

Steel 45

Chapter 45: Lambert's Birthday I

Lambert awoke bright and early on this wonderful morning in the middle of July. Today was July 17th, 1417; in other words it was the teenage boy's 16th birthday. Today he would finally become a member of adulthood in this feudal world. His wedding to Linde would be held in a fortnight, and he was not very excited for that day. Currently, his relationship with Linde was cold, to say the least; she no longer punished him for his mistakes and barely took an interest in him as a person. She often walked right by him as if he did not even exist. On the other hand, she had become increasingly close to his elder brother and rival.

Ever since her father left the young beauty in charge of managing his transaction with Berengar, she had sought every opportunity to spend time with his brother instead of himself. Now Lambert may be considered quite dense when it comes to relationships with the opposite sex, but even he was beginning to suspect Linde was having an affair with his elder brother. He even began to doubt the parentage of his so-called child. He had never once confronted his fiancée despite his worries as he was too fearful of the truth.

The more he thought about such things, the more he began to convince himself it was the truth. After all, during his last attempt on Berengar's life, somehow the information was leaked to Berengar's militia that the young lord was in trouble, and they marched in the dead of night to Wildsch?nau to save the bastard's life. To this day, he still had not caught the scoundrel who was responsible for leaking such information. Nevertheless, he could not bring himself to accuse Linde of such actions openly; after all, that would essentially be treason against the Count of Tyrol, who was her father. Lambert could not imagine Linde would betray her family for his brother, and thus his suspicions were kept in check.

Still, he did not keep such thoughts in his head for long; he quickly got dressed as he rose out of his bed and decided to give his fiancée an early surprise. As such, he visited her quarters at the crack of dawn. However, when he knocked on her door, there was no response, which was quite worrisome. Thus he knocked louder and louder, but no matter how hard and loud he pounded on the woman's door, she did not respond. Lambert found that to be very strange; where could she have gone at such an hour. Truth be

told, she enjoyed a very early morning bath with her lover, but Lambert had no way of knowing this. As such, he waited at her door until she responded. Eventually, he saw Linde appear wearing her nightgown from the previous night, while her hair was damp as if she had just been in the bath. Her porcelain skin glistened under the light of dawn as it shone through the windows. The heavenly beauty looked at Lambert with shock as he stood outside her door, waiting for her arrival. Just how long had he been there waiting?

Lambert was furious; where had she been at such an ungodly hour, and why was she wearing her nightgown?

"Where the hell have you been? I've been standing here pounding on your door for thirty minutes!"

Linde frowned as she noticed the tone Lambert was taking with her, and she coldly snubbed her nose at him before trying to enter her door. However, Lambert grabbed ahold of his fiancée and shoved her against the wall, his eyes filled with rage as he pressed her head firmly against the cold stone doorway.

"I asked you a question!"

Linde returned his furious gaze with one of her own, however after a few moments, her murderous gaze faded and she began to smile, which confused Lambert. Until he felt Berengar's iron grip rip into his shoulder, almost as if he were going to tear out the boy's clavicle, Lambert turned his head around with a horrified expression as he saw Berengar staring at him with a freezing glare. When the teenage boy looked into the eyes of his older brother he could feel the cold gaze of death staring back at him. Thus he quickly released his grasp over Linde in fear.

Berengar was also noticeably damp; however, that was not uncommon at this hour as Berengar was known to wake up early and exercise heavily. He appeared to be in loose-fitting clothes he normally wore for such an occasion. Berengar still latched onto Lambert's shoulder and even dug his fingernails deeper into Lambert's doublet. Inflicting pain on the boy.

"What do you think you're doing? Is that any way to treat your fiancée?"

Berengar's eyes were cold and expressionless. Yet his voice was thunderous and full of fury. This noticeably enraged tone held a hint of natural authority behind it and reminded Lambert of a Tyrant sentencing a subject to death for an unforgivable crime. Berengar's eyes showed the indifference he felt towards Lambert's meaningless life, but his voice carried the weight of a thousand stars. At that moment, Lambert felt like kneeling and begging for forgiveness, but he quickly grabbed ahold of his resolve and talked back to Berengar; after all, one day soon, he would be Baron, and Berengar would be a corpse.

"She's my fiancée. I can do what I wish with her"

however, the moment he spoke those words, Berengar struck the boy with the back of his hand; it was such a violent blow that Lambert felt that he nearly lost a tooth from the impact. Berengar's icy gaze penetrated Lambert's soul, and the tone he now used was enough to awaken everyone who dwelled within this corridor.

"She is your fiancée, and you will treat her with respect!"

Before Lambert could make a proper retort, he was struck again by Berengar's hand, Lambert was outraged that he was treated in such a manner, yet he did not dare say another word at this point. Instead, Berengar looked over to Linde, his tyrannical expression softening as he did so.

"Linde, are you okay?"

Lambert noticed that Berengar was incredibly informal with his fiancée, which further ignited the fire within his heart. Yet, he stood there and did nothing. Linde, on the other hand, was flushed with excitement; she had never seen Berengar so angry over the way someone had treated her before. She wanted to jump into his arms at that moment but knew she could not do so for it would be inappropriate. As such, she merely nodded her head and bowed gracefully.

"I am fine; thank you for your assistance in this matter."

Berengar nodded and smiled at Linde before turning his attention back to Lambert, where he grabbed ahold of the boy's hair and shoved his face into

the cold stone floor. He decided to give the boy a stern warning; after all, he would not tolerate any violence towards his women.

"If you so much as lay a hand on her again, I swear to our father in heaven that I will grind you up into sausage and feed you to the pigs! Do I make myself clear?"

Lambert tried to escape from his grasp but could not do so; Berengar had grown quite strong since he had been reincarnated into this world. Noticing Lambert's defiance, he slammed the boy's face into the stone floor once more and yelled at him.

"Do I make myself clear?"

Lambert nodded his head and hissed through his teeth in an absolute fit of rage.

"I understand..."

The ruckus in which this incident caused had awoken Henrietta, who, after exiting her room, witnessed her two brothers engaged in a bloody struggle and Linde standing in the corner sneering at Lambert's fate. If the little girl did not like Linde before, she despised her now. Thus she approached the scene and tried to coax her two brothers into settling their dispute peacefully.

"Big brothers... What's going on?"

Berengar did not notice Henrietta approaching until now, and after seeing the worried expression on the little loli's face, he let go of Lambert, dragged him to his feet and patted him off.

"Nothing much, just some friendly wrestling, right Lambert?"

Lambert immediately noticed the deathly glare Berengar was giving him and agreed to the ludicrous excuse Berengar had come up with on the spot.

"Absolutely..."

Though Henrietta was still worried about the overall situation, she noticed that they had decided to act civil in her presence. Thus she approached them

further, immediately switching the subject from whatever had caused such a scuffle.

"Lambert, I want pancakes for breakfast! Can we have pancakes?"

Though Lambert was a devious prick, he still had a soft spot for his little sister, much like Berengar, and had thus elected to put this feud to rest for now. As such, he smiled and patted Henrietta on the head before agreeing to her request.

"Sure, Henrietta, whatever you want!"

Henrietta ran into Lambert's arms and hugged him while staring down Linde with a look that said

"I'm watching you!"

Linde was unphased by the little girl's provocation as she had seen it many times since her arrival; despite her best efforts, she had proven incapable of building a bond with either of the women of Berengar's family. Which was unfortunate, but she would not lose any sleep over it. Truly aside from Berengar, it was the women of the von Kufstein family who had the best intuition. Eventually, Adela also left her quarters and saw what was transpiring; though she did not know what had occurred, she instinctively felt it was something serious. She would make sure to ask Berengar about it later. After concluding the violent scene, the five of them walked into the dining hall, where they would await the arrival of the Baron and Baroness so that they could begin Lambert's birthday breakfast.

Lately, Berengar had been ordering a beer with his breakfast, however today he suspiciously ordered a 2-liter flagon of milk to be brought to him. Despite his unusual behavior nobody minded it. While drinking from his morning milk Berengar could tell Lambert was glaring at him with a desire for revenge. Still, there was nothing the boy could do about it at this moment. Instead, he made a civil talk with the others. The group pretended as if the awkward scene in the corridor had never transpired.

Lambert, on the other, was almost entirely certain that Linde was cheating on him with Berengar, but there was nothing he could do about it. Count Lothar

would never believe his daughter would conspire against him and would probably have Lambert severely punished for suggesting such a thing. As such, all he could do was be cautious around her in the future. The group chatted for quite some time before the Baron and Baroness arrived; they were quite shocked to see that Berengar was here before them. Usually, he was either exercising or hard at work this early in the morning. Instead, he was sitting here peacefully conversing with the others.

The Baron and Baroness sat down at the head of the table and ordered the food to be prepared and brought for them. While they waited for the food, they congratulated Lambert on his 16th Birthday; later that night, they would hold a coming of age ceremony for their second son. It was sure to be a festive occasion, one in which Berengar would take advantage of to cuck his brother to the fullest degree. He had plans to bed Linde in every part of the castle today without anyone knowing, including Lambert's bed. It was Berengar's way of saying happy birthday to his diabolical little brother who had already made multiple attempts on his life.

Eventually, breakfast was served, and as Henrietta had suggested, German pancakes were one of the many delicacies served. Berengar, of course dined entirely on wurst and sauerkraut. He would need a lot of protein if he were going to enjoy Linde to the extent he desired today. Thus he piled his plate with nothing but wurst and sauerkraut while drinking yet another giant 2L flagon of milk. Though the rest of the family was puzzled by his actions, Linde had an eery suspicion about what he was planning for the upcoming hours and, for the first time, was slightly excited about Lambert's birthday.

Adela looked at Berengar curiously, wondering why his breakfast was so weird.

"Berengar, are you not going to have anything else?"

Berengar shook his head and patted the girl's silky golden blonde hair.

"Sometimes a man has got to eat his wurst and sauerkraut."

She did not know what to say, so she merely accepted his answer and moved on. As such, Berengar spent over an hour with his family discussing the schedule for the day while they feasted on their fabulous breakfast. Of course,

he planned to be absent for most of it and only show up at the end drunk out of his mind. Still, he had prepared a gift for Lambert. The present he had planned for Lambert was the mini balls he had used to kill the boy's assassins during his hunting trip. While cleaning up the corpses, he made sure to recover the minie balls used to kill his opponents. He also added a fourth one which he had used to hunt a buck. The reason for this was simple it was a symbolic gesture, four used bullets for the four men-at-arms killed during the hunting trip. As long as Lambert thought the fourth bullet came from his assassins, it would intimidate the boy. Essentially Berengar was using violence and intimidation to pursue his political aims. In other words, this was a symbolic act of terror against his enemies.

This was only the beginning of the day in which Lambert entered adulthood. There were many things to come as Berengar played mind games with his brother on a day that was supposed to be filled with celebration. Instead, Lambert would only feel dread and terror as his older brother would torment him in more ways than had already occurred.