar and that of the Field Marshals of the Second World War.

The primary difference between the uniform that Berengar currently wore, and that of the original, was that the red trim that scaled across the edges of the uniform was replaced with a forest green color. Much like you would have seen in use by the Cold War Era East-German Border Guard

At his collar, Berengar had unique tabs made for his position as King of Austria and Reichsmarschall or, in other words, the Marshal of the Realm. These tabs were based upon the Reichsmarschall tabs used by Herman Goering in his past life, the difference being that the center material was not white but forest green instead.

Hanging from his collar was his Grand Cross of the Iron Cross and his Austrian Military Merit Order on top of it. On his shoulders, he had tabs unique to his position. Like the collar tabs, these were based heavily on Herman Goering's, the difference being the nazi reichsadler was replaced with the double-headed eagle of Austria.

Pinned on his chest above his top left pocket was a series of three ribbon bars, signifying his glorious feats in combat. Below these ribbon bars, placed square in the center of the pocket itself, was his Star of the Grand Cross of the Iron Cross.

From his right shoulder to his left hip was a Sam Browne-style shoulder strap connected to his belt; both were made of black leather. The belt buckle was made of white gold with the Austrian double-eagle imprinted upon it. On his left side was his black leather holster, which contained his revolver.

Below this belt were his trousers in the style of a Wehrmacht Field Marshal's Jodhpurs. The difference was that the stripe was not red but the same forest green that trimmed his tunic. These pants were stuffed into a pair of black leather officers' jackboots.

Finally, atop his head was a new eyepatch, made of black leather, with an Iron Cross patch sewn into the center. Unlike his other stately eyepatch, it did not have a gilded edge. Above that was an officer's brimmed cap in the style worn by the Field Marshals of the Wehrmacht.

The primary difference between this cap and that of the original was that the golden Nazi Reichsadler pin had been replaced by the Austrian Double Eagle of Berengar's Kingdom. In fact, the entire uniform was completely rid of any form of nazi paraphernalia and was instead replaced with Imperial symbolism.

As Berengar stood in front of his soldiers on the docks of Trieste, it was this image that they gazed upon. His soldiers were dressed in the style of the M40 Field Uniform used by the Wehrmacht in his past life, but with feldgrau painted steel armor in the form of German Trench armor from the Great War.

They also wore M35 Stahlhelms with the Austrian Reichsadler painted on the side. Slung over their shoulders were the Schmidt Needle Rifles, and clipped to their web gear were two Stick Grenades per soldier, alongside the standard equipment. Berengar began to give a speech to his gathered soldiers before they embarked on their journey to reclaim Iberia for their Moorish allies.

"I gaze upon you, the sons of Austria, and my heart is filled with pride. Pride in our people, pride in our Kingdom, but most of all, pride in our strength! Each and every one of you is about to embark on a journey to a land far away from your birth, with a single purpose. To kill our enemies!

Now I know what many of you are thinking, why should I fight and die in some God-forsaken spit of land so that the Muslims can reclaim Iberia? However, if you are thinking in such a manner, I must inform you that you are gravely mistaken...

You will not be killing for the sake of the Granadans. You are doing so for the well-being of your people! Make no mistake; the Church will rally together all of the significant Catholic Kingdoms to march upon our soil in five years.

Hundreds of thousands of enemies will enter our lands in an attempt to butcher our families. Why? Because we dare to disagree on the teachings of Christ? Or maybe it is to stifle the growth that every man, woman, and child in this Kingdom has fought so hard to achieve!

Now I want to ask each and every one of you a straightforward question... If the three Catholic Kingdoms of Iberia were to no longer exist, would they be able to assist our enemies in destroying our homes? Nein!

Thus do not think of this as throwing your lives away for some filthy Saracens on the other side of the world so that they may see some peaceful days. Instead, think of it as taking the fight to your enemies so that your people and your families will never see the horrors of war that you as men must witness!

There is a fire inside each of us that burns brighter with every passing breath! We, as Germans, understand the art of war on a profoundly intimate level. It could be considered a right of passage for all of our young men to enter the battlefield and claim glory for themselves, for their King, and their Fatherland! Now it is your turn, so go forth and kill the enemies of Austria! Hail Victory!"

As Berengar finished his speech, the crowd of 25,000 soldiers and the sailors who would spend the next few weeks ferrying them across the Mediterranean threw up Roman Salutes and chanted in unison the following phrase.

"Hail Victory! Hail Victory! Hail Victory!"

A cruel smile etched itself upon Berengar's lips as he witnessed this; he had only seen such a spectacular scene in the historical videos of a specific mustached man's speeches from his past life. Berengar had no intentions of creating a fascist state. Instead, his goals were purely Imperialistic; he envisioned a society akin to a far Grander Second Reich rather than its failed successor.

However, one could not deny the powerful speaker and propagandist that man was. As such, Berengar had on occasion borrowed specific phrases and gestures from the Third Reich, such as the term "Hail Victory" and the Roman Salute, to use among his troops. It seemed to have the desired effect, as the soldiers were fired up and ready to kill any Catholic Iberians they came across.

As for Berengar, for the time being, he had no plans to interfere in Granada. Arnulf was a capable enough commander, and he was needed in the Fatherland to further enhance its industrial capabilities. The King of Austria

had seen enough of war for the time being, and six months was not enough time of peace for him to properly enjoy himself.

While the Soldiers of Austria prepared to embark on their newest war, Berengar returned to the palace, where he approached with trepidation. He may have forgotten to inform his loved ones that he was not, in fact, embarking on war at the moment. He knew how they worried about him while he was on the battlefield, and that fact that he had not informed them that he would be staying behind was sure to cause some panic.

As he entered through the doors of his palace, he was immediately greeted by his three wives and his younger sister, who all jumped into his arms, colliding with him like an avalanche forcing him down onto the ground. They were visibly upset. Clearly, they thought he had left them behind without saying goodbye.

Eventually, Berengar chuckled before rising to his feet; he could tell by their pouting expressions that they were greatly displeased with him. Deciding to diffuse the tension Berengar made a joke, which went as well as you might expect.

"I was only gone for a couple of hours, and yet you girls look like I have been away for a lifetime. Did you miss me that much?"

The various reactions from the four women were complicated. Adela seemed to be pouting with a small tear in her eyes. Linde seemed to be angry, and Honoria seemed to be pleasantly surprised. As for Henrietta, Berengar had no idea what was going on in her head, but she appeared dreadfully worried about his safety.

Noticing that he had ruined the mood, the young King of Austria quickly gathered the girls together for a group hug and informed them of his decision.

"Relax, I'm not going away to war for a while; if I were to leave, who would continue my efforts to industrialize the nation? Unless something serious happens during the conflict, I will be here with you four girls. Now let's get something to eat!"

After saying this, Berengar led his family towards the Dining Hall, where they all began to celebrate the fact that the young King had not left them all behind. Later that night, Berengar would retire to his quarters alongside his three wives, where they would have their own little private party.

Chapter 395: Preparing for the Constitutional Convention

On the following morning, Berengar rose bright and early with a sense of fatigue. He once more had most of the energy drained from his body as he entertained his wives. More importantly, he had an important meeting later in the day, and thus there was little time for him to relax.

With this in mind, he quickly finished his morning routine before heading out the door of the royal palace; as he sat within his carriage, he carried a briefcase filled with important documents regarding his five-year plan.

His destination was simple; it was the temporary residence of his Uncle and father-in-law, Chancellor Otto von Graz. Since their victory in their war for Independence seven months ago, Austria had become a sovereign Kingdom.

However, despite this, they had until now operated under a Constitution designed while they were still a subservient Duchy. With this in mind, Berengar now felt it was time to hold a Constitutional Convention. The purpose behind this was to draft a new Constitution for an Independent Austria. This was Berengar's reason for visiting his Uncle on this fine morning.

After knocking on the door a solid three times, the door opened to reveal a young maid. With the abolishment of serfdom, servants such as maids and butlers now had to be paid a living wage. Despite this, it was a highly desirable position as, generally speaking, housing and meals were accommodated as part of the position.

The young maid stared in shock as she realized that the man standing before her was the King of Austria; it took her a few moments to pay her respects to Berengar, where she quickly kneeled in front of him and apologized for her lack of decorum.

"Your Highness, I apologize; I was just surprised to see you here. I will go alert his Grace of your presence right away."

As the young girl departed, Berengar waited inside the entrance of Otto's chateau for a few minutes before the man arrived; he was dressed in nothing but a silk robe and had an unpleasant expression on his face; it would appear as if he was still sleeping when Berengar arrived.

Nevertheless, the moment he saw his nephew and son-in-law standing before him in a military uniform, he realized that more important matters were afoot. Thus Otto greeted Berengar with a warm smile before leading him into the study.

"Your Highness, I was not expecting your visit so early in the morning. I apologize for my improper appearance. Please wait in my study; I will have young Magdalen here attend to your needs while I tidy up."

Berengar merely nodded his head in silence, signaling to his Uncle that he approved. Afterward, the older man rushed up the stairs and into his bathroom, where he began to bathe and select appropriate attire for the meeting.

While this was going on, Berengar noticed the maid eying him carefully as if he were a wolf, and she was a lamb. Evidently, his reputation as a womanizer had preceded him, seeing as how the girl seemed to be exceptionally cautious around him.

Nevertheless, Berengar had no interest in a lowly maid; if he took up another lover, she would have to be at least a Princess. Thus Berengar put on a friendly smile as he gave an order to the young maid in a polite and delicate manner.

"Magdalen, was it? I would greatly appreciate it if you would fetch me a cup of coffee."

The girl instantly nodded her head in silence and scurried off like a frightened rabbit as she began to prepare what her monarch had requested. Before long, she returned with a fresh glass of black coffee, where Berengar immediately began to request another favor.

"Please, if you would add some milk and sugar, that would be most welcome."

The maid instantly nodded in silence and fetched a fresh glass of milk and a sugar cube that she skillfully mixed into the ceramic cup. After doing so, she asked the question on her mind.

"Is there anything else you require, your majesty?"

However, Berengar merely shook his head as he responded to her inquiry.

"No, you have done wonderfully, thank you."

The girl instantly blushed as she heard this and ran off into the background; she knew it was best not to stick her nose into the business of the nobility, especially the King of Austria. After a while, Otto returned in his noblest attire before sitting down across from Berengar, where he opened up the conversation with small talk.

"So, how is my daughter treating you? I hope she hasn't been causing you too much trouble..."

Berengar smiled as he heard this and placed down his cup upon the small plate provided with it.

"Quite the contrary, I greatly enjoy her company; with her around, I find my workload much easier to handle. However, due to her pregnancy, she and the others are a little bit, shall we say... moody."

Otto chuckled briefly when he heard this before sizing up Berengar in his new field uniform. Afterward, he inquired about the state of his attire.

"So you're going off to war, I take it? You chose a good time; by the time you return home, your girls would have either already given birth or will be damn close to it. Meaning you will have to suffer less."

A misleading smile formed curved itself upon Berengar's lips as memories of his achievements in battle flooded his mind, filling his sight and hearing as if he were hallucinating. His hands were as still as granite as he recounted the time he had spent engaging in pure unadulterated violence. Eventually, he broke free of the illusion and responded to Otto's line of questioning with an appropriate answer.

"Out of the frying pan and into the fire, huh? Actually, for the time being, I will be here, at home in Kufstein. Unless the situation within Iberia turns volatile and my presence becomes required, I will not participate in this campaign, no matter how much I desire to do so.

As for the uniform, quite honestly, I felt it was a good change of pace from the overly luxurious attire I usually wear. In my humble opinion, it makes me look more militaristic and utilitarian than my usual style, and I greatly admire those attributes."

Otto immediately nodded his head silently in response to this statement. He sympathized with Berengar's point of view. Despite the fact that he did not partake in Austria's military, at least not since a centralized, professional force was established. He had still seen his fair share of war in the past.

Having engaged in small talk for an appropriate amount of time, Berengar sipped from his coffee once more before finishing it off; after doing so, he instantly switched the topic to his reason for visiting. After all, as King, he was a very busy man, and could not stay for long.

"Anyways, Uncle, this is not what I have come here to discuss with you. Instead, I have come to ask for your assistance. I am aware that you are well respected among the nobility of Austria; as the Chancellor of our Kingdom and the current Duke of Steiermark, you hold an advantageous position. Hence, I must request something of you."

Otto's gaze shifted to a severe glint as he prepared himself for what Berengar was about to ask. By the sound of his nephew's voice, something serious was about to transpire; as such, he nodded his head before speaking in the affirmative.

"Whatever you require of me, so long as it is within my power, I will fulfill it to the best of my ability."

Berengar naturally smiled when he heard this response; it was exactly what he wanted to hear. As such, he wasted no time and immediately began to inform his Uncle of the decision he had come to."

"Uncle, it is no great secret that some of my reforms have been less than popular among the higher echelons of Austrian nobility. Some still refer to me as Usurper and Upstart. They look down upon my lineage rather than kneel before my achievements. I have no ill will towards them; they are old and stubborn fools refusing to change with the times.

Whenever a significant change occurs within a society, there will always be men like that. However, I do require their assistance. Soon I will be gathering together the heads of State and various noblemen from across the Kingdom for a matter of great importance.

Now that we are an independent Kingdom, the time has come to establish a Constitution worthy of our great Nation. Though I have done the groundwork with the previous renditions, they were never intended to be the final product.

With this in mind, I want all of the great men of Austria, whether they come from the nobility or the common populace, to come together and aid me in creating a system that will endure the test of time and take everyone's needs into account.

The fact of the matter is, with a simple request, I can quickly gain the support of the common men and that of the lesser nobility, for nobody has gained more during my time as a Monarch than they. However, I fear men of your caliber, the Dukes and Marquesses of Austria, will be a bit hesitant to join in on this Constitutional Convention of mine.

What I require of you is fairly simple, I would very much appreciate it if you could represent the interest of the higher nobility and call for this meeting as Chancellor before I make the announcement, so it appears as if I am not forcing my ideas onto everyone else yet again."

After hearing this, Otto was silent for several moments; he did not make a single movement as he reflected on Berengar's speech. After a while, he finally sighed, and in doing so, nodded his head as he accepted the task bequeathed to him by his sovereign.

"Very well, I will make a public declaration in the coming days, requesting a Constitutional Convention; I will call upon you, and everyone you deem to be of importance to attend the meeting in the Reichstag where we will come to a

consensus on what should, and should not be put into our Constitution. Though I must be honest, I fear that you are simply using this as a propaganda piece to satisfy those who have been less than agreeable with your reforms."

Berengar chuckled when he heard this response; after doing so, he stood up from his seat and nodded his head with a smile etched upon his face before responding.

"Uncle, you know me so well... Very well, I will leave this task to you; after you make your declaration, I shall respond in agreement, where we will then set a date and time for the leaders of our society to gather in the Reichstag. I look forward to working with you in the future."

After saying this, Berengar departed from Otto's temporary residence; it was only after he had ensured that his nephew was long gone that Otto dared to release his breath and utter the thoughts he had on his mind.

"No wonder he has three wives, the amount of work this fool endures is enough to put any man into an early grave..."

Chapter 396: Austrians Arrive in Granada

A few days had passed, and the first of Berengar's armed forces had stepped foot upon the soil of the Iberian Peninsula. In southern Granada, Thousands of Austrian Soldiers gathered together with their arms and artillery as they prepared to advance north.

However, until the remainder of the division could arrive; a temporary city devised of tents was set up on the edge of the region for the time being. This city of tents was used to house the thousands of soldiers waiting for the rest of their division and supplies to arrive. A General who had earned his spot in Berengar's good graces was currently leading the First Division.

With his swift victory over the Swiss, Adelbrand von Salzburg was sent as the leader of the First Division until he regrouped with Arnulf and the forces of the Royal Granadan Army. At that point, Arnulf would seize command of all Coalition Forces in Granada by decree of King Berengar von Kufstein.

For some time now, the Reconquista had become a proxy war that Berengar used to divide the forces of the Catholic Church and force his enemies to spend time, bodies, and resources on a fight they simply could not win. Unfortunately, the Granadan Army proved less competent than he had initially estimated. They forced him to enter the war years in advance of what he had planned.

Berengar himself was in the process of leading the Kingdom of Austria into a new era of Industrialization. He could ill afford to march an army to war at the moment. Instead, he had begrudgingly dispatched a portion of his Army to his ally's territory under the supervision of one of his top Generals, who was loosely related to him.

Adelbrand was a young and ambitious Duke who was always a skilled warrior with a mind for tactics. Despite his age, he had gained an advantageous position in the Austrian Royal Army and proven himself on the battlefield by leading a campaign against the Swiss, which ultimately resulted in their annexation.

He was the young brother of the incompetent dullard Wolfgang von Salzburg, the husband of Ava von Graz, Berengar's cousin and Adela's sister. The man had distant ties to Berengar from a familial aspect, and thus the young monarch was more inclined to trust him.

Adelbrand, of course, was fiercely loyal to Berengar and his regime, seeing the meritocratic approach to succession and military matters to be an enormous improvement over the medieval primogeniture system. After all, if Berengar had not risen to power, he would still be kneeling beneath his idiot of an elder brother, that is, if he was still alive.

While Salzburg was being burned to the ground under Bavarian occupation, Adelbrand took up the mantle to defend his home, despite it being a lost cause. Wolfgang had fled to the relative safety of his wife's family's estate, leaving his people to suffer under the wrath of the Bavarian Armies. If not for Berengar's intervention, it is hard to say precisely what the young Duke's fate would have been.

Initially a Count, he, much like his counterpart Otto was raised to the status of Duke when Berengar rose to the position of King. Now he was tasked with

leading the First Division of the Austrian Royal Army, which was the most battle-hardened and elite Division of Berengar's forces to battle in Granada.

Granted, he would be forced to cede his authority to Arnulf, who would act as leader of both Granadan and Austrian forces. Nonetheless, he held significant power in this campaign to eradicate the Catholic Kingdoms of Iberia.

Eventually, Adelbrand noticed the arrival of the Granadan Sultan, who gazed upon the field of feldgrau clad men with a look of hope in his eyes. Hasan had a joyous expression as he witnessed the arrival of the Austrian forces.

He was in for a big surprise, as Berengar had initially informed him that he would only be sending 10,000 men to aid him. Ultimately Berengar had opted to send a whole division, which just so happened to be the most veteran force he had under his command.

Berengar was the type of man to under-promise and over-deliver. He had initially expected it would take longer than six months to equip his entire first division with the arms necessary to win this conflict in extravagant fashion.

However, due to his ongoing Industrialization, and the efficiency of his workers, the arms factories produced more than enough weapons to fulfill the demands of a single Division. Thus, in the end, Berengar had sent the entirety of his First Division along with one of his most capable Generals to achieve overwhelming victory.

The first division comprised of three Infantry Brigades, one Cavalry Brigade, one Artillery Brigade, and a few support battalions, which consisted of specialty units like Jaegers, Medics, Pioneers, etc. Not all of these men had made their way to Granada yet, and as such, Hasan was unaware of the immense force that Berengar had committed to his cause.

Upon noticing that Adelbrand seemed to be giving commands to his troops, Hasan approached the man and quickly asked the question on his mind.

"Are you the man in charge here?"

Luckily for Adelbrand, since Berengar had first met Hasan, the man had been studying his German and could now communicate effectively with the leaders

of the Austrian Army. In response to Hasan's question, Adelbrand threw up a standard military salute and reported his name and rank to the Sultan of Granada.

"Major General Adelbrand von Salzburg, I have been tasked by his majesty King Berengar von Kufstein to lead the First Division of the Austrian Royal Army to victory in this campaign!"

Though the Granadan Royal Army had sought to emulate Austria's mighty military, they had yet to fully encompass the proper scale and unit designations that Berengar had used. After all, at the beginning of this conflict, they had less than an entire division's worth of men to field.

For this reason, Hasan did not immediately understand just what a division of soldiers meant. Because of this misunderstanding, Hasan immediately asked a relatively foolish question.

"The first division? Does that mean there are more of you coming?"

Adelbrand immediately responded to this question with a smug expression as he explained in full detail just what exactly Austria defined a Division as.

"While my entire unit has yet to reach these shores. I assure you there will only be one division taking part in this conflict. Your Majesty, I must inform you that a full division is roughly 25,000 men who are fully capable of waging war independently if they must. Due to the superiority of our forces over that of the enemy, his Majesty King Berengar has decided that he will only need the First Division to win this war!"

After hearing that 25,000 Austrians would be arriving to support him, Hasan felt greatly relieved, as if the pressure he had been facing these past six months suddenly vanished. He was aware of how efficient the Austrians were in warfare and knew that Berengar truly valued their alliance if he were to send so many of his soldiers to battle.

However, there was one last question on his mind as he thought about this. As such, Hasan did not hold back his thoughts as he inquired about the whereabouts of a specific person.

"Tell me, where is King Berengar? I very much would like to share a drink with him!"

Adelbrand's expression suddenly became awkward; he had no idea that Berengar had utterly neglected to inform Hasan that he would not be entering the conflict. An uncomfortable smile appeared on his face as he tried to explain the situation as delicately as possible.

"King Berengar is currently occupied overseeing a critical transition without our Kingdom and is unavailable to lead the conflict. However, I assure you that under my command, it will be more than enough to win this conflict."

Hasan immediately began to curse in his native tongue as he spoke his thoughts aloud.

"That bastard! I bet he's avoiding me because he knows I will try to marry my sister off to him!"

Adelbrand had no idea what Hasan was saying, but he figured it was not pleasant. Thus he kept his mouth shut. He would only speak up on Berengar's behalf if the Sultan had the guts to insult him in a language that the General could understand. Luckily for everyone involved, Hasan kept his thoughts to himself. After a while, Hasan began to speak to the Austrian General about the ongoing conflict.

"At the moment, your General Arnolf is behind enemy lines leading my Royal Guard in what he referred to as a Guerilla campaign. So far, they have been successful in slowing down the Iberian advance, but it won't be long before they engage my defenses. I suggest that you quickly make your way to the front to reinforce my main Army, or else it will be a hell of a lot more difficult when the first line of defense fails."

Adelbrand shook his head when he heard this suggestion; he had a plan and would stick to it. It was with this in mind that he responded to Hasan's request.

"I will wait here until the first division has fully landed. Afterward, I will route out your enemies from your land. When I have secured your Emirate and exterminated every last Catholic in these lands, I will then drive my Army into Portugal, where I will capture its capital and force their King to kneel before

me. For the time being, your soldiers will have to hold out. I am sure they can manage that."

When Hasan heard this, he sighed before walking back to his Caravan, he had traveled a long way to greet the Austrian Host, and he was not going to sit around and wait for the rest of the division to arrive. As he began marching back to his carriage, as he did so he called out to Adelbrand, giving him the green light to do whatever he pleased.

"You are the General, do what you think is best, but I warn you, if they break through my Army, you will be forced to deal with dozens of small armies across my territory, and this will turn into a very long campaign."

After saying this, the young Sultan departed from the port, traveling back to his Capital of Granada. While Adelbrand and Arnulf waged war against the Iberians, Hasan would sick back in his palace and enjoy the luxuries contained within. This carefree attitude would later be seen as an act of cowardice, becoming a significant point of contention between the Granadan Generals and their Sultan.

Chapter 397: Assassinating an Eastern Warlord

Since Berengar had first decided to annex the Teutonic State and incorporate it into his domain, he had ordered Linde to send field agents into the territory currently occupied by the Eastern Coalition, which was comprised of multiple countries such as Poland-Lithuania, the various Rus States, and the Golden Horde.

These Field Agents were tasked with sabotage, assassination, and deep reconnaissance to halt the Eastern Coalitions' advance into what little remained of the Teutonic State. It was a difficult mission, and at the moment, a field agent by the name of Jürgen Speck was deep behind enemy lines with a task that most likely would result in his untimely demise.

Nevertheless, for the sake of the Fatherland, he was more than willing to pay the price. In his hands was a Schmidt Needle Rifle, with its range elevated out to a thousand yards. Having performed excellently in his marksmanship course, Jürgen was more than capable of making the shot. At the moment, he was sitting far away from his target, who was riding with his host.

Khadan was the current Khan of the Golden Horde, and he was riding with his warriors westward to Marienburg with a single purpose, to eradicate the last remnants of the Teutonic State. It would undoubtedly be a massacre if he and his 130,000 horsemen arrived within those lands.

At that moment, Jürgen was aiming down his sight in the pouring rain as he waited for the Khan's approach. The man would be entering firing range any minute now, and the Agent could take his shot. Dressed in a splinter camo smock and field cap, Jürgen blended in with his environment at such a distance perfectly.

Without a Khan to lead the Horde, the various clans would undoubtedly fall into infighting for the next ruler. Thus Jürgen took a deep breath and placed his finger on the trigger. His target was now within his sights. As he squeezed the trigger, the sound of thunder cracked in the air, startling the Eastern warriors.

Initially, they thought it was just thunder, yet when they gazed over their fearless leader, there was a bloody hole square in the center of his chest. Due to the distance of a thousand yards and the poor weather, they had not seen the smoke plume that spat out of Jürgen's rifle and thus was unaware of how their leader had been slain.

Nevertheless, the Khan fell from his horse's back with shock in his eyes as he breathed his last breath. The moment this occurred, the Horde of 130,000 men erupted into chaos; they frantically began to search for the culprit, never expecting that he would lay hiding in the bushes a thousand yards away.

However, in his panicked state, Jürgen made the foolish action of hopping on his horseback and fleeing the scene of his crime, which immediately caused the Horde's scouts to notice his presence. Had he just stayed put and hunkered down, it was possible that the Golden Horde would have assumed the death of their Khan was an inside job, and yet now with a lone horseman frantically absconding from the scene, they knew that their Khan had somehow been assassinated by an outsider.

With this in mind, the Golden Horde began to chase after Jürgen with their swift horses. Whether he could escape or not was now in God's hands. The

Austrian Agent hurried off as fast as his horse would allow him; luckily for him, Arabians had a high endurance level.

Nevertheless, despite spending nearly three miles outrunning his pursuers, his horse began slowing down; it could no longer endure its top speed and was completely exhausted. Considering he was left in the middle of nowhere, with no surrounding village to hide in, Jürgen knew he had only one chance of survival.

After reflecting upon his choices, he quickly halted his horse, where he pulled out a piece of parchment contained within his pouch; with a fountain pen in hand, he pulled out a map of the area and marked down his general location with a single phrase written down, S.O.S.

After doing so, he attached the letter to the messenger owl that was contained within a cage tied to the Horse's saddle. After doing so he threw the owl into the air and sent it off to the nearest field camp of his nearby agents. Hopefully, reinforcements would arrive soon and liberate him from his desperate situation.

If the eastern warriors of the Golden Horde wanted to pursue him, they would have to do so under his terms. Considering he was dressed in camouflage and wielding a superior weapon, Jürgen knew his only hope for survival was hiding out until his pursuers abandoned their quest to find him. After scouting out the area, Jürgen found a nearby forest that he could hide within until help arrived.

With this in mind, the man quickly began covering himself in mud to hide his white skin, where he then fled under the cover of the large forest. He hoped he would hide well enough that the eastern warriors would be unable to find him.

After roughly an hour had passed, Jürgen had found a small cave, where he took the chance to rest within; it was unknown if some form of predator lied within its depths. However, he knew that if he did not get out of his soaking clothes soon, then without a doubt, he would die from hypothermia.

Luckily for Jürgen there were no signs of a beast camped within the cavern, thus the man quickly started a fire and stripped from his soaked clothes,

where he reached into his satchel and pulled out a pair of medieval peasant clothing he kept as a spare in case the need arose where he would have to hide his identity.

For three days, Jürgen stayed within the forest, hunting and trapping his food while surviving the land; just when he thought his pursuers had lost track of him, he felt a sharp pain pierce through his thigh. A barbed arrow stuck out from his leg just below the femoral artery. He was well and truly crippled.

Though he tried to crawl away, he was eventually kicked over by a large Mongolian man dressed in the armor of his people. Just as the man was about to bring down his blade and decapitate the wounded field agent, his hand was stopped, and an even larger man began speaking to him with a stern tone, in a language that Jürgen did not understand.

Before long, Jürgen was bound up with rope and carried out of the forest by Mongols. The worst imaginable situation had transpired; he was captured alive by the Golden Horde and would undoubtedly be tortured for information on his identity before being executed.

Jürgen knew the odds of rescue were low, and such resigned himself to his fate; even if aid could arrive, there was no conceivable way for them to break into the Golden Horde's encampment and free him from his bondage. Unknowingly to him, his owl had reported his location to the nearest field outpost, and thus, a team of agents was already on its way to search for his whereabouts.

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Roughly a month had passed since Jürgen's capture, and at the moment, Hemma who was the Deputy Director of Royal Intelligence was standing within the halls of their headquarter's located within the city of Kufstein. She held a field report in her hand as a frown curled upon her lips. After reading through the information, she fully understood the situation at hand.

Since Jürgen's capture, the Golden Horde had split off into various factions vying for the position of the Next Khan. The objective had been achieved, and their advance into the Teutonic State was halted. They were no longer united, and Jürgen was surprisingly still alive. Though tortured mercilessly, he had

never revealed his identity. Thus the Mongols continued to keep him breathing for the time being.

However, his current location was deep within the camp of the prime candidate for the position of Khan. With 50,000 horse riders by his side, it would not be easy to extract the field agent from his predicament. A team of agents was constantly monitoring the situation, and they had sent a request back to Headquarters on how to proceed.

It would not take long before Jürgen had finally broken and revealed that this was a ploy by Austrian Intelligence to slow down the Golden Horde's Advance into the Teutonic State's lands. When that happened, open warfare would occur between Austria and the Golden Horde.

Such an outcome needed to be stopped at all costs. Thus Hemma, who was currently dressed in her work uniform, had a complicated expression on her lips. Until now, none of her field agents had been captured alive.

The information that Jürgen had available could quickly spark a war between the two countries. Thus two options presented themselves; either way, an elite team that she did not have available would have to sneak into the enemy encampment.

After dwelling upon it for some time, Hemma sighed heavily as she stared at her Director of Covert Operations, who had handed her the report. After several moments of silence, she revealed her thoughts on the matter.

"It looks like I am going to have to request aid from the director herself..."

Chapter 398: Establishing Special Operations

Berengar, Linde, and Hemma were currently within the King's Office inside the Royal Palace. As Berengar sat down at his seat, Linde stood by his side as they read the report given to them by the Deputy Director of Royal Intelligence.

Hemma had proven herself a capable field agent in the past and was well aware of the dangers associated with the mission she had been ordered to give out to the men and women under her command. However, one of her

people was captured, and she currently lacked the means to extract them from their compromised position.

The only option left was to ask for assistance from the armed forces, directly under Berengar's command as both King and Reichsmarschall of Austria. Berengar gazed at the report with a complicated expression; he knew that he had issued the order to assassinate high-profile targets, but taking out the leader of the Golden Horde was a rather foolish decision on Royal Intelligence's part.

After coming to a thorough understanding of the current situation, Berengar sighed heavily as he placed the report down upon his desk. After doing so, he put his fingers together in contemplation. He sat there in silence for a few moments before he finally asked the question on his mind.

"What is it exactly that you are requesting of me?"

Hemma gulped the saliva pooling in her mouth as she struggled to find the means to express her desire. Eventually, she steeled her resolve and asked Berengar for the support she had in mind.

"I request that you dispatch your forces to enter the camp covertly and either extract or eliminate Jürgen to prevent classified information from being leaked to the enemy."

Berengar thought about the question at hand for a few moments. Though his field agents were talented in espionage, assassination, and sabotage, they were not skilled in military matters. As a result, if they attempted to rescue the target, it would fail.

Berengar had not thought of establishing a dedicated special operations unit until now. The reason was quite simple; he believed the superiority of his forces was so overwhelming that the use of specialized units to fulfill unconventional tasks was not required.

Yet, here he sat, with a mission that not even his Jaegers could easily pull off. After all, covert operations were not exactly in their job description; they were direct action, light infantry specialists.

With this in mind, he pulled out a piece of paper and began to draft a Royal Edict to immediately establish a task force under the command of the Austrian Royal Army. If Austria's Jaeger Corps were based upon the 75th Ranger Regiment from his past life, this unit would be based on the Green Berets.

This Special Forces unit would be labeled as Jagdkommandos and trained in land and seaborne operations. They would act as the silent professionals needed to complete Austria's dirty work. As for Airborne operations, unfortunately, Berengar did not yet have the means to manufacture aircraft; as such, he could not train them in such methods. After finishing the edict, Berengar put down his fountain pen and announced his decision.

"I am authorizing the establishment of a special operations force, designed to handle covert operations like these. They shall be known as Jagdkommandos. They shall be equipped with specialized equipment for their missions that will not see use in the standard armed forces for many years; after all, for what I have in mind, we will only be able to produce a small number of such weapons. You have my permission to take whoever you see fit from the Army to establish this unit.

I want Agent Jürgen extracted alive if possible; however, if such a feat proves too challenging to achieve, he needs to be eliminated in a way that does not draw attention to us. A bayonet to the heart will suffice. You have two weeks to form this unit and dispatch them to Poland. Any longer than that, and I fear the man will break and reveal everything."

Hemma immediately stood up and saluted Berengar after receiving her orders. She did not know how effective the unit would be within two weeks; however, it was better than what she currently had available.

"Heil Victory!!"

After saying this, Berengar nodded, stood up, and returned her roman style salute before dismissing her. After doing so, he sat back down in his seat with a weary expression. Though the Golden Horde had split apart for the time being as they tried to elect a new Khan. One of his agents was captured and would require a specialized team to extract or eliminate him.

For the time being, the troops sent on this mission would undoubtedly be recruited from the most elite Jaegers and field agents; after their task was completed, they would be trained into the elite force that Berengar had mentioned earlier and equipped with more advanced weapons than what was currently available to his Army.

After dwelling upon this for a while, Berengar felt his shoulders being rubbed and looked up to see Linde's beautiful smile as she comforted him. After all, ordering the potential elimination of one of his agents was not easy to accept, and thus she knew her husband was likely conflicted.

"It's okay; even if it comes to what you fear most, he will have died for the sake of the Fatherland. What Jürgen knows can't be released to the Mongols. It would invite danger to the people here at home."

Berengar began to relax as his second wife gave him a message. He knew the reasoning for doing such a horrid task, but just because it was logical did not make it any easier on his conscience. While Linde was rubbing his shoulders, Berengar cracked a joke to his wife about her Deputy Director.

"Hemma looked good in her uniform; maybe you should dress up in yours more often?"

When Linde heard this, she immediately rolled her eyes; though she was director of intelligence, she had never actually gotten a uniform tailored for herself. After all, she spent more time at home in the palace looking after the kids than she did at headquarters.

Because Austrian Royal Intelligence acted as both a Domestic and Foreign Intelligence agency, there were uniforms in place for members who spent most if not all of their time within the Nation's borders. These uniforms were partially based upon those of the Stasi from East Germany, with the primary difference being that the collars were in the form of those used by the Wehrmacht in WW2.

Hearing that her husband so very much wanted to see her in a uniform brought a smile to the girl's face as she wrapped her arms around his shoulders from behind and whispered in his ear, with a sensual tone.

"If you want me to have a uniform so badly, then I will have one designed... However, I fear that if I wear such a thing, you won't be able to keep your hands off me."

After saying this, she turned Berengar's seat around and sat in his lap as she began to kiss him passionately. The young King immediately began to unzip her dress from the back, where it fell from her shoulders, revealing her substantial bosom. It did not take him long to start sucking the milk from her teats.

However, before they could become truly connected, they heard a knock on the door followed by the sound of their son's voice, which thoroughly interrupted the couple's playtime.

"Mommy? Father? are you in there?"

Upon hearing this, Berengar sighed heavily before helping his wife get dressed; after doing so, he approached the door and let his son in. Linde's frustrated expression immediately softened the moment she saw her darling little boy enter the room. Berengar picked his son up into the air and smiled as he asked the boy a question.

"Hans, what is the matter? You know better than to knock on my office door during work hours..."

Hans immediately looked over at his mother and back at his father before expressing his reason for interrupting them.

"I'm hungry, and I couldn't find mommy!"

After saying this, Berengar set the little tyke down on the floor before where he rustled his strawberry blond hair. As he did so he gave his son a brief lecture with a smile on his face.

"Hans, you're four years old now; it is time for you to ween off your mother's milk. If you're hungry, go to the kitchen and ask for a glass of milk and something to eat."

This would have been a convincing argument if there wasn't a leftover drop of Linde's milk upon Berengar's lips. Upon seeing his father lecture him in such a manner, Hans began to pout and immediately questioned his father's hypocrisy.

"Then why do you get to drink mommy's milk?"

Berengar was immediately awestruck when he heard this; he quickly wiped the milk on his lips onto his sleeve before giving a questioning look towards the boy's mother, who was gazing at him with a mocking expression. Upon seeing this, Berengar sighed before coming up with the quickest excuse he could think of.

"Because I'm your mother's husband, and a husband can have as much of his wife's milk as he wants!"

The moment Hans heard this, a light flickered in his eyes as if he had come to the most tacit understanding. He quickly nodded his head in response to Berengar's words before responding.

"So if I get married, I can have as much of my wife's milk as I want?"

Not realizing the problem he had caused, Berengar quickly nodded his head with a smile on his face.

"Now you understand!"

After saying this, Hans hugged his father before running out the door. Berengar would never know that he had inadvertently passed on his fetish for breastfeeding to his son with this statement. Of course, such a thing would not manifest itself for many years.

Chapter 399: Next Generation Weapons Part I

While plans were underway to form a special task force to liberate the captured field agent from the hands of the Golden Horde. As well as the

ongoing efforts of the Austrian intervention in Granada. Berengar had decided to design two new weapons that would eventually replace the needle rifle and the 1422 Service Revolver in a few years.

However, more importantly, these weapons would become the standard issue to his Jagdkommandos in the upcoming months. The reason Berengar had no intents to mass-produce these weapons, for the time being, is because they relied on smokeless powder, and he currently had a limited production capability of such a valuable resource.

It was only after his chemical factories expanded that he would be capable of mass-producing the substance and with it the munitions required for these weapons to function. With this in mind, the first firearm he intended to create was a multi-shot bolt action rifle.

This bolt action rifle was primarily based upon the Kar98k, the standard-issue infantry rifle of the Wehrmacht during the Second World War of Berengar's previous life. However, a few alterations were made to the overall design. The first change to the weapon was that the bolt handle was straight rather than curved.

This alteration was due to the inclusion of a dustcover based upon the system used by the Arisaka Type 99 Rifle issued to the Imperial Japanese Army during his past life. This dustcover was a piece of stamped steel attached to the bolt and moved alongside it; it was designed to cover the action and prevent dirt, dust, and grime from entering. In the case of trench warfare or jungle environments, this was a huge bonus.

The Mauser 98 action was arguably the best action of any service bolt action rifle; it was robust, reliable, and durable. Unlike other designs, it utilized three locking lugs to keep the bolt intact. Aside from the battle-proven functionality of the weapon, it also included an internal five-round box magazine.

Other minor alterations Berengar made to the rifle were an insert in the stock and butt-plate designed to store the cleaning kit much like on an AKM, and a magazine breakdown button contained within the trigger guard much like was seen on the Arisaka Type 99.

To put it simply, taking apart the magazine on the traditional German Mausers was more complicated than it needed to be. While one would rarely take apart the internal magazine, sometimes it was necessary, such as in maintenance, and anything easier for the grunts in the field was a plus in Berengar's book.

Other alterations to the overall design were purely cosmetic; for example, Berengar designed the stock to be based upon the predecessor of the kar98k, which was the Mauser Model of 1933, also known as the Mauser Standardmodell, or the Mauser Banner Rifle. The primary difference between the weapons stocks was a lack of indent for a curved bolt handle and the inclusion of a small rectangular cut on the handguard beneath the rear sight.

In other words, this bolt action rifle was a mixture of three excellent rifles from his past life. The Mauser Kar98k, the Mauser Standardmodell, and the Arisaka type 99 which was loosely based upon the Mauser 98. Berengar was creating what he thought was the perfect military bolt action rifle.

Berengar decided to label the rifle as the Gewehr Model of 1425, or the g25 for short. This was because Berengar intended for it to begin mass production and standard issue to his soldiers three years from now. In the meantime, it would be a weapon utilized by his covert operators and thus not officially adopted by his armed forces.

To Berengar, there was no more excellent full-sized rifle caliber than the 7.92x57mm Mauser, also known as the 8mm Mauser. It was a powerful cartridge that was in use by the German Army from the days of the Boxer Rebellion to even after WWII, during the early years of the Cold War from Berengar's past life.

The 8mm Mauser was a rimless, bottleneck-style cartridge. This meant that the rim around the primer was not substantial in size and that the cartridge tapered towards the bullet. The projectile itself was a spitzer-shaped bullet that used a copper jacket with a mild steel core. It also utilized a double-based smokeless powder which meant there was a mixture of nitrocellulose and nitroglycerin.

This cartridge had a muzzle velocity of 790 m/s or 2,592 ft/s and an effective range of 550 yards when shot out of a g25 rifle. In reality when equipped with

a telescopic optic or when in the hands of a talented marksman the rifle could achieve hits out to 1,090 yards.

After designing the rifle, Berengar moved on to the next critical piece of equipment he would be issuing to his Jagdkommandos, and that was a new sidearm. While the 1422 Service Revolver was practical among rear echelon troops, officers, and cavalry. Berengar felt that something far superior was needed as a sidearm for his Special Forces.

With this in mind, he quickly got down to drafting the blueprints for a legendary pistol that was issued to German troops of both world wars from Berengar's past life. However, it would forever remain in infamy as the favored sidearm of the Waffen-SS, the elite shock troops of the Nazi party, and the personal Army of the Fuhrer.

The Mauser c96 that Berengar designed was chambered in 9x19mm Luger, more commonly referred to in the modern era as 9x19mm parabellum, which had become one of, if not the most widely adopted military and police cartridges in the world by the time of Julian's death.

The Mauser c96 was among the first commercially and militarily successful semi-automatic pistols and was commonly referred to as the broom handle by American shooting enthusiasts. However, due to this fact, it had some quirks that were later redesigned in later models. For example, Berengar fully intended to replace the internal, stripper clip-fed 10 round magazine with detachable 10 or 20 round magazines, as was seen on many of the variants that had made their way to China in his past life.

Though there were better semi-automatic pistols Berengar could adopt, there was a particular reason that he chose this weapon for use in his special forces. When the Germans adopted this pistol, they generally issued it with a wooden holster that could also act as a stock, turning the gun into a semi-automatic pistol caliber carbine.

This would be essential for dangerous operations, where his Jagdkommandos would need access to relatively rapid-firing weapons. As such, it made the perfect sidearm for his most elite forces. Also, from a purely aesthetic perspective, it was a uniquely German handgun, which Berengar greatly appreciated.

Another minor alteration to this weapon was the use of improved iron sights, which led to the shooter acquiring their target faster than on the original model. Was this essential to the function of the weapon? No, after all, the Mauser C96 from his previous life had an exceptional combat record. Still, it did not hurt to make such a minor improvement.

Having designed the weapons that would soon be issued to his Jagdkommandos and later become standard to his conventional Army, Berengar laid back and relaxed in his office chair. He had done more than enough work for that day; with this in mind, he broke out the old skull chalice and poured himself some fortified wine.

As he drank from his chalice, he saw a particular sight enter his room. Honoria was dressed in a silk dress of the current fashion within Austria that was dyed purple, much like her hair. She had a sultry smile on her face as she approached her husband. Though Berengar did not know immediately what she had in mind, he could take a guess.

As she reached her husband's seat, she quickly hopped in his lap, nearly knocking the chair over as she did so. If not for Berengar's foresight and fast reflexes, the couple would have indeed smashed into the ground. However, after stabilizing himself, Berengar immediately asked his third wife why she was bugging him.

"So... I assume you have something to tell me?"

Honoria quickly nodded her head, however in the very next moment, she kissed her husband; after they had separated, she began licking his neck, which Berengar found strange. After a while, he flicked her on the nose and asked her the question on his mind.

"What are you doing?"

Honoria's playfully prodded his chest with her dainty finger as she whispered in her husband's ear.

"Marking my territory, you reek of Linde's perfume!"

Berengar chuckled when he heard this before getting down to business.

"We can play later; tell me, what is so important that you have interrupted my progress?"

Honorina began to pout as she heard this before sighing. After she did so, she expressed the thoughts that troubled her mind.

"My crew wants to participate in the war against the Catholic Iberian Kingdoms, but I'm pregnant and can't enter the battlefield. So... I wanted to know what you thought about allowing Melissa to take over for the time being?"

Berengar thought about this for a few minutes before he broke into laughter; Honorina did not know how to react to this action and became slightly offended as she protested his attitude.

"What's so funny?"

Berengar calmed down after hearing this before responding to the princess's question.

"They're your crew, do what you want with them. You don't need to ask for my permission on how to run your business..."

Upon hearing this, a broad smile appeared on Honorina's pretty face as she kissed Berengar on the cheek. After doing so, she hopped off his lap and ran towards the exit leaving behind a single phrase.

"Thanks, daddy!"

After saying that, she disappeared from Berengar's sight, where he quickly downed the remaining contents of his fortified wine. After doing so, a single thought escaped from his lips.

"Looks like I'm going to need to break out the whiskey."

Having said this, Berengar spent the remainder of the evening drinking liquor by his lonesome.

Chapter 400: Annihilating the Aragonese Army

Throughout the past few weeks, while the Austrian Expeditionary Force gathered on the coast of Gibraltar, the war in Granada had been waging on. The central defensive line commanded by General Ziyad was crushed at Granada's northern borders, and by now, they had been forced to withdraw to their Capital City.

While this had transpired, General Arnulf and the Granadan Royal Guard had become trapped deep behind enemy lines, struggling to survive as Duke Lorenzo de Benavente ruthlessly pursued them across the plains of Andalusia. After the attempt on his life, he had refused to show mercy to Arnulf and the men beneath his command.

Currently, the city of Granada was enjoying its last few days of peace, as the men, women, and children contained within prayed to their Deity for their very survival. After all, the Crusaders who would soon beset upon them would never show any mercy.

What little remained of the Granadan Royal Army scrambled to form a line of defense to protect their capital city from the ferocity of their enemies. Luckily for them, the Austrian Reinforcements had finally arrived, where they immediately dug themselves into a massive and well-fortified trench line. 25,000 Austrians, standing side by side with 5,000 Granadans patiently waited for the arrival of the main Aragonese Army.

Standing a few miles outside of the city was the primary force of the Aragonese Army, supported by tens of thousands of crusaders from the Order of Santiago and Calatrava. At its head was none other than King Felipe de Trastámara with an army of 50,000 men at his back.

The Aragonese King had personally led this Army to defeat Granada. After all, the Castilians were currently struggling to route out the remnants of the Granadan Royal Guard, and the Portuguese armies were God knows where. Thus, in his eyes, the glory for defeating Granada and completing the Reconquista naturally fell to him. At last, after nearly 700 years, Iberia would once more belong to its native sons.

It was with this in mind that he sneered with disdain upon the supposedly meager fortifications standing between him and total victory. He cared not that the Austrians had arrived insignificant number to halt his advance.

They may have powerful weapons on their side, but Aragon had the power of the Lord God almighty backing them, and thus the foolish King feared not what sorcery Berengar the Accursed had managed to conjure from the depths of hell.

After receiving a scouts report about the nature of the enemy's defenses, Felipe gave his order to his troops, who were sitting back and waiting for the battle to begin.

"Forward march and fear no evil, for God is on our side!"

Tens of thousands of men immediately began their charge, attempting to take the trench line from the Austrian and Granadan forces. Completely unaware that they were walking into a massacre.

The Aragonese were quite confident; recently, they had begun to manufacture their crude version of the arkebuse. It was made of cast iron, and they had utterly failed to standardize its caliber. Still, nevertheless, the Aragonese were now equipped in some small capacity with the weapons the Granadans utilized. It was with this in mind that they recklessly charged towards the enemy, foolishly believing they would not be fired upon until they reached a distance of a hundred feet.

The Knights were the first to enter the fray, as the horses attempted to gallop over the barbed wire; however, overburdened by barding and their riders, it did not take long for the Catholic Cavalry to get stuck within the defenses that the Austrians had made.

It was only after the Catholics reached a range of roughly 600 yards that the echo of the Artillery roared in the air. The screams as the shells twirled out of the barrels of the mighty 1422 Field Guns resounded across the battlefield, like that of a titan escaping from the pits of Tartarus.

The shells landed upon the Army trapped within the field of mud and barbed wire. As they detonated, piles of men were torn into chunks of meat, and

others were ripped apart by the white-hot shrapnel. Blood-curdling screams accompanied the sound of gunfire and Artillery to form a symphony of war.

Felipe gazed in horror at the rear of his Army as he witnessed the destruction wrought upon his Army. The very sight of the 75mm High Explosive shells erupting and engulfing his men in fiery blasts was exactly as the Pope had described. Somehow, somehow Berengar the Accursed had conjured hellfire upon the battlefield!

The terrified King of Aragon immediately wet his hose as he could no longer contain his bladder; after doing so, he immediately cried out in a shrill voice befitting that of a hysterical woman.

"Retreat! For God's sake, retreat!"

The echo of gunfire and explosions had wholly drowned out his order despite this. Instead, the men within the field were given their conflicting orders by their officers. That being that under no circumstances were they to retreat; if they wanted to survive, they must press forward at all costs.

As the King witnessed his Army being torn to shreds and refusing his orders, he immediately gave up and ordered his House Guard to retreat. Thus the King fled the battlefield as his Army valiantly tried to overcome the technological gap between them and their foes.

Adelbrand, on the other hand, stood upon the city walls beside General Ziyad and the young Sultan Hasan. They watched the massacre unfold from a distance with a pair of binoculars. With a wicked grin on his face, Adelbrand immediately declared to his allies.

"Wonderful, isn't it? The power that His majesty's Army possesses is not limited to what you see here. I am certain that we will be wielding even greater weapons in five years. As for what you see here? It will probably be issued to the reserves. Aren't you glad that his majesty has a soft spot for Saracens such as yourself?"

Hasan could hardly believe his eyes; by now, the Iberians had begun to withdraw, the rapid rate of fire of the needle rifles, combined with the

explosive power of the rifled breech-loaders, had indeed, and utterly torn the enemy army to shreds.

Within minutes of the battle beginning, tens of thousands of men lie dead in the fields outside his capital city; as for the remainder of the Aragonese Army, they were either wounded and bleeding out or struggling to retreat from the trap they had marched into.

The young Sultan only had one thought on his mind as he witnessed the sheer level of bloodshed beneath his very eyes.

Whatever it takes, I must marry my sister to King Berengar. Without a marriage to bind our two houses together, this could be the fate of my people one day...

As Hasan was thinking these words, Adelbrand reached into his satchel and pulled out a folder where he instantly handed it to the young Sultan with a stoic gaze. Confused by this action, Hasan immediately inquired about what was inside.

"What is this?"

The Austrian General refused to look the Sultan of Granada in the eye as he continued to gaze upon the carnage on the battlefield below. However, without the slightest hesitation, he revealed a hint of the true nature behind the folder.

"It is a gift from his Majesty King Berengar. While I win your war for you, he wants you to get to work and begin implementing what is inside of this folder."

Hasan looked through the folder briefly and was confused by what he was staring at. Nevertheless, there was sure to be somebody within his realm he could comprehend its contents. He handed it to his General Ziyad and gave him a command.

"Have this folder brought to somebody who understands what is contained within."

Ziyad immediately nodded his head and saluted his Sovereign. After doing so, he gazed upon the battlefield in the trenches below. The Aragonese crusaders were annihilated with it; the echoes of gunfire and artillery had begun to fade.

This day would mark a turning point in the centuries-long Reconquista. The ruthless massacre of the Aragonese Army at the hands of the Austrian First Division would spark out an outcry by the Catholic World, and countless volunteers would soon march from their homes to end the combined threat of the Austro-Granadan Alliance.