

Steel 41

Chapter 41: Linde's Revelation

A month had passed, and Berengar awoke once more at the crack of dawn. Lying next to him was Linde, who was sprawled about under the sheets, her silky strawberry-blonde hair glistened under the light of the sun. She was still asleep and lately had slept through his morning exercise. She was now roughly two months pregnant at this point, and as such, Berengar allowed her some much-needed rest, as he knew that nobody else in the castle would be up at this hour. However, he quickly got out of bed and started his daily workout. Today was a chest-oriented day, so he used his bench press. Though he recognized that he would never be as physically strong as he was in his past life in this life. Berengar still tended to exercise four to five days a week.

After spending half an hour lifting various weights, Berengar quietly exited his room and went for his daily run. He liked to run at least ten miles a day during the days of the week he exercised. As such, he ran around the village in loose-fitting clothes early in the morning when the farmers began to get to work. Due to the recent industrialization of the region, many of the commoners had proper working hours and were still resting at this time. Thus the number of people up at this ungodly hour was constantly dwindling. Berengar would wave and say hello to the common folk, but his primary focus was on his run. The only other people who were up at this hour were the militia members in basic training. When their commander ran by, getting in his morning run, they all saluted him at attention; he returned the salute as he continued to run.

The fact that the men could see their Lord and Commander up at the same hour, engaging in an exercise routine like themselves, boosted their morale, as well as their trust in Berengar. He was a man who led by example and refused to get any more sleep than his men did. Berengar also never truly had a day off from his work. He was so busy maintaining his region's industrial, agricultural, and military sectors that he felt like he did more work than his father did. In fact, his father, the Baron, had deliberately pushed an excess of his workload on to Berengar, expecting him to break from the stress. Still, Berengar took it in stride and exceeded his expectations in every way. This was one of the reasons Sieghard gave him the prestigious title of Regent. Berengar thrived when he was busy; he was not a man who could handle idle time well; when Berengar had downtime, he was bored, and he always found

something to do when he was bored. Preferably something productive, as such, he worked harder than anyone he knew.

This was a trait from his previous life, where he had to work hard for everything he owned. His family was not particularly wealthy growing up. Both of his parents worked full-time jobs with excessive overtime. From a young age, he found himself helping around the house to alleviate the stress on his parent's shoulders. That was one of the reasons he knew all of his family's cooking recipes by heart. As the son of German immigrants, his youth was filled with German cuisine, and when he reached a certain age, he handled the cooking and cleaning of the house when his parents were at work. By the time he was an adult, he had entered Westpoint, and after graduation, was an officer in the military; as such, he spent much of his downtime looking busy. In his mindset, if you are looking busy, you might as well be productive.

After finishing his run in roughly an hour and a half, Berengar returned to the castle, where he washed the sweat away from his body in the private bathhouse the family had constructed within their castle. After getting out of his bath, over two and a half hours had gone by since the time he woke up, and he planned to get some work done in his chambers. He returned to his room to find that Linde was still asleep; by now, the servants were wide awake and active throughout the castle; even his family members were out and about. The fact that the young woman was still in his room meant there was a great risk involved with returning to her quarters at this point. Berengar walked over to the bed and got inside with Linde; he decided to tease the girl and caress her bare body until she woke up. She immediately felt him grabbing onto her heavenly bust, and a smile spread across her face as she pretended to sleep. However, when Berengar whispered in her ear.

"It's already past 7:30. If you continue to sleep in, my family will find you here..."

Linde immediately got up and out of bed, while shaking his hands away from her breasts.

"Master, why didn't you tell me it was so late already!"

Berengar chuckled as he watched her get dressed in her nightgown from the night before, with a big grin on his face.

"You need your sleep, so I decided to let you rest."

After getting dressed in her nightgown, the girl kissed him on the lips before absconding from his room in secrecy, cautiously returning to her own quarters while making sure nobody was aware she had spent the night with Berengar. If Berengar had not awoken her, she would have surely slept in long enough to cause a scandal. Thankfully her lover was looking out for her.

After Linde had left his room, Berengar spent the remainder of his morning going through his progress. By now, the formation of second artillery battery was taking precedence over the infantry battalion's ranks. Most of the new recruits were placed into the second artillery battery, while the arms factory had begun to spam 12 lb cannons. He now had more cannons than cannoneers, which he supposed was a good problem to have. Due to the increase in workforce, he was able to form the second steel production line in half the time of the first, and it was now fully operational. With the increase in productivity of the mines after the von Kufsteins seized them from Ulrich's family, the steel-making factory could double its output. Any steel that exceeded their production capability was sold at a fair price to the contacts he had made during his engagement ceremony. The armor he designed had been produced in massive numbers for his troops, and a total of 1/4 of this his soldiers were now equipped with munitions grade half-plate armor.

After investing in importing materials and establishing the use of inventions like the spinning mule, he was now able to make clothing for peasants and nobility fetching a fair price while relying mostly on local production. It was only the super luxurious fashion that cost him a pretty penny to make, luckily he was still able to sell them for quite the profit, thus expanding the already filled coffers of the Barony of Kufstein.

Today was an important day for Berengar; two of his schemes would fully come to fruition this day. Over the past month, the marshal had been slowly poisoned by the young lord's spies to the point that he was very near death. A slight overdose today would rid the world of one of Lambert's most powerful allies. Though physicians had checked on the man, ultimately, they could not find out the cause of what ailed him.

The second scheme was far more important in the long run and would come to fruition this day. Linde would be informing the family that she was pregnant

with Lambert's child when in all reality, it was Berengar's. Since the night of Berengar and Adela's engagement ceremony, she had avoided Lambert as much as possible. The boy had approached her several times requesting that they sleep together, but she kept refusing him. As such, Berengar arrived on time at the breakfast table, where he waited patiently for Linde to break the news. After the family enjoyed their meal for quite some time in peace, the young woman finally dropped the bombshell on the family.

The girl's face instantly grew flustered as she spoke her words.

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

After a slight pause which aroused everyone's interest, Linde looked at Berengar, then at Lambert, and then back down to the table where her meal was laid out. Finally, she blurted out what she was instructed to say, minus a very critical detail.

"I'm pregnant..."

From Berengar's perspective, the girl noticeably failed to mention it was Lambert's child, however that did not stop the family from being shocked by the revelation and assuming it was Lambert's. Though she didn't explicitly say the child was Lambert's, the only person who suspected it might be Berengar's was Gisela, who eyed her eldest son curiously. Though Berengar may try to act surprised, Gisela knew when her son was lying, and at that moment, she was correctly able to guess that the child was, in truth, Berengar's, not Lambert's.

Lambert was at first in shock when he heard the news. He had to clarify the issue.

"You're pregnant?"

Linde nodded in response.

Sieghard, on the other hand, interrupted and asked his own question

"It is my son's?"

Linde frowned at the comment and answered honestly

"Who else would be the father?"

With that being said, a smile appeared on both Lambert's and Sieghard's faces. They were excited by the news and could not wait to throw a wedding. On the one hand, Lambert was happy because this solidified Linde as his woman; even if she was not sleeping with him, nobody else was either, as such he could be considered the only man to sleep with the gorgeous young woman who was considered one of the three heavenly beauties of Austria. On the other hand, Sieghard was just happy to have a grandchild, which he would hopefully be able to see before he perished. He, too, did not have high expectations for surviving the upcoming war. The two were completely unaware that the girl never once directly admitted to Lambert being the father; after all, Sieghard had another son.

Lambert attempted to hug Linde in response to the news, but the girl slapped him across the face in front of his family and shouted at him.

"Who said I had forgiven you!?"

Quickly the young boy sulked back to his seat in silence. Berengar was trying to contain his wicked grin. He had truly grown into the role of a sadist over the last few months, at least when it regarded his enemies. Nothing gave him more joy than watching his nemesis dangle on the hook he had cast for him. Lambert played along to Berengar's tune perfectly, and the young lord could not get enough of it. He supposed he had Linde to thank for this juicy scene. By not directly admitting to Lambert being the father, Linde was essentially leaving a door open for Berengar to claim the child as his own later in life. Something in which the young woman was adamant about making a reality. Thus it was Linde's scheme and not Berengar's which was cemented in history this day.

Adela, on the other hand, had never suspected Berengar to be the father. Despite the fact that Linde had openly declared war on the young girl and had by vying for Berengar's affections as of late. She had enough faith in her betrothed that he would not do such a thing behind her back. Also, she was aware of Lambert's supposed misdeed, and the timing for Linde's pregnancy matched perfectly. In a million years, the little girl would never suspect that

Berengar had deliberately framed Lambert to assume the role of the father of his bastard child. As such, a smile spread widely across her face as she felt as if by this news she had already won the war against Linde; after all, there was no way Berengar would be interested in a woman who was pregnant with his brother's child.

The conversation around the breakfast table quickly shifted to altering the wedding plans so that it may occur at the soonest date. Lambert's sixteenth birthday was later this week and he would finally become of the proper age to marry. Though Linde acted as if she was acceptable to those terms, she could not wait for the day until her lover eliminated her fiance. She prayed to God above that Berengar may strike down Lambert before her child was born. That way, the child would never have to worry about who its real father was.

The only person at the table who was not satisfied with this result was Gisela. With this news, the Baroness realized that she would never be rid of her future daughter-in-law. A young woman she greatly despised. Worse yet, Berengar's fling with the harlot had resulted in her having great confusion about the actual parentage of her future grandchild. Much like Adela, Gisela would never have guessed that this was all a ruse by her eldest son to pin the parentage onto Lambert. After all, she was unaware of the war which her two sons waged in the shadows.

With this breaking news, the family at the very least pretended to have a pleasant breakfast. Later that day Berengar would finalize another of his schemes to screw over his little brother who had already thrice made an attempt on his life. Berengar was a man who did not easily forgive his enemies, and soon Lambert would come to feel his older brother's wrath.