

Steel 401

Chapter 401: Saving Agent Jürgen

Weeks had passed since Berengar first gave the Royal Edict to establish a special operations unit known as the Jagdkommandos. During this time, a small team of elite soldiers had been formed with a single purpose; to save Agent Jürgen.

To nobody's surprise, this team was made entirely of Berengar's most elite soldiers from his Jaeger Corps. At the moment, a small fireteam that made up this Task Force was sitting on a rowboat in the middle of the Vistula River, inching ever closer to their target.

Captain Andreas Jaeger was the current team leader of this specialty unit that would one day evolve into the infamous Jagdkommandos. Though there were many potential candidates for this position, after a thorough screening, ultimately, he was selected to lead this mission. At the moment, he was sharpening his bayonet as he sat within the boat used to approach their destination.

The likelihood of him and his men needing to use these weapons to eliminate their potential hostiles was undoubtedly high; after all, a single shot of their rifles would immediately alert the entire camp of their presence.

The man was currently dressed in what had become known as an M22 Field Uniform; it had become the basis for all soldier's uniforms within the Kingdom of Austria and was nothing more than a replica of the Wehrmacht's M41 Field Uniform from Berengar's past life.

Over this uniform was a Splinter camo smock, and over that was his trusty trench armor, which was painted to match the camouflage smock. Attached to the breastplate was a set of black webgear in the form of six ammo pouches that contained his paper cartridges for his Needle Rifle. Though Austria had begun to manufacture bolt action rifles and semi-automatic pistols, they were not yet tested or approved for field use; because of this, the unit was still equipped with the standard-issue Needle Rifle.

Under this armor was a black leather belt that contained his bayonet, his entrenching tool, and his canteen. As for his footwear, it was a pair of black

leather combat boots that went up to his ankles. Worn over the top of these boots were a pair of splinter camo puttees. Atop his head was an M21 Stahlhelm, which was the designation given to the helmet he had worn for some time, It was also painted in splinter camouflage.

For better concealment, he wore a ghillie cape that acted as faux foliage; it wrapped itself around his head, shoulders, and back. The only other remarkable feature of his kit was that his face was painted in a woodland pattern to obscure his pale skin that was likely to be seen in the dark.

As the boat approached their destination, Andreas sheathed his bayonet before grabbing ahold of his paddle, where he and his team silently brought it to shore. Once on dry land, Andreas quickly went over the plan one more time.

"The plan is simple; we infiltrate the camp and silently take out the guards. After doing so, we make our way to the tent that Royal Intelligence claims to be the current location of our missing field agent. Our objective is simple, extract Jürgen and bring him home!"

The men who comprised this particular unit silently nodded before Andreas ordered them to move out. After doing so, they silently began to approach the nearby encampment that was not far away from the Vistula.

Before long, Andreas and his team found themselves behind the backs of a pair of Golden Horde sentries. Andreas quickly slung his rifle over his shoulder and unleashed his bayonet. After placing his hand over the man's mouth, he quickly slid the dagger across his throat, ending the man's tragic life.

Blood spilled onto the ground forming a crimson pool. However, Before the other sentry could react, he was quickly taken out similarly by one of the men within Andreas' squad. Only after Andreas was sure the two men were genuinely dead did he and his team drag the warriors' bodies out of sight and hide them within the bushes.

While all of this was happening, a marksman was stationed on the hill above with his needle rifle in hand. He was gazing down into the encampment

through the iron sights of his rifle. If shit hit the fan, he would have to cover his team's escape.

After hiding the bodies, Andreas took the point where he slowly and cautiously made his way between the tents. Luckily for him, it appeared to be some form of celebration tonight; because of this, many of the Mongol warriors drank themselves to sleep. Only a few hostiles were wandering through the camp, and they were intoxicated to such degree that they could not notice Andreas and his squad if they were to crouch down five yards in front of them.

Thus Andreas and his men swiftly made their way to the tent where Jürgen was supposedly held captive. Where they split into two groups, while Andreas and the medic rescued Jürgen, the others would search for his equipment. It was not a good idea to leave behind the gear that could identify Austria as the assassins. After entering inside, they found their target tied to a post, with cuts and welts all over his body. He was missing his left hand and both of his eyes.

The fingernails on his right hand were completely removed, as were all his teeth. Evidently, when they weren't cutting away at his body, they beat him with blunt objects as there was substantial bruising across his torso, and multiple fractures in his limbs.

How he had managed to survive this long was utterly unknown to the veteran medic who accompanied Andreas and his team. Jürgen was clearly on the brink of death, and as such, The medic instantly began to treat what few wounds he could manage.

When there was nothing more to be done, the medic pulled out smelling salts and placed them under Jürgen's nose, which immediately awakened the poor man. All he could see was darkness out of the dark pits where his eyes used to be; however, despite his lack of sight, he could still sense that he was surrounded. Thus he immediately began to panic. However, before he could scream, his mouth was covered, and he heard the familiar words of his native tongue whisper in his ears.

"I am Captain Andreas Jaeger, of the Jaeger Corps. We are here to rescue you!"

Upon hearing this, Jürgen's brow immediately began to relax as he realized that aid had finally come for him. Afterward, Andreas removed his hand where Jürgen immediately began to speak.

"I... I said... nothing... Well... besides eat shit!"

After saying this, Jürgen began to chuckle, which immediately caused him to cough. Upon seeing this, the medic immediately cut him down. However, Jürgen was far too injured to walk. As he collapsed onto the ground, he began to chuckle once more before making a request.

"Water..."

Captain Andreas quickly pulled out his canteen and guided it to Jürgen's lips, where he hastily took a sip. After drowning the blood that had pooled in his mouth with fresh water, the man sighed heavily before making one final request.

"Kill me... Please!"

Andreas was shocked when he heard this. However, the medic looked at him with a worrying gaze before whispering in his ear.

"His wounds are too severe; if we take him out of here, he will die before we make it to the boat. We should grant him his wish and put an end to his suffering."

Upon hearing this, Andreas' hands began to tremble. He began to realize that they were far too late. Jürgen was as good as dead, and if they attempted to bring him back, they could easily be caught by the Golden Horde.

Despite this potential reality, he was undeterred; the veteran Captain refused to allow an Agent of the Crown to die in foreign lands and have his body tossed to the wolves or mutilated any further by those filthy savages. It was with this in mind that he made a solemn vow to Jürgen as the man gasped, struggling for breath.

"I promise you that I will have your body buried in Austrian soil."

At this point, Jürgen could no longer speak. Instead, he nodded his head with a stern expression on his face. After doing so, the medic pulled out a small capsule that contained a fast-acting and lethal poison. He slid it into Jürgen's mouth and massaged his throat so that he would swallow it.

With this act, the agent began to whimper until there was utter silence; not even the sound of him breathing remained as his soul entered eternal rest. Upon seeing this, Andreas sighed heavily before giving the new order.

"Cover me; I'm going to make sure Jürgen makes it home, even if it is as a corpse!"

After saying this, he slung the fallen agent's body over his soldier and drew his pistol, where his team immediately exited the tent with rifles in hand. For Andreas and his team of operators, the real difficulty was about to begin.

Chapter 402: The Bohemian Army Arrives

Having recovered Jürgen's corpse, or what was left of it, Captain Andreas Jaeger quickly made his way out of the tent; however, the moment he exited it, he noticed a large and muscular figure. According to the dossier they read over before this mission took place, this man was likely to be none other than Subetei, the man who was the favorite to succeed the previous Khan who Jürgen had assassinated.

Subetei immediately reached for his saber; however, before he could even get his hand on his weapon, a booming echo resounded through the night's sky. A gaping hole was in the middle of the Mongolian warlord's chest as he stared at Andreas with surprise. In the Captain's hand was a 1422 Service Revolver, which he had fired the moment Subetei reached for his weapon.

The once-proud Mongolian warlord who was just about to become the next Khan of the Golden Horde collapsed to the ground. However, the minute he did so, many warriors appeared from outside their tents, wondering what such a noise could be. They gazed in astonishment as they saw their leader bleeding out on the ground in front of a group of strangely dressed men.

The brave warriors of Subetei's faction immediately unsheathed their blades and began howling as they charged at the intruders. Andreas did not hesitate

and quickly raised his revolver with one hand as he opened fire upon the enemy in rapid fashion.

Beside Andreas was the medic who quickly raised his rifle and fired at the oncoming opponents. Gunshots echoed in the air as bodies collapsed. The more shots fired, the more Mongolians appeared from their tents, armed and ready for combat.

However, Andreas did not stay behind, instead, he and the medic quickly regrouped with the other members of their squad before fleeing from the scene of their crime. Evidently they had found Jürgen's equipment. While the soldiers ran, they also reloaded their weapons and fired at any hostiles who dared to get in their path. As for Andreas, he had long since fired his six shots, and because he was carrying Jürgen's body, he could no longer load his weapon.

With this in mind, he quickly holstered his firearm before unsheathing his bayonet, where he held it close to his body in case he needed to kill someone who got too close. As the Mongolian warriors began to chase after the fleeing Austrian team, the marksman on the hill above began carefully picking his targets; with every squeeze of the trigger, another hostile was sent to the afterlife.

With great finesse, he quickly racked the bolt of his needle rifle back, where he placed the next paper cartridge into the action before slamming the bolt home. After doing so, he quickly acquired his next target on the path of least resistance and gunned him down. Andreas quickly spotted the marksman clearing the path and ordered his men to follow it.

"This way! Hurry!"

The Austrian Jaegers fiercely began to battle their way out of the enemy encampment. As a Mongolian approached the medic reloading a paper cartridge, he quickly halted the procedure. He then raised his bayonet while thrusting it into the man's heart. After doing so, he finished pushing the bolt forward before firing on another target.

Andreas was protected by his soldiers, who guarded his flanks as they secured the route out of the camp and towards the boat. Before long, they had

gained a head start over the warriors of the Golden Horde, who were now rushing back to their tents to grab ahold of their bows. However, by the time they retrieved them, the Austrians had made their way out of the encampment and rushed towards the river basin where they had left their boat.

The marksman continued to clear a path until his comrades had gotten close to their position. As such, he fired one last shot protecting the rear guard from an incoming sword swing, exploding the target's head before hopping down from his position and regrouping with his team. As he ran alongside them to the shore, he instantly cursed.

'Well, this is a fucking shit show!'

Andreas did not say anything. Instead, he tossed Jürgens body into the boat and began to push it into the river. Before long, the Mongolians arrived and began to fire their arrows upon Andreas and his team; fortunately, their vitals were well protected from missile fire, and the hands failed to pierce through the Austrian steel trench armor.

Andreas quickly unslung his rifle and fired a shot into the torso of the nearest Mongolian warrior before hopping into the boat which was now flowing downstream, every one of the Austrian soldiers made their way into the boat—at the same time, ducking their heads, and protecting their exposed backs from missile fire. They began to row as if their lives depended upon it, as arrows fell upon them instantly.

However, due to the shape of their helmets, if they huddled down just right, there was no way they could be killed. After a while, they made it out of range of the Mongolian composite bows and began to cheer as they flipped off the hostile warriors who stared at them with disbelief. However, Andreas immediately barked at his soldiers to remind them of something serious.

"We're not out of the woods yet; we need to get to the extraction point before they can get on horseback and follow; quit your cheering and start rowing!"

Just as Andreas had said, the Mongolian warriors of the Golden Horde doubled back to their camp, where they got ahold of their horses. It was a race against time; the Austrians had to make their way downstream to where

their mounts were located. If the Mongolians arrived before they did, it was all over.

With this in mind, the team furiously rowed the boat into the rapids, where they were propelled downstream at a tremendous rate. After a while, they arrived at their destination, where Andreas picked up Jürgen's body and placed it on the back of his horse. After mounting their horses the team immediately set off towards the Austrian Borders.

However, before they could celebrate, they noticed that the advanced force of the Golden Horde was not far behind. Several hundred elite Mongolian riders were closing in and fast. With this in mind, Andreas pulled out his revolver once more and began ejecting its empty cartridges out of its gate. After doing so, he rapidly reloaded the weapon, with the reins in his left hand and the revolver in his right, he stormed off on his horse towards his homeland.

The Mongolians rushed their horses towards the Austrians without caring for their mount's safety. Eventually, they began to close the distance, where they proceeded to fire their arrows towards Andreas and his men. They were not in a good position, as their trench armor did not protect their backs. If an arrow made its way through its exposed area, it could mean death.

The Austrians faced their oncoming attackers and fired their revolvers at them. The bullets traveled downrange to limited success. If anything, they were more likely to strike the horse. A .38 special was not capable of entirely stopping a horse with a single shot unless it hit a vulnerable region.

However, when their shots did land clean, they managed to either knock down a rider or kill its horse. As the Chase continued, things were beginning to look bleak to the Austrians. By now, they had run out of ammo with their revolvers, and they were not equipped with cavalry carbines.

However, in their darkest hour, the sound of thunder resounded in the air, and in the very next moment, a plume of smoke appeared from the edge of the forest. As it did, more than a quarter of the approaching Mongols fell dead. It took a few moments, but another volley was fired shortly after, where an exciting sight took place.

Men dressed in Uniforms that they did not recognize emerged from the treeline with muskets in their hands and triangular bayonets affixed as they loaded quick loading tubes into the bores of their weapons before firing another volley. With this third volley, every last member of the horde who had followed them was either slain or trapped beneath the weight of their horse.

Seeing that their enemies were defeated, Andreas ordered his unit to halt as they watched the unknown men rush forth from their positions and skewer any member of the golden horde left alive with their bayonets.

Andreas was quite suspicious of this new and unknown force and thus approached them cautiously. However, the man in charge of the company of soldiers who had helped them with their pursers immediately saluted him before speaking in what Andreas would politely refer to as "Broken German."

"Captain Kryštof Jílek of the Royal Bohemian Army. We were sent to provide aid; I am glad we arrived on time."

Berengar had suspected something like this could happen. With this in mind, he had kept the newly established Bohemian Army on standby to intercept and aid the Jaegers if they found themselves in trouble during their escape. Andreas was stunned to see that there was some form of support for them, however before he could thank the man and his troops, Captain Kryštof immediately began to interrupt.

"The majority of their army is still out there, and there are not enough of us to fight them off. Quickly, while you can make your escape, we will be returning to Bohemia immediately."

Thus the brief interaction between the Bohemian Army and Austria's fledgling special forces group ended. Andreas quickly gave his orders to his soldiers; he was confident he did not want to stick around for the rest of the horde to arrive.

"Quickly, with haste ride towards the fatherland!"

His soldiers immediately nodded their heads and followed the path back to Austria. The rest of their journey would be entirely uneventful.

Chapter 403: Constitutional Convention Part I

Berengar stood within the halls of the Reichstag. Surrounding him was every prominent political and economic leader within the Kingdom of Austria. After Duke Otto von Graz had openly called for a Constitutional Convention to amend the current Constitution of Austria, the nation was in an uproar.

How dare the Duke and father-in-law of the King question the Crown's authority for the sake of the upper nobility. However, when Berengar responded in a cordial, and welcoming manner, the people naturally calmed their wrath.

Berengar had gone a step further, and called for every titan of industry, every political representative, every noble of significant standing, to gather together in the Reichstag for a single purpose, to redraft the Constitution in a way that worked for all people.

Currently, Berengar was addressing the massive gathering with some of his proposed changes to the current Constitution. After much bickering from the nobility, and common populace. The bicameral legislative that was based upon the United States of his previous life was thoroughly scrapped. The young King of Austria began to recount the changes to this system that had become universally accepted after several days of near-constant debate by those attending this Constitutional Convention.

"It is my understanding that we have come to some form of agreement on this matter, so allow me to reiterate for official purposes. As far as the legislative branch is concerned, there shall be two chambers of parliament.

An electorate comprised of educated common men of good moral character can elect up to one member of parliament for every twenty-five thousand citizens who dwells within the confines of the Kingdom of Austria.

Every four years there shall be an election to elect a member of parliament to fill these positions, No representative shall be allowed to run for office more than twice. The representative must be at least thirty years of age and pass a background check, as well as a written test supervised by the royal Crown itself.

Their duty, should they be elected shall be performed with the principle of serving the Austrian Crown to the benefit of the people. A member of parliament will have the right to draft bills to be looked over by the King of Austria, this will require at least a 2/3 majority to pass .

They shall also have the power to impeach government officials under the condition of a 2/3 majority. In the event of an impeachment of a member of the peerage, the Trial will be handed to the House of Lords to handle. Are there any objections to these terms?"

Berengar gazed around the Reichstag at the gathered men to see if anyone raised a hand or voice in protest to these terms. As he had previously announced, it had become universally accepted at this point, and thus not a single person raised a complaint regarding this portion of the Constitution. Upon seeing that there were no voices of dissent, Berengar cleared his throat before moving on to the next portion of the legislative branch.

"Moving on to the House of Lords..."

There shall be five members of the House of Lords for every Duchy within our great realm. These Noblemen shall be elected by a simple majority from the Peerage of their respective Duchies and will serve a four-year term, with a limit of two terms.

The requirements to become a candidate for a position within the House of Lords are as follows. The nobleman in question must be at least thirty years of age, a citizen of Austria for at least five years without dual citizenship, pass an intensive background check as well as a written test supervised by the Austrian Crown itself.

If the Duchy in question has not managed to fill its seats within the House of Lords, then the Austrian Crown will choose the remaining representatives on their behalf. The King of Austria will also be able to select a total of five lords that will represent his interests within the House of Lords.

With the greater good of the Austrian Crown in mind, the members of the House of Lords will have the power to draft and edit legislature for the King to review, the authority to remove government officials from a position of power

with a fair trial, as well as the ability to suggest potential members for the King's Court."

After reviewing the terms that the Constitutional Convention had agreed upon prior, Berengar once more gazed over to see if there were any dissenting views. Yet again, not a single man present raised a voice of objection to the terms proposed. Having gained the consent of the various members of society present, Berengar began to address the Executive Branch of government.

"As for the Executive Branch of Government, I will reiterate the consensus that was previously agreed upon throughout our deliberations.

The King of Austria shall be head of the government; he will preside over the House of Commons and Lords, where he will have the power to sign bills into law, declare war, and oversee treaties. The Crown of Austria shall receive the title of Reichsmarschall, where he is the de-facto commander-in-chief of Austria's Armed Forces.

The King shall also retain the power to issue Royal Edicts. If the reigning Monarch deems the need to personally pass legislation for whatever reason, he can issue a Royal Edict to do so. This law will remain in place until his successor is chosen, where the new King will have the power to renew these Royal Edicts or terminate them.

As far as the laws of succession are concerned, the King will have the ability to appoint a successor of his choosing from his Dynasty. This successor shall be determined by merit rather than order of birth. Only the most competent of his male offspring shall be chosen to inherit the Crown. If there are no male offspring of the King, then the most qualified of his brothers or nephews shall be selected to succeed him.

The Crown of Austria cannot be passed down to anyone outside the von Kufstein dynasty. As such, only full-blooded German men will be capable of succeeding the reigning Monarch. As for the female members of the von Kufstein Dynasty, all marriages pertaining to these women must be matrilineal in nature.

If, for whatever reason, the King passes away without selecting an heir, the Royal Court will vote upon the male members of the von Kufstein Dynasty for succession; a simple majority will choose the result.

If for whatever reason, the need arises to remove the King from office, it can be done so long as a unanimous decision is achieved by both the House of Commons and the House of Lords. The King shall not be able to edit the Austrian Constitution unless a ? majority within the House of Commons and House of Lords decide otherwise."

Having spoken about the matters pertaining to the King of Austria, Berengar gazed upon the crowd; it took several days of bitter debate to achieve this result. Still, ultimately the people nodded their heads in response to the terms presented. Having seen this, Berengar immediately began to address the role of the Royal Court.

"The Royal Court will act as the personal advisors of the reigning King, as well as the heads of the various Federal Departments. They will advise the King as experts in their respective fields and control matters pertaining to their department. The members of the Royal Court will have the power to draft a bill which shall be passed to the House of Lords to review.

As for the Selection of the members of the Royal Court, they can either be chosen directly from the reigning Monarch or be suggested by the House of Lords. The minimum requirements to be selected as a member of the Royal Court are as follows.

They must be a minimum of thirty-five years of age and a citizen of Austria for at least ten years without dual citizenship. They must pass a written exam overseen by the Austrian Crown, go through an extensive background check, and have previously held a position as a government official."

After saying this, Berengar gazed upon the crowd, who once more nodded their heads; by now, this was merely a formality to ensure that everything they had debated upon over the past few days was still in agreement. Luckily for him, nobody disagreed with the previously mentioned roles of government. It was with this in mind that he moved onto the Judicial Branch.

"The judicial Power of the Kingdom of Austria shall be vested in one supreme Court, and such inferior Courts as Parliament may from time to time ordain and establish. The Judges, both of the supreme and inferior Courts, shall hold their Offices during good Behaviour, and shall, at stated Times, receive for their Services, a Compensation, which shall not be diminished during their Continuance in Office.

The Trial of all Crimes, except in Cases of Impeachment; shall be by Jury; and such Trial shall be held in the Duchy where the said Crimes shall have been committed; but when not committed within any Duchy, the Trial shall be at such Place or Places as Parliament may by Law have directed."

Berengar admitted to himself that the Judicial portion of his government was copied nearly word for word from the Constitution of the United States from his Previous life. He wanted nothing to do with sentencing criminals unless related to subjects such as Treason, War-Crimes, etc.

After getting through this final part and seeing the unanimous agreement by the members of society gathered in the Reichstag, Berengar took a deep breath; now that he had established the three branches of government, he needed to discuss other essential amendments to the Constitution such as Individual rights.

Chapter 404: Constitutional Convention Part II

Having established the three branches of government within the Austrian Constitution, Berengar had now moved onto the individual rights and liberties that the people in his society would maintain. Naturally, as a Semi-Constitutional Monarchy, the people would not be given the extent of freedoms that they had during Berengar's past life.

"Amendment I of the Austrian Bill of Rights is as follows:

Unless in the event that such freedoms have been deemed a threat to National Security, Parliament shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

Amendment II of the Austrian Bill of Rights is as follows:

Unless in the event that such action is deemed necessary for National Security, no soldier shall, in time of peace, be quartered in any house, without the consent of the owner, nor in time of war, but in a manner to be prescribed by law.

Amendment III of the Austrian Bill of Rights is as follows:

Unless in the event that such freedoms have been deemed a threat to National Security, the right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

Amendment IV of the Austrian Bill of Rights is as follows:

Unless in the event that such freedoms have been deemed a threat to National Security, no person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise, infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a grand jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the militia, when in actual service in time of war or public danger; nor shall any person be subject for the same offense to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.

Amendment V of the Austrian Bill of Rights is as follows:

Unless in the event that such freedoms have been deemed a threat to National Security, In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the state and district wherein the crime shall have been committed, which district shall have been previously ascertained by law, and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, and to have the assistance of counsel for his defense.

Amendment VI of the Austrian Bill of Rights is as follows:

Unless in the event that such freedoms have been deemed a threat to National Security, Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted."

Berengar had once again simply copied several aspects from the United States Constitution that he deemed to be necessary. However, for the purpose of future stability of his Empire and to combat the potential threat of dangerous ideologies, Berengar had ensured that there was an exemption to these individual rights under the guise of National Security.

With these Amendments spoken, Berengar searched around to see if any member of the Constitutional Convention disagreed with any of the terms presented. However, such things had already been thoroughly debated over the past few days, and thus not a single person rejected these notions.

Having established the three branches of government and the people's individual rights. There was one final article of the Constitution that Berengar wanted to establish. Thus, he spoke in an authoritative tone as he addressed the convention.

"There is one final addition that I wanted to add to our Constitution, and thus I will present it now where it will be open to the floor to decide whether it is contained within or not.

All men, who are between eighteen and thirty years of age, must serve a minimum of four years in active duty to the Armed Forces of Austria and another four in the Reserves. Exemptions shall be issued under the condition that one may be deemed unfit for service; however, if one is in fact deemed unfit for service without a proper disability, they will be forced to pay an additional 3% of income tax until the age of thirty-seven for a maximum of eleven years."

After saying this, Berengar gazed around at the gathered people expecting some form of fierce debate to erupt, thus causing this constitutional convention to continue for another few days. However, only silence remained. That is until one man, in particular, stood up; this man was well respected within the Kingdom of Austria as its most outstanding General; as Eckhard stood up, he threw a Roman salute towards his Monarch while shouting a patriotic slogan.

"For King and Fatherland!"

Upon seeing the fervent response from the man responsible for many of their Kingdom's victories, everyone else in the room stood up and followed in his footsteps.

"For King and Fatherland!"

Berengar gazed upon the men gathering before him with a sense of pride as he returned their salute with one of his own and with it the phrase he commonly used in response.

"Hail Victory!"

After doing so, he allowed the commotion to calm down before addressing the members of the Constitutional Convention.

"If there are no disagreements, then I will conclude this Constitutional Convention, and we will hereby ratify this document as the basis of our Government!"

With this said, the crowd erupted into cheers; after several days of agonizing debate, they had finally come to a unanimous agreement on the roles of government and the liberties of the people. While this government may appear restrictive to the people of Berengar's past life, it was undoubtedly the most liberal that had ever been seen in this medieval world.

Of course, in the end, under the guise of national security and the power of Royal Edicts, the Royal Crown of Austria still held significant authority to do as it pleased with the country. Thus, in reality, Berengar's power was not limited in any meaningful capacity that might prevent him from instituting the reforms he deemed necessary for society.

What this Constitutional Convention managed to create was a sense of belonging by all members of society, as if all classes were represented in the creation of this new form of government, rather than having the King draft it by himself.

As Berengar returned to his palace, he began to wonder if a true liberal republic would ever present itself in this world that he had so drastically altered. After all, with the overwhelming power and technological superiority of the future German Empire, would the other Nations seek to emulate his Semi-Constitutional Monarchy? Would the age of Enlightenment and its ideals ever come to pass?

When he considered the fact that his society would one day be the envy of the world, with principles based upon the ideas of collectivism, militarism, meritocracy, and autarky. How would the ideas of liberty and individualism ever sprout when his people realized that under the reign of their Monarchs, they had been uplifted to a state where the average man lived a better life than that of foreign nobles.

He thought of these questions as he opened the door to his palace and entered inside. As he had suspected, his family was waiting for him, with different expressions. Linde was concerned that he may have ceded too much power from himself in an attempt to appease the masses, while Adela was happy that he was taking steps to ensure the rights of the common people.

On the other hand, Honoria simply did not care about the constitutional convention as it would not affect her or her children. Instead, she was just happy that her husband was home so that she could fool around with him. Thus she was the first to approach him and plant a kiss on his lips while whispering in his ear.

"Welcome home, daddy!"

Berengar by now had become accustomed to the intimate expression that the young princess used to refer to him and stroked her purple hair as he embraced her. Following this, his other wives followed suit in an attempt to one-up one another, each kissing him, before referring to him by their affectionate nicknames.

However, in the next moment, something unexpected happened; Henrietta ran up and hugged him before planting a kiss on his cheek; after doing so, she rested her head in his chest before saying the words contained deep within her youthful heart.

"Welcome home, big brother!"

Berengar was confused, his sister did not normally behave in such an overly affectionate manner akin to his lovers. In fact, for a while now, she has been purposely instigating conflict between his wives, yet now all of a sudden, she followed the way they welcomed him upon returning home. He was just thankful that she didn't kiss him on the lips, or else he would have to have an awkward conversation with the girl about boundaries.

Due to how intoxicated he was, Berengar had forgotten entirely what he witnessed during the time he had played poker with his sister. Thus he could not rationally think of why her behavior was so sporadic throughout these past few months. However, he decided not to dwell on it and quickly pet her golden hair before shifting the subject.

"So, what is for dinner?"

While Berengar may not know what was going on in his little sister's mind, Linde had begun to gaze at the young girl with suspicion. Henrietta had single-handedly stolen the spotlight as she gained the majority of Berengar's affection. The veteran spymaster began to consider that quite possibly, Henrietta was not the little rabbit that she had always thought of her as, but instead was a sly fox.

Berengar was a rational and logical man. Because of this, he had never considered the possibility that maybe Henrietta was beginning to develop feelings for him. After all, she had been cooped up in the Castle her entire life. Because of this, the girl had limited interaction with people outside her family, and they were all the girls from her school.

Her two brothers were the only males she had ever interacted with in any significant capacity who was remotely close to her age. With Lambert dead and Berengar being the only man in her life, naturally, as she entered her teenage years and began puberty, she had started to entertain some taboo ideas.

One thing was certain if Berengar did not find a proper suitor for his sister soon, she was bound to act upon her incestuous fantasies, which was something that could only bring trouble for the young Monarch. However, he

did not know any of this, and as such, he brought his family to the dining area, where they enjoyed a meal in peace. The only person in the room who had begun to suspect Henrietta's intentions was Linde, whose gaze never left the young girl's sight.

Chapter 405: In the Name of God

With the disastrous defeat that the Kingdom of Aragon and its supporting Crusader Armies had suffered outside the city of Granada. The Catholic world was practically turned on its head overnight. Adelbrand did not stand idly by and led his into the occupied Granadan territory to liberate it from the Catholic oppressors.

Battle after battle, the superiority of his artillery and the individual soldiers under his command had utterly massacred the Iberian Forces. In doing so he had successfully rescued Arnulf and the remainder of the Granadan Royal Guard from their pursuers.

While the King of Aragon had successfully fled the sight of his soldier's slaughter, he was far from unscathed. Physically he was fine; however, mentally, the man could not get over his fear; every time he closed his eyes, he could hear the roar of the Austrian artillery and the fiery explosions that resulted from its shells. His men being turned into nothing but meat paste had a particularly chilling effect on his mental state.

If Austria had such fearsome weapons, when the Crusade arrived, he knew that only death awaited those who embarked on such a foolish venture. Despite this, he sent a warning to the Papacy about what he had witnessed on the field of battle.

Pope Julius had just finished reading the letter written by King Felipe of Aragon; his hands were trembling in rage as he tore the document to pieces in a fit of fury. The King of Aragon had requested the Pope to gather all faithful Christian men and send them into Iberia. He believed there was no conceivable way for the Iberian Union to achieve victory.

The very idea that the King of Aragon felt that defeat was inevitable without sending countless men into the meat grinder brought an overwhelming sense of wrath to the Vicar of Christ. Just when the Catholics were about to win the centuries-long Reconquista; Berengar the accursed had deployed his forces

in defense of the Moorish invaders! Austria blocked its path no matter what ploy for power the Papacy sought to achieve.

"God damn you to hell Berengar von Kufstein! You are always one step ahead of me, no matter where I seek to strike! It is simply intolerable! What kind of devil are you to torment me in such a manner!"

If Berengar could hear the Pope's words right now, he would be smiling with a vicious grin genuinely befitting of the devil. The Papacy's greatest military supporter was on the verge of collapse. With the loss of Northern Italy and Switzerland, the Holy Roman Emperor was cut off from the rest of his Empire, which was currently fighting among themselves over a meaningless title.

After a humiliating defeat to the Austrian Army, Balsamo Corsini had outright refused to aid the Papacy in its attempts to counter Berengar's rise in power; the man was too frightened even to risk the slightest chance of having the might of the Austria Military at his gates once more.

With the ongoing construction of the major Naval Base on Malta, Berengar would soon have a prime location to strike at any power within the Mediterranean; the very idea that Austria controlled the land and seas with domineering fashion was enough to make the Pope wish death and damnation upon its entire populace.

Julius was so worked up that he could no longer think straight; he somehow gained the brilliant idea of issuing a decree to all of the Catholic World in a state of mental turmoil. Thus he put on a calm facade as he walked out onto his balcony and announced to the people of Rome the supposed word of God.

"Any man who gives his life in pursuit of Reconquista shall surpass the depths of Purgatory and directly enter through the Gates of Heaven. To kill an infidel is to gain a higher status in the Lord's Kingdom. Go forth, righteous men of Christendom, and drive the Moors and their Austrian allies out of the Iberian Peninsula! God wills it!"

After saying this, the Pope immediately withdrew from his balcony. He returned to his Papal throne as he began cursing his enemies out loud, utterly unaware that the Cardinals were nearby watching his erratic behavior.

"I don't care how many men must bleed to achieve it, but make no mistake Berengar von Kufstein, your wretched army shall be driven from the lands of Iberia, and the Catholics shall achieve their victory over your heresy! You will not replace the Church as the major power of the West!"

...

Weeks passed since the Pope's announcement calling upon all men of faith to march to Iberia in an attempt to eradicate the Granadans and their Austrian Allies. At this time, the various Kings of Europe reacted to the message differently.

Like the King of Hungary, some were eager to gain vengeance on Austria for past grievances and thus sent not only a detachment of their military but also tens of thousands of their peasants into the conflict. Others like the Kings of England and France were far too busy with their petty squabbles to bother sending troops to the Iberian Peninsula.

Despite this, many of their peasants who sought glory in the afterlife picked up whatever weapons they could manage and voluntarily traveled to the land that was supposed to guarantee a spot in the Kingdom of Heaven. After all, an eternity in the Lord's Domain was far better than the life of a serf.

Even Poland-Lithuania was affected by this decree; believing they were on the verge of victory with the Teutonic Order, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth sent 10,000 soldiers to the Iberian Peninsula and another 20,000 peasant levies. They had no idea that Berengar had set his sights on the rump state that was the Teutonic State and the lands that belonged to Prussia in his past life.

Hundreds of thousands of Christians had taken up the Cross in an attempt to reclaim the lands that belonged to the Emirate of Granada. In response to this, Hasan Al-Fadl, the Sultan of Granada, began to panic as he stood within the War Room of his Royal Palace.

By his side were three Generals of note, two of which were Austrian. General Arnulf von Thiersee, the Commander of the Austro-Granadan Coalition, spoke with confidence as he tried to assure the young Sultan that he need not worry.

"Your Majesty, you must remain calm. Even though hundreds of thousands of hostile forces will be marching upon these lands, you still have the support of the First Division! I am certain that his Majesty King Berengar is already planning to dispatch additional troops to Granada as we speak."

Adelbrand scoffed in response to this before commenting on his own.

"His Majesty will probably lead the charge himself after hearing that such a massive army is on its way. You know how King Berengar is; he likes to be in the thick of combat; I doubt he will miss such an opportunity to entertain his endless bloodlust."

Upon hearing that his ally would likely send further support, Hasan began to calm down a bit; to aid his nerves, he took a sip from the fortified wine that he had acquired from his trade with Austria. The man nearly choked on the liquid when he heard Adelbrand's further speculation.

"His Majesty may request the aid of the Byzantine Empire; after all, he has close ties to the Emperor, and our army is still in the process of being equipped with the newest weapons. Perhaps he will even bring the Bohemian Forces with him. After all, they have yet to be truly tested in battle."

Adelbrand nodded his head in agreement; Berengar did not form the Bohemian Royal Army so that they could sit back and defend its borders. As for the Byzantines, it was a bit of a stretch to get them involved considering their history with Muslim Nations. However, if anybody could convince the Emperor to send an Army to Granada to fight against the Catholics, it was Berengar. When Hasan heard this, he immediately began to inquire how many troops would come to his support.

"Just how many men do you think Berengar will bring with him?"

Upon hearing this, Adelbrand and Arnulf looked at each other with complicated gazes, as if they were trying to figure out how their Liege's mind worked. Ultimately it was Arnulf who sighed before revealing his thoughts on the matter.

"His Majesty doesn't like to simply win wars; he aspires to dominate in every conflict; I wouldn't be surprised if he brought another division with him, and

however many troops he has managed to raise in Bohemia. So most likely an additional 30,000 troops, which should be more than enough to handle the enemy. "

After hearing such a response, Hasan felt relieved and no longer worried about his future. He had seen the level of destruction that a single Austrian Division had done to an army twice its size. Thus if another were to arrive in Granada, he need not worry about the war any longer. All that was left to do now was drink and wait for the storm to arrive.

Chapter 406: State Funeral

Berengar stood at the funeral procession within the cemetery that was established for fallen soldiers and field agents. He had a downcast expression as he stared at the closed coffin which contained the corpse of one of his bravest field agents.

Though he had sent the best soldiers at his command to liberate the captured field agent known as Jürgen Speck, by the time they arrived, the man was on the brink of death and only lasted long enough to inform his comrades that he had never revealed any information to his captors.

Because he had died in service to the fatherland and had resisted his cruel torment at the hands of his captors until the very end, Berengar had set up a massive funeral service for the man. Various heads of state, including the King, the Chancellor, the Director and Deputy Director of Royal Intelligence, and the Director of Covert Operations, were all present to send this man off to the afterlife.

Due to the condition of his corpse, it was a closed casket funeral, and at the moment Ludolf, head of the German Church, was saying Jürgen's last rights as his coffin was interned in the Earth. Berengar felt a hand attach to his own as he listened to the Priest's words; upon looking over, he saw the gloomy expression of his Second Wife and Director of Intelligence Linde von Kufstein as she gazed into Berengar's one good eye.

For this special occasion, Linde wore a uniform that proudly displayed her status as Director of Royal Intelligence, it was a steingrau colored uniform in the style that one might see in use by the Stasi of East Germany during Berengar's past life.

The primary difference was that the collar was downturned in style used by the Wehrmacht, and all communist symbolism was replaced with the Imperial symbols of Berengar's Kingdom of Austria. Berengar felt that his wife was quite attractive in her uniform, and if not for the fact that they were currently at a funeral, he would have pinned her to the ground and ravaged her then and there.

However, now was not the time for such things, and thus as Ludolf closed his speech, Berengar let go of his wife's hand and approached the Podium where he began to address those who had gathered.

"My fellow Austrians, we are gathered here today to mourn the loss of a great man, who gave his life in service of his King and Fatherland. I can not go into exact details of the operations that Jürgen Speck had conducted that resulted in his untimely demise, but know that his efforts were not in vain.

Jürgen was a man I did not personally know, as I have little contact with the Department of Intelligence, aside from regular communications with its Director. However, from what the soldiers dispatched to rescue the man has told me, he was a man of great conviction! I know that he has left behind a widow and two young children, and make no mistake for his sacrifice to this Kingdom, his family will be taken care of at the expense of the Crown!

After saying this, a man stood before Berengar with a small wooden case, where Berengar grabbed ahold of it before approaching Jürgen's widow. She struggled to contain her tears as she watched her loving husband be interred into the ground. After standing directly in front of her, Berengar placed a hand on her shoulder in comfort and expressed his sympathy.

"I am sorry for your loss, for your husband's Conspicuous gallantry, extraordinary heroism, and courage in the face of a significant and known risk above and beyond the call of duty I hereby award him the highest honor a man of his position can achieve, the National Intelligence Cross!"

Berengar opened the small wooden case to reveal a solid gold Cross pattée; this Cross had a wreath surrounding its center with a black enamel filling. Inside of this filling was a golden Austrian Double-Headed Eagle. The ribbon attached to the medal and mirrored the pattern of the United State's National

Intelligence Cross from his past life, with the difference being the colors were in black, white, and gold.

Berengar handed this award to Jürgen's widow and embraced her in a platonic hug as she cried into his shoulder. It was not every day that Berengar had to fulfill such depressing responsibilities; as such, he kept a stoic facade in the face of the gloomy atmosphere, conducting himself with the dignity that Monarch should have towards his people.

After the funeral procession was over, Berengar returned to the palace, where he locked himself away in his study and began to drink from a bottle of whiskey that he had saved inside his desk for special occasions. Not caring about the possibility of intoxication, Berengar filled his skull chalice to its edges with the amber liquid before slowly drinking from it, reflecting on the cost of his ambitions.

Linde did not return with Berengar; she was needed at the Headquarters of Royal Intelligence to oversee some critical matters regarding the status of the Golden Horde. Luckily for them, the team had managed to retrieve Jürgen's equipment, and body, before his captors could identify him as an Agent of the Austrian Crown.

In fact, after the destruction of the force that chased Andreas and his team at the hands of the Royal Bohemian Army, the Golden Horde had wholly disregarded the loss of the previous Khan. With His death, and that of the man most likely to succeed him, the Golden Horde was in a state of turmoil, as the various warlords among their ranks fought for control, they had gone from rampaging through Teutonic Territory to killing each other in pursuit of power. Thus Berengar was not exaggerating when he said that Jürgen's actions were not in vain.

However, Berengar had a new headache to do with; while his agents continued to hamper the Eastern Coalition; the Pope had done something incredibly foolish and turned the might of his proxies towards the Iberian Front. Desperate for a victory against Austria before he could gather his forces to march on its Kingdom, the man had implored hundreds of thousands of men to go out and die in the Iberian Peninsula.

A single division of Austrian soldiers may be equipped with the most modern weapons available to them. Still, they were not enough to single-handedly fight off hundreds of thousands of hostiles. Thus Berengar would have to push back his plan to annex the Teutonic State and personally lead the Second Division into Granada. After all, a war of this caliber was something that Berengar was compelled to take part in.

The young King of Austria took another sip of his whiskey as he thought about this. While conscription had been introduced into the constitution of Austria and was currently undergoing implementation, it would be months before any of the hundreds of thousands of young men being thrust into the Armed Forces were adequately trained and outfitted for war. Thus he could only rely on his current army of 100,000 Men and the fledgling force he had established in Bohemia, of roughly 15,000.

Of course, Berengar did not plan to send all his soldiers into Iberia and leave the fatherland defended solely by the garrisons. Thus he planned to dispatch the Second Division, alongside the 15,000 Bohemians, for a total of 40,000 additional men to enter the Reconquista. When combined with the First Division and the roughly ten thousand Granadans who remained in its Armed Forces, he would have close to 75,000 Men in the field.

Despite this, they would be heavily outnumbered by their enemies. Thus Berengar was left with one option, to call upon the alliance he had made with the Byzantine Empire and ask for their aid. With this in mind, he took another sip of his whiskey before drafting a formal letter to the Emperor of Byzantium requesting military assistance in Iberia.

By the time Berengar finished all of this, it was well past midnight, and he was both exhausted and heavily intoxicated. Thus when he left his study and entered the hallway searching for his quarters, he stumbled upon a young woman he believed to be his wife, Adela. After all, she looked awfully similar and it wasn't easy to make out her features in the darkness.

This girl had her golden blonde hair tied up in twintails and wore a frilly white nightgown as she gazed at the King of Austria with an embarrassed expression. Berengar instantly stumbled forward and grabbed ahold of the girl before kissing her passionately on the lips. After doing so, he whispered

something in her ears, which caused her appearance to flush, followed by a silent nod.

Berengar then led the girl into the penthouse suite where he lay her on the bed; he proceeded to get undressed before pouncing on the girl, who appeared as if she was a frightened little rabbit about to be devoured by a hungry wolf.

Just when the girl was sure that her chastity would be taken, Berengar collapsed on top of her, he was truly and utterly asleep. This girl then began to pout while stuck beneath the weight of her elder brother, with a single phrase escaping from her luscious pink lips.

"Stupid big brother..."

Berengar would never realize how close he came to making a horrible mistake on that night. By the time he awoke, Henrietta would be gone, and he would have no memory of what had transpired.

Chapter 407: Negotiating Byzantine Intervention into Reconquista

The young Austrian King took a sip from the tea contained in his ceramic cup. Sitting across from him was none other than Vetranis Palaiologos. With a simple letter, Berengar was able to summon the mighty Emperor of the East to his humble abode. Thus, the two men were currently within the confines of the Austrian Royal Palace, specifically in its study discussing important matters of State.

Berengar placed his teacup down on the coaster as he gazed at the man sitting before him. By his side was Strategos Palladius Angelus, who had become the chief advisor of military matters to the Byzantine crown after Arethas' untimely demise. The stark contrast between Berengar's modern fashion and the medieval attire that his guests wore signified just how much more advanced Austria was compared to the next most powerful State within the Mediterranean.

Though their alliance had not been in effect for long, the King of Austria and the Byzantine Emperor were now engaged in a fierce negotiation over military action in Iberia. Berengar, who had already pledged support to his ally in the West, attempted to persuade his father-in-law to join the Anti-Catholic

Coalition and annihilate the vast armies who had begun to march to their deaths.

"I have dispatched the Second Division of the Austrian Royal Army to Granada, where they will unite with the First Division and what remains of the Royal Granadan Army. From there, they will push the Catholics out of Granada.

Before long, I will join them and lead my troops into battle as I have always done; the problem at hand is that there are now hundreds of thousands of zealous Catholics marching on Iberia in a foolish attempt by the Pope to beat my armies via proxy.

What the Pope should be doing is saving these bodies for the so-called Crusade he has declared against me and adequately outfit them to invade my lands. However, I won't complain; if I can slaughter a few hundred thousand would-be crusaders in Iberia, it simply means the incursion into my Kingdom will be weaker.

While my soldiers will likely be able to handle the situation, I would feel safer knowing that I have more men in the field to combat the enemy's numerical advantage. Without this support, I fear the conflict could go on for many months, perhaps even a year. I have three children on the way, and I would prefer to return home in time so that I can welcome them into this world.

So, I request that you send one of your armies as an expeditionary force into Iberia to fight alongside Austria and Granada to drive the Catholics out of the Moorish lands. More men, with more guns, is always a bonus on the battlefield."

After hearing this request, Palladius whispered something into Vetrans' ears which caused the Emperor to nod his head. After doing so, he began to speak in an authoritative tone that resembled what Berengar would expect from a man of his position.

"After driving the Catholics from Granada, what is your plan then? Do you intend to keep arming the Granadans to resist any further incursion into their lands?"

Berengar took another sip from his tea before responding to Vetrans' comments. After several moments of introspection, the young Austrian King revealed his plan for the Iberian Peninsula.

"After I have crushed the Catholic Armies of Iberia and the fanatics who flock to their cause. I will begin rebuilding the Granadan Army and Navy from scratch. My intent is not to spend years of my life fighting their wars. Instead, I plan to outfit them with the means to reclaim much of Al-Andalus by themselves.

A unified catholic Iberia is frankly unacceptable for my plans. While Hasan may not be the most competent ruler or even a half-decent strategist, he has something far more valuable, in my opinion. The young Sultan of Granada has a degree of tolerance for those with different views than himself.

Suppose that Al Andalus were to somewhat resurface under the control of his Dynasty, it is possible that we will see a reformation in the Muslim Faith, which would make them far less hostile to those of different religions, thus strengthening cooperation between our people. At the end of the day a cooperative, and moderate Islamic State in Iberia, is a far better alternative than that of a fanatical and militant Catholic one."

A wide smile formed on Palladius' face as he heard this; such grand ambitions for establishing a powerful ally in the West of the Mediterranean reassured the man of his ploy to place Berengar and Honoria's heir on the Byzantine Throne.

Though Vetrans may not be aware of Berengar's intent, Palladius had a very tacit understanding after listening to this conversation. The young King of Austria intended to create an economic and military alliance between several powerful states that could dominate the Politics of Europe, the Near-East, and North Africa, all with Austria at its head.

While Palladius did not desire for his Empire to play second fiddle to the Austrian Kingdom, he was rational enough to realize that there was not much he could do to prevent this fate. It had been half a year since he last visited Austria, and in his absence, the fires of industry had been introduced to its Capital and had even begun to spread across the entire realm.

The veteran Strategos also knew that Berengar would never give the supreme weapons that he had begun to manufacture to anyone but his own army. However, the use of older models and the means to manufacture them was something Berengar had already shown interest in equipping his allies with.

With this in mind, Palladius whispered his thoughts on the matter at hand into the ear of the Emperor. After hearing what Palladius had to say, Vetransis nodded his head in agreement afterward. He sighed heavily before making his demands.

"If you wish for us to assist you in this conflict, then there are some demands that I would like to make in compensation for the blood that my men will naturally shed."

A smile etched itself upon Berengar's immaculate appearance as he nodded his head while responding with a single phrase.

"Go on..."

After hearing this, Vetransis cleared his throat before making his demands of Berengar.

"After this conflict is over, you will supply us with the technology needed to replicate the weapons you have already begun to sell to us. We will not consider joining this alliance with the Moors in Granada unless this condition can be met."

Contrary to what the Byzantine Emperor expected, Berengar silently took a sip from his tea before uttering a single word.

"Done..."

After hearing this, Vetransis gazed at him with shock; he could not even think of what his second demand was at this point. He was simply astonished that Berengar would quickly give away such valuable technology.

However, he had no way of knowing that Berengar had already planned to do such things in due time. Hell Berengar even planned to sell the technology behind his Frigates and Clippers to the Byzantines after he had replaced them

with his proposed Adela Class Light Cruisers and Dominion Class Cargo Ships.

It was as Palladius had suspected, Berengar wanted his allies to be powerful enough to hold their own against their enemies while still being technologically inferior to his realm. After all, he wanted Germany and its future Empire under his Dynasty to rule this powerful alliance. The only way to ensure such a thing was to maintain a vastly superior State. After silence prevailed for a while, Berengar raised his brow before asking the question on his mind.

"Is there anything else?"

After discussing it with his advisor for a few moments, Vetrans shook his head, realizing that asking for anything more was likely to jeopardize the progress he had already made. As such, the Emperor reached out his hand to seal the deal. In response, Berengar firmly grabbed ahold of his father-in-law's hand and shook it as he said the following words with a smile on his face.

"A pleasure doing business with you... I expect you to send a sizeable army into Granada within three months. When the war is over, and we have won, you will get the technology behind the 1417/18 Rifled Muskets and the 1417 12 lb Field Guns, as well as the knowledge behind the tools to produce them."

Berengar had no intention to equip the Byzantines with the Bessemer Converter. Instead, he would give them the technology behind the puddling furnace, which could be used to create the steel necessary to make the springs in the flintlock action. Albeit in a severely limited supply, aside from this small amount of steel, such technology would significantly increase the iron that the Byzantines could produce.

With this agreement made, the Byzantines had secretly entered the Reconquista. They would soon enough be fighting alongside the Austrians and Granadans for the sake of repelling the Catholic Armies from the Moorish Kingdom.

After finalizing their agreement, Vetrans and his advisor departed from Berengar's study, the Emperor of Byzantium would spend some time with his Daughter over the next few days before returning to Constantinople. As a man

who ruled over a vast empire, his time was severely limited, especially now that he had much to prepare for.

As for Berengar, he would get his affairs in order in the coming days before departing for the warzone himself. He was not the type of man to hide away at home while his soldiers fought on the frontlines of a dangerous conflict. With this in mind, he stretched his back before getting back to work, for he too had much to prepare for.

Chapter 408: A Particularly Difficult Farewell

Berengar stood within the courtyard of his royal Palace; today was the day he was most excited for and yet dreaded dearly. Why did he dread this moment? Because saying goodbye to your family as your march towards a theatre of war thousands of miles away from your home is never easy.

This goodbye was more brutal than the last, maybe it was because his three wives were months into their pregnancy, and the possibility of him returning in time to witness the birth of his new children was small.

Or perhaps it was because this was the first proxy war he had personally entered. After all, before today, he had only ever fought in conflicts directly related to his lands and the growth of his territory.

But what was there to gain in the Reconquista for this young King of Austria? Perhaps only the creation of a stable and powerful ally that could secure his access to the Atlantic. Such a thing was important beyond measure to his plans for exploration and colonization of the New World. Yet his family did not know of such grand ambitions, nor were they even aware that such a faraway place existed.

Thus when he said goodbye to his wives, his children, and his sister, they were not the most cheerful bunch. Hans looked up at his father, who was dressed in his field uniform with a questioning gaze. The young boy latched onto Berengar's legs as he asked the question on his mind.

"Must you go to war?"

Berengar immediately knelt and patted his young son's head as he affirmed his actions.

"When you're older, you will come to realize that there are times where a man must take up arms to defend his family and his nation. I know it may not seem like it now, but this conflict in Granada is essential to our Kingdom's long-term power and stability. In a few years, I am certain that you will comprehend why this campaign in Iberia is necessary.

Trust me when I say that if not for the degree of resistance my soldiers currently face, then I would not leave you and your sister behind so soon after returning from my last campaign. A King must lead his men into battle; that is my responsibility as Monarch to my people."

Tears began to form in Hans's eyes as he heard his father say these words. Berengar responded to this by wiping the tears from his young son's eyes with his thumb before hugging him. As he did so, he whispered some much-needed fatherly advice into the young boy's ear.

"As a man, you must never cry in front of others, it is a sign of weakness, and those with ill intent towards you and our family will take advantage of this. So stiffen up that upper lip and put on a show of strength even if you are at your weakest!"

Upon hearing this, Hans immediately stopped crying and put on a stoic facade; he immediately let go of his father and saluted the man. Berengar returned his emotionless gaze with a proper salute of his own before shifting his attention to Helga. The girl was close to two years old now, yet she did not have her brother's exceptional brain. Instead, she was rather average for a child her age.

Berengar picked the girl up in the air and kissed her on her forehead before placing her in her mother's arms. He told the girl something he had seldom said as he did so.

"Remember whatever may come to pass, that daddy loves you!"

After handing off his daughter to her mother, Berengar kissed his second bride on the lips, whose tears were flowing from her beautiful sky blue eyes. Though she was confident that Berengar would return home unharmed, she always had a difficult time dealing with the worry that would inevitably arise

within the depths of her heart whenever her man marched to war.? Berengar held onto Linde as he whispered in her ear.

"Take care of the kids when I'm gone..."

Linde nodded her head silently in response as she struggled to contain the tears in her eyes; after saying this to Linde, Berengar latched onto Honoria as if he were a lamprey and kissed her passionately. After their tongues unbound from one another, he whispered words of encouragement in her ears.

"Fret not, you carry my child, and that is far more important than engaging in piracy. I promise you that future glory awaits you and our child. Besides, I'm not that easy to kill; you have not gotten rid of me just yet."

Honoria laughed bitterly as she heard this poor joke; after saying this, Berengar patted her on the head before turning his attention to Adela, who could not wait any longer; she immediately grabbed ahold of him and kissed him as if she would never see him again. After spending much time in each other's embrace, she released her lips and gazed fiercely into his eyes with a stern expression while saying the words contained within her mind.

"Be safe! I swear if I lose you, I will never forgive you!"

Berengar stuffed the girl's head into his chest as he kissed her forehead. After doing so, he released his grip over her and hugged his younger sister. A nervous expression appeared on the girl's face as various ideas collided within her head. As her elder brother hugged her goodbye, a single thought resounded throughout her mind.

If you don't tell him now, you may never get another chance!

Thus right when Berengar was about to pull away, Henrietta grabbed ahold of his handsome face and pressed her lips against his own, which greatly shocked everyone gathered in the courtyard. With a flushed appearance, Henrietta let go of Berengar and admitted her feelings in an embarrassed tone.

"I love you, big brother! When you come back, I will fight for you!"

After saying this, she was too timid to stick around for her elder brother's response and immediately ran back to the Palace, leaving Berengar, his wives, and his children in an utter state of confusion. Berengar's heart thumped rapidly as his brain tried to process what just occurred. After a while, a single thought escaped from his lips.

"Well, now I hope I die on the battlefield..."

Berengar shifted his gaze over to his three women, who were glaring at him with unbridled fury contained within their eyes. They did not know what he had done to charm his younger sister, but there was no way they were going to let such an unspeakable relationship come to pass. Henceforth, the three young women who were constantly at odds with one another formed a pact to safeguard Henrietta from the grasp of her lecherous big brother.

Of course, at that moment, Berengar genuinely felt that he would rather die than deal with the landmine that was his sister's incestuous feelings for him. Marrying a cousin was one thing, but taking your sister as a mistress? That was a line that even a pervert like him was unwilling to cross. Berengar figured he would have to introduce a proper suitor to the girl when he returned, or things were only going to get worse. Upon seeing how viciously his women stared at him, Berengar sighed before announcing his departure.

"Well, I am off; I will see you all later..."

Of course, he didn't mention that he would need a stiff drink after this whole debacle. Thus he climbed into his royal Carriage, where he would be traveling to Trieste over the next few days before sailing to Gibraltar. He was slightly perturbed that his railway was not completed yet, but he could only do so much about that.

Thus Berengar opened up a bottle of whiskey stashed away in his Carriage and gazed out at the countryside as he inched ever closer to his direction. The only thought on his mind was how he could face Henrietta after this war was over. As such, he took a large swig from the bottle before sighing heavily.

"Dammit, Henrietta! Why the hell would you do such a thing before I ship off to war! What the hell is wrong with you! How am I supposed to handle this!?!"

After several days and a bottle of whiskey later, Berengar found his way to a Frigate departing for Granada. The young King had a massive headache, and it was not just because of the booze he had consumed.

Thus he would spend the entire journey to Granada avoiding his problems by drinking them away. When he finally arrived at his destination, he would be eager for blood; after all, violence was the only way he could vent his frustrations at the predicament he now found himself in. Historians would scratch their heads for generations trying to figure out the reason behind the young King of Austria's particularly brutal actions during this campaign.

Chapter 409: A Tempting Offer Part I

The frigate carrying the King of Austria arrived within the port of Gibraltar after several days of travel. During these past few weeks, thousands of Austrian men had gathered in the area, waiting upon their monarch to appear so that he could lead them into battle.

Berengar was dreadfully hungover after nursing away his worries with the sweet taste of liquor. Having stepped onto the beach of Gibraltar, the radiant sun shone down upon him, its warmth increasing his urge to vomit. One thing was sure; it would take him a few days to be fit for combat.

Thus, he stepped forward and rallied his forces around him. Realizing that he would require a few days of rest, Berengar had altered the plan. He would lead the Second Division to Granada where they would regroup with Sultan Hasan Al-Fadl within the city before advancing north and aiding their line of defense at the northern borders of the Emirate.

It took several days to arrive within the Capital City; however, when the 40,000 soldiers from Austria and Bohemia entered the gates, they were practically greeted as saviors by the local Moorish and Arabic populace. After all, these citizens had witnessed the might of the Austrian Army's First Division as they ruthlessly slaughtered the Aragonese and Crusader forces who had foolishly marched upon the city.

Berengar and his Royal Guard ultimately made their way to the Royal Palace to meet with the young Sultan in person. As they approached the magnificent stone building, Berengar dismounted from his horse, where he glanced upon Hasan, who had a broad smile on his face. The two young men shared a brief

moment of friendship as they hugged before letting each other go. Berengar was the first to comment on the situation as he greeted his friend from the West.

"Hasan, it has truly been too long since we last met."

the young Sultan nodded his head in response as he led Berengar and his Royal Guards into the depths of the Palace.

"Indeed it has, though I must say your complexion is paler than normal. Are you alright, my friend?"

Berengar instantly nodded his head in response, with a smirk on his face, revealing that he had overindulged on his journey to the Iberian Peninsula.

"I'm fine, just a little too much alcohol, you know how it is. After a few nights' rest, I will be ready to deploy to the frontlines."

Hasan chuckled as he heard this before making a sly comment about the Austrian King's condition.

"Well then, I guess we will not be celebrating your arrival too fiercely. However, I do have something arranged for you that I think will be to your liking!"

Berengar was instantly curious as he heard this; just what did Hasan have in mind for tonight's entertainment? Nevertheless, he smiled in response and nodded his head.

"Well, then you have my thanks in advance."

After walking through the halls of the Granadan Royal Palace, Berengar and Hasan arrived in the dining hall, where the two men sat down. While waiting for food to arrive, Hasan began to question Berengar about how he planned to wage this war against the Catholics.

"I've got to ask, we are heavily outnumbered, and the Iberians have begun to field Arkebuses and Falconets. Though I have personally witnessed the destructive power of your army, I must admit I am not hopeful for victory."

Berengar smiled as he drank from the glass of wine in his hands; sometimes, a bit of alcohol was the perfect cure to a severe hangover. After taking a sip from the glass, he quickly revealed his intentions to win this conflict in the most efficient manner.

"The answer is simple, we form a trench line across your borders and outfit it with men and artillery. No matter where your enemies approach, they will have to cross through barbed wire and trench warfare to make any significant gains.

This conflict shall be primarily defensive; we must bleed the enemy dry and force them to the negotiating table. Such action will buy us time, and allow me to aid in the reconstruction of your army so that you can take the defense of your nation into your own hands."

Hasan was surprised when he heard this; he expected Berengar's armies to march all the way to the borders of France. Hearing that they were fighting a defensive war brought great concern to the young Sultan.

"So we will not be invading the enemy Kingdoms?"

Berengar shook his head as he further instructed on the vision of this conflict.

"I did not necessarily say that, while a portion of our army defends your borders against your neighbors, a force of 10,000 men which I shall lead, will march into the neighboring Kingdoms and wreak havoc upon the enemy cities and townships. I will bring what little infrastructure these barbarians have to ruins and route their cowardly Kings out from their castles!"

Hasan was shocked that Berengar was willing to take such a stance. Nevertheless, Berengar was confident in the combined forces of Austria, Granada, and the Byzantines to defend a trench line from hundreds of thousands of their enemies. After all, the weapons his army wielded were far greater than that of his enemies.

The two men discussed the exact tactics and plan Berengar intended to use in order to bring their enemies to their knees over the next few months. After a few hours, the sun began to fall from the sky, and in its place, the moon rose. Having properly feasted within these hours, Hasan eventually led an

inebriated Berengar to a secluded room where he spoke with a smile on his face.

"Wait right here, my friend; there will be someone here to entertain you shortly!"

After saying this, Hasan immediately departed from the area through its silk curtains leaving Berengar by his lonesome. The young Austrian King chuckled to himself as he thought of who could possibly be entertaining him. He knew he would have to decline the Sultan's Offer if he brought out a prostitute for Berengar to enjoy. Nevertheless, he stayed put as he sat in silence and took part in the wine sitting on the table before him. He was anticipating what kind of surprise his friend had planned for him.

Before long, a gorgeous young woman dressed in a Tyrian purple and gold belly dancer costume parted through the silk curtains and entered the room. Though she wore a matching gossamer veil, Berengar immediately knew who this woman was, as he would recognize her magnificent F cup-sized breasts anywhere.

However, after seeing them outside of a regal kaftan and instead contained within a skimpy belly dancer's top, Berengar's jaw had practically dropped as drool pooled up inside his mouth. He could not believe just how impressive this woman's chest was. It was better than even Linde's; he had a severe urge to suck on her nipples the moment he gazed upon her bountiful cleavage.

He was quite shocked as the woman stared him in the eye with her pair of beautiful amber irises and began to dance sensually. Though Berengar knew that Hasan had intended to establish an arranged marriage between their two houses, he had never thought much of it until now.

However, as Yasmin's substantial bust and plump rear jiggled as she danced before him, Berengar found himself growing ever more enticed by the woman's beauty. As if a spell was cast upon him the young King began to consider the fact that this woman was just the thing he needed to take his mind off of Henrietta's confession; he became visibly excited as he enjoyed the show.

Berengar witnessed the amorous dance with excitement as he watched the woman prance away, ultimately. In the end, she halted her actions and climbed atop Berengar's lap, staring intensely into his one good eye. He could feel the breath escape from beneath her veil as she whispered in his ear.

"Name your desire; my husband and I shall fulfill it!"

Upon hearing these words, Berengar was incredibly conflicted. Should he take the woman up on her offer and sleep with her? After all, she was as beautiful as any of his wives, and what man wouldn't want to sleep with such a woman?

Or should he reject her, and in doing so, escape from the trap that Hasan had laid for him? For if he had sex with Yasmin now, the likelihood was he was taking her purity, or at the very least, such a thing could be pinned on him. If such a thing occurred, there could only be three potential outcomes, compensate Hasan and Granada for stealing the Princess's virtue. Take responsibility and marry the woman, or go to war.

After dwelling upon these options for several moments Berengar stared at the beautiful woman in silence as she asked the question one more time.

"How shall I serve you, husband?"

Chapter 410: A Tempting Offer Part II

Berengar sat in the middle of a room, closed off by translucent silk curtains; sitting atop his lap was a lovely maiden who was a few years older than himself. She was dressed in a skimpy belly dancer's outfit and wore a gossamer face veil.

Through some difficulty, he could make out the delicate features of her gorgeous face as her shining amber eyes stared into his own. She had just asked him a question that put him in a rather tricky position. Quite obviously, this was a trap set by Hasan to force Berengar's hand into marrying his sister, and if he did not play his cards right, he would undoubtedly be bringing another bride home from this war.

While such a thing did not frighten Berengar, after all, he was the man of his house and by law was allowed up to five wives; the fact of the matter was he

did not like the idea of falling into Hasan's trap. If he were to marry Yasmin, it would be under his terms, not someone else's.

Ultimately he came to the logical conclusion to control his urges and not submit to his friend's will. Thus despite every instinct of his body telling him to indulge in the foreign beauty sitting atop his lap, after careful consideration, Berengar sighed and pushed Yasmin aside, where he began to decline her offer.

"Though nothing would help me take my mind off my current troubles more than sleeping with a beautiful woman like yourself, I fear that if I were to fall prey to such a trap that your brother has set for me, then it would only invite future turmoil."

Yasmin was greatly surprised by Berengar's actions. She had never expected that the Austrian King would be able to resist her charms, especially after considering how erect he was. She gave Berengar a curious gaze as she asked the question on her mind.

"You will not lie with me?"

Berengar shook his head and responded with a smug expression.

"It is a tempting offer, and if you truly wish to do so, then I would have no qualms about enjoying the night with a foreign beauty such as yourself. However, I have a nagging suspicion that you do not desire such an outcome. Rather, you are simply fulfilling your duty as a member of your household."

Upon hearing this, Yasmin began to smirk beneath her face veil, which did not go unnoticed by Berengar. She had not expected him to be such a shrewd man, though she had heard rumors of his brilliance as both a ruler and a military commander; she had also come to know that he was infamous for being easily swayed by beautiful women. Yet, here he was, controlling his urge to push her down and take her virtue. Seeing the woman gaze at him with a sense of fascination, Berengar began to grin before asking a question he already knew the answer to.

"So what do you say? Want to fool around? I'll have you know that I am packing heat..."

Yasmin began to giggle at this response before shaking her head; as she did so, she responded with a playful tone of voice.

"Oh, I can very much see that, though; I am afraid I will have to pass for now. However, if you continue to impress me in such a manner, then I might find you worthy of being my husband."

Berengar smirked as he heard this response; he immensely enjoyed the witty banter with this woman; after declining each other's offers, Berengar stood up and began to leave the room. Before he departed, he left one final phrase for the woman.

"Thank you for the dance; it was impressive, to say the least. I will make sure to think of you later tonight while I am in the tub."

Yasmin had a sultry smile on her pretty face concealed beneath her veil as she responded in a coy manner.

"Be sure that you do..."

After hearing this, Berengar returned to his room, where he planned to get some much-needed sleep after taking a bath. At the same time, Yasmin reflected on what had just transpired. They say that capable men rarely live up to the hype, but she was not disappointed in the slightest.

She was prepared to sleep with Berengar and even marry him to fulfill her familial obligations. However, she never had imagined that he would turn her down. Nor did she believe she would develop an interest in the man.

Instead, he surprised her and had managed to draw her attention. For the first time in her life, she had become intrigued by a man. Before she realized it, the princess of Granada found herself in her chambers, underneath her silk sheets naked, playing with her tight slit, while thinking about what could have transpired on this night if either of them had given in to their base desires.

As for Berengar, as promised, he took a long bath, thinking about the sensual dance that Yasmin had displayed for him. Despite the fact that he initially did not have any plans to make the woman his own; after everything that had happened on this night, he could not deny that his interest was piqued. She

was a different breed than his other girls and was just as attractive. He did not know where things would lead, but he looked forward to their future encounters.

Eventually, the night came and went, and Berengar awoke as fresh as an apple the next day. All he needed to overcome his dreadful hangover was a good night's sleep. After arising from his bed, he quickly got dressed, where he entered the dining hall to receive breakfast. Both Hasan and Yasmin were already at the table waiting for him.

When Berengar arrived, he acted as if nothing had happened the night before. Though Hasan had become aware that his plan had failed, his elder sister could not help but glance at the Austrian King now and then with a seductive expression.

As for Berengar, he noticed the princess's flirtatious gaze and returned it with one of his own. These actions did not go unnoticed by the Young Sultan, who smiled as he realized that though his plot may not have worked as intended, there seemed to be some form of romance budding between his sister and his greatest ally. Eventually, Berengar killed the mood by announcing to the Sultan and his elder sister the following words.

"I will be marching off to war with my Second Division shortly after breakfast. I thank you for your hospitality, but war waits for no man. The sooner I arrive at the frontlines, the sooner I can end this conflict and return home to my family."

Both Hasan and Yasmin were shocked to hear this; after everything had happened, they were sure he would stick around for a few more days to improve relations with their family. After all, he said he would need several nights to recuperate just the day before. The young Sultan immediately began to panic as he tried to convince Berengar to stay within the Palace for just a few more days.

"You're leaving so soon? You should stay and rest for a few more days before departing; there's no reason to hurry to the frontlines, since we have taken back the territory north of here, we have had no difficulties holding the line!"

However, Berengar shook his head in response to this offer and spoke.

"I am quite well-rested after last night. However, hundreds of thousands of men will soon be marching upon your position. If I want to bring our enemies to their knees, I need to dispatch my force to their positions and construct the necessary fortifications as quickly as possible. I promise that after I have forced the Iberians to surrender, I will return here for a proper celebration."

Berengar quickly finished his meal before washing it down with a glass of milk; after doing, so he raised from his seat before making his intentions clear.

"After I have won your war for you, there are things that we will need to discuss as Monarch to Monarch. I would very much appreciate the presence of your beautiful sister when that time comes."

Having said this, Berengar departed from the Royal Palace of Granada with his Royal Guard following behind. He spent the next hour rallying his army before marching north of its position. When Berengar left the Dining Room, Hasan immediately began to question his sister for exact details on what had transpired the night before.

"Just what happened between the two of you last night?"

The Granadan princess merely smiled before shaking her head; after doing so, she cryptically responded to her younger brother.

"Nothing important, however; if he keeps acting this way, I'm afraid I will fall head over heels for him..."

Though Yasmin wanted to spend more time getting accustomed to Berengar, she was well aware of the urgent position she and her family had been placed in. Berengar would pack up quickly and march to the front lines, which greatly impressed her. She would have immediately lost interest if he stayed around to enjoy time with her while a war was being waged.

With this in mind, she quickly got up from her seat and departed towards the balcony where she witnessed Berengar lead an army of 40,000 Austrians and Bohemians north. As she did so, she gazed fondly upon his back in the distance; a single thought escaped from her luscious lips.

"Come back safe..."

