

Steel 451

Chapter 451 - Papal Woes II

The Pope sat in his Chair with a hopeless expression. Not only did the peasant's Crusade to Iberia fail miserably, but due to the massive supply of forces sent to the region, the Catholic world was undergoing an economic crisis and a massive famine. Roughly half a million peasants from across Europe lie dead in Iberia, their corpses rotting under the hot sun.

Because of this, there were substantially fewer people to work the fields. The Catholic Kingdoms were severely lacking in agricultural technology compared to the Kingdom of Austria. Since practically all work had to be done by hand; the overwhelming majority of the population in the Catholic World were forced to work on farms.

Now that half a million men lie dead in a foreign country, the populations of France, Hungary, Poland-Lithuania, England, and the German States were depleted. This had led to a massive food shortage that could not easily be overcome.

Meanwhile, Austria was overflowing with a food surplus; despite this fact, they outright refused to sell their excess agricultural products to the Catholic Kingdoms; what they did with this extra food, Julius did not know.

If he knew that the Austrians were preserving the excess food and selling it for a minimal price to their citizens in an attempt to ensure that they were all properly fed, he would probably gouge his eyes out from pure envy.

Thus he was in a state of crisis as more of his followers believed that the Papacy's obsession with hunting down and destroying the German Reformation had become a lost cause. If it were not for the rulers of these nations offering their support, then few men would volunteer for the Crusade against the Berengar Heresy.

Julius stared at the reports in his hands with complete and utter frustration. Portugal had fallen, King Luiz was now a prisoner of the Emirate of Granada, and Aragon was attempting to annex Castile in a brutal campaign that depleted both Kingdoms' strength. On top of all of this, there were rumors from the conflict that Austria had deployed weapons of severe destruction capable of countering the numerical advantage that the Catholics had employed.

At this very moment, the Vicar of Christ felt lost and faithless; no matter how many times he wracked his mind around it, he could not comprehend why the Lord God almighty was testing him so frequently. Was it indeed the end of days? Or did the Heavenly Father favor the German Reformation?

If the Catholic world knew that their Pope was having a spiritual crisis, they would probably lose faith in the Church entirely. However, they were blissfully unaware of this fact, and thus Julius kept his doubtful thoughts to himself as he was surrounded by his Cardinals who gazed upon him and his downcast expression. Ultimately one of the Cardinals voiced his concerns over the matter as he began to address the issues at hand.

"I think the question on everyone's minds is what are we going to do? We are already raising funds via indulgences for the Crusade against the Berengar Heresy, but after the disaster that was the Peasant's Crusade against Granada, fewer and fewer people now support our cause.

On top of all this, the Kingdoms suffering from famine partially blame us for this result. If the Church had not called for a massive crusade to overwhelm the enemy with a sheer volume of numbers, then they likely would not be suffering to the extent they are now.

Thousands of men, women, and children in the Catholic Kingdoms are dying from starvation with each passing day! We do not have the funds to aid them, for all of our wealth is going towards investing in yet another attempt to end Berengar's reign. What do we tell the people who starve to death and can't afford the inflated prices of grain? That they should give what little wealth they have to us in hopes that we can avenge their deaths?"

With these words spoken, few men gathered in the chamber knew how to or desired to answer this question. Utter silence prevailed aside from the sound of the Pope tapping his papal throne repeatedly with his index finger. For quite some time, not a word was spoken before the Pope raised his voice; as he did so, he projected his authority as the leader of the Catholic World.

"We must secure the funds and workforce necessary to march on Austria within 4 years' time. I don't care how we have to do it, Berengar von Kufstein must die! If he is allowed to persist as a ruler, then the Catholic Church as a whole will be ruined!"

Despite the Pope's words, his council of Cardinals was no longer sure that such a thing was possible. Since the Berengar Heresy began, there had already been two Cardinals to defect to the enemy's side. Such a thing was a slap in the face to the Papacy, and yet as time went by, more and more of the men present considered jumping ship. Thus it was no surprise when one of the Cardinals voiced his concerns over the Pope's command in a fairly flustered state.

"You have gone mad, Julius, just like Simion before you! This King of Austria has driven you past the point of sanity. It is no longer about the power of the Church over sovereign kingdoms, but the very survival of our Religion!"

In your attempts to drive Berengar von Kufstein out of power, you have shed the blood of countless lives and caused economic crisis upon the Kingdoms who look up to us. Famine and Poverty rule over Europe, while Austria rises to new levels!

Is it any wonder that millions of Germans flock to Berengar's so-called Reformation every year? By now, the Catholic Dukes and Margraves of Germany no longer have the ability to compel their people to follow our faith, for the peasants and Lords alike have united against them!

If you insist on going down this path of another reckless Crusade, I swear to you, it will be the end of the Roman Catholic Church as we know it! I implore you to rethink your actions and settle your grudge with the King of Austria once and for all!

Let me remind you that if it weren't for the corruption of the Bishop of Innsbruck and the local clergy, Berengar von Kufstein may not have ever challenged our authority! See reason Julius before it is too late!"

Though the other Cardinals remained silent, the reality was that many of them held similar views of the ongoing conflict with Austria. If the Austrian Army could annihilate half a million men in battle within the Iberian Peninsula with a force of 50,000 men, then what could possibly be achieved by invading their home turf?

However, Julius was consumed beyond the point of reason; at this point, he, like his predecessor, had been driven to the brink of madness after being bested by an upstart from a once insignificant region. The Pride of the Papacy was at stake, and the constant humiliation they had suffered in their attempts to remove Berengar from power had driven both Popes mad.

Even if the Cardinals initially selected Julius to replace Simion so that he would take a moderate stance against Berengar von Kufstein and his realm, it did not take long for him to be pushed past the point of no return. Thus instead of accepting his losses and making amends with the young Monarch, he instead doubled down once more.

"I refuse to allow this upstart from Austria to further humiliate the Papacy and the Catholic Church as a whole. If I were to bow my head and concede defeat to this Devil, he would be acquiring exactly what he desires. Under no circumstances will I allow such a fantasy to become a reality!

Instead, I will bring forth the greatest army this world has ever seen and ravage his lands! I swear even if it is the death of me that I will see Berengar von Kufstein's head encased in bronze, and mounted outside my walls!

This will serve as a permanent reminder as to what happens when you dare to challenge the authority of the Church! If any of you refuse to play your part, then you can consider yourselves excommunicated!"

The Pope had expected this mad rant to convince his Cardinals to follow his plan until the end. Instead, the Cardinal who had raised his objection responded by pulling off his hat and placing it on the table. After doing so, he stared deep into the Pope's eyes before declaring his intent.

"I will not follow you into damnation. If this is the direction of the Catholic Church, then I want no part of it. You can consider me excommunicated!"

After saying this, he began to walk away from the Papal Chamber with his head held high. Julius called out to him in an utterly enraged state as he did so.

"Fine! Go! You are excommunicated and, at this moment, branded a Heretic! If you ever step foot in another Catholic Kingdom I will have your head on a pike!"

When the other Cardinals heard the Pope's response to the Cardinal's resignation, many of them followed suit. They too stood up from their seats and placed their hats upon the table before walking off.

In the end, all of the Cardinals from German-speaking regions had ended up resigning from their position and walking off. In their eyes, the Pope had gone entirely insane with a thirst for vengeance, and they refused to allow their people to bleed over the unrealistic possibility of avenging their losses to the Kingdom of Austria and its Monarch.

Chapter 452 - Demonstration Of The 1422 Lightweight Mortar

In the middle of the Kufstein Testing Grounds, an Austrian Soldier loaded a projectile down into the bore of the standing device; in the next moment, the 60mm shell flew through the air and towards the group of straw targets at the training ground. The moment it impacted, it blew up in a fiery explosion, sending shrapnel in all directions.

Despite their utter destruction, the weapon was quickly reloaded and fired a second shot on the targets' location. The shell whistled into the air and impacted once more only a few centimeters off its previous mark.

Berengar witnessed the display of the newest mortar design that Ludwig and his son Jakob had come up with. This lightweight, highly mobile mortar could be deployed either as a crew-served weapon or operated by a single individual.

Berengar was quite shocked to see that without his instruction, such a valuable weapon of war had been developed by his engineers. To an even greater shock, it was not Ludwig who was the lead designer but his eldest son Jakob.

After witnessing the demonstration performed by his soldiers, the young monarch began to clap repeatedly with a wide grin on his face. Initially, he had intended to create a mortar design of his own after returning from the war effort, but in reality, his engineers had developed an entirely functional

lightweight mortar without his input. Thus he was delighted to see such a valuable weapons platform come to fruition.

"Wonderful! Wonderful! It would appear that Jakob has inherited his father's intellect!"

The young engineer had a bashful response as he heard the King's mighty praise.

"You flatter me too much, your majesty; if not for the efforts of my father, I don't believe that I alone would have come up with such a functional design."

However, Berengar dismissed the boy's humble claims and placed his hand on his shoulder as he complimented him once more.

"You are too hard on yourself, Jakob, your father, has informed me of how much he contributed to this mortar, and I assure you that this weapon would not exist without your brilliant mind coming up with the basic design!

This weapon will revolutionize our Infantry and their tactics! I will award you with the Order of Civil Merit for your actions! You have done well, son!"

Though Berengar spoke as if he was substantially older than Jakob, the reality was that he was at most three years his elder. Thus it came off quite awkward as he said these words. Despite this, Jakob had a humble smile on his face as he nodded his head in agreement.

Berengar returned his gaze to the ongoing display; when he witnessed the baseplate easily removed and the weapon operated by a single user, he was genuinely shocked. Such a device would be considered exceptional even by modern standards. This was well beyond what he had in mind for a mortar.

He watched intensely as the man placed his foot on the bottom of the mortar and held it with one hand by the handle as he skillfully laid the projectile down into its bore before firing the device. However, the 60mm ammunition had decreased in effective range. It was still a sight to behold; immediately, the young King asked the question on his mind.

"Jakob, what is the weight of this weapon without its baseplate?"

The young engineer immediately smiled as he obediently answered his King's question.

"Approximately 20 lbs, your majesty!"

Berengar could not hide his awestricken state as he returned his gaze to the device. This was a genuinely lightweight mortar that could be lugged through any terrain and operated by a single soldier. The thought of such firepower in the hands of a soldier, while still capable of carrying a rifle, brought a sense of wonder to his eyes.

Berengar was aware that such weapons were scarce in his past life and primarily utilized by special operations units. Yet here in the 15th century, his engineers had come up with a design that was a close replica while not on par with the so-called commando mortars of his past life. He was genuinely astounded by the work of his engineers.

Perhaps only Berengar would recognize just how useful this weapon could prove to be in the hands of the correct units, thus when he made his following statement, all of the officers gathered stared in awe at their monarch.

"Jakob, tell me? What is it that you desire? So long as it is within my power, I shall grant it to you!"

Even Ludwig was surprised when he heard this, and thus he nudged his son's shoulder and whispered something in his ear. After this had occurred, Jakob nodded his head before responding.

"There is not much I require, your Majesty, thanks to the efforts of the father, my family is wealthy and has a noble title no matter how minor it is. I suppose if there is anything I might need in this life, it is a proper wife!"

Berengar chuckled when he heard this and immediately responded to the young man's request.

"Well, I can't force a woman to marry you, but if that is your desire, I can at least make it, so you are more desirable in the eyes of our Kingdom's many ladies. Very well, I at this moment name your family

the Dukes of Thurgau, henceforth Ludwig and his trueborn sons shall be given the surname von Thurgau, and rule over the Duchy of Thurgau within the Grand Duchy of Switzerland!"

All of the men present were greatly surprised when they heard this remark. Even Ludwig didn't expect Berengar to give them such a prestigious position. Though with Berengar's political reforms, Noble Titles had essentially become ceremonial rather than actual political rulers. Still, the title of Duke was no laughing matter.

It came with a level of Prestige that would allow plenty of young ladies of noble descent to come clambering after Ludwig's sons with the intent for marriage. Although the actual Dukes of the old Nobility would likely snub Ludwig's family as they were recent upstarts, such a thing would not be a case for the women from the families of Margraves and Counts.

After a few moments of silence due to the shock, Ludwig and his son Jakob got their act together and correctly thanked their monarch for his generosity.

"Thank you, your majesty; I swear I won't let you down!"

"Your Majesty, I don't know how I can ever repay you for such generosity. However, my son will work hard to live up to your praise!"

Berengar smiled and nodded to the two men's responses before gazing upon the weapon's display once more. Now that the mortar had been taken care of, there were a few more weapons he would need to introduce. What he needed to design was a proper landmine.

Though landmines were one of the most brutal and unforgiving inventions of the 20th century, Berengar knew how effective they would be at securing his borders from invaders. With the upcoming Crusade against Austria, he wanted to take every precaution to ensure minimal losses while maximizing enemy casualties.

Thus he vowed that after this demonstration was over, he would get to work on one of the most gnarly weapons ever to exist in his past life. For now, he sat back and drank from his chalice as he gazed upon the destructive power of the 60mm Mortar. Every time the explosion went off, he gazed with fondness upon it.

As for Ludwig and Jakob had excited expressions; they had once more elevated their status in society and by such a large margin this time. With the wealth Ludwig had accumulated as the head of the Austrian Royal Armory, now a large plot of land, and the title of a Duke. He knew that his family would be set for generations.

Despite this, the older man swore he would make sure that his heirs were proper noblemen and did not waste away on the wealth that their forefathers had created; he desired to create a Noble House whose name was embedded within the Industries of the Kingdom of Austria.

While his father and King were occupied with their thoughts, Jakob was intensely focused on his own. He knew he had just hit the tip of the iceberg and thoroughly planned to become even more helpful to the Kingdom of Austria in the future. Thus he vowed to produce new weapons designs and continue the family lineage of Noble Engineers.

With the three men dwelling on their thoughts, eventually, the demonstration came to an end. Not only was Berengar fully satisfied with the results, but so were the officers in charge of overseeing the testing and implementation of weapons into the Armed Forces. A unanimous decision was made this day to implement the 60mm Mortar into service within the Austrian Royal Army as soon as possible.

Chapter 453 - Dinner With The French Prince

Since Aubry had first arrived in Kufstein throughout the past few days, Berengar had been maintaining his distance. As a host, he was forced to entertain guests from the nearby Kingdom of France. Because of this, he would find himself at meals with his family, with Aubry at the scene.

An awkward situation was taking place at the moment, as Honoria glared at Aubry with a sense of overwhelming fury. The feminine Prince of France had stolen her seat next to Berengar and was currently flirting with her man.

While Berengar was far from pleased with the result, he found it hard to push away the boy's repeated advances. Thus he was sitting in his seat, with a twink staring at him with a longing gaze, trying to find out more about his personality.

"I heard that your Majesty was just a lowly Baron's son. Yet, you used your superior knowledge of engineering and tactics to rise to the Status of a King. Is that true?"

Berengar sneered at Aubry as he entertained his question with a smug response.

"That is right; in the eyes of many of my more noble subjects, I am still nothing more than a usurper. A lowly Baron who had killed his way to the top. Now tell me, Aubry do you despise me for my lowly pedigree?"

Though Berengar expected the boy born with a silver spoon in his mouth to rile in disgust of his lowly heritage, his statement had the opposite effect. There was a twinkle of excitement in Aubry's eyes and a slightly noticeable bulge in his dress as he heard Berengar boast of rising to his current position through sheer strength of will. The feminine Prince shook his head before expressing his thoughts on the matter.

"Not at all; in fact, I find it exciting. Despite being born to a line of lowly Barons, you have used your power to achieve victory over your masters, to the point where you are now the most powerful man in Christendom. Any man who calls you usurper is unaware of your great strength!"

Berengar immediately frowned as he noticed that his plot of insulting himself had not had turned out quite as planned. Instead, he decided to take a more religious approach. Though Berengar knew there was no way that a homosexual like Aubry was deeply religious, he did know for a fact that the social implications behind his following statement were something the boy could not ignore as a Prince of a Catholic Kingdom.

"So, you don't mind that I am a heretic who has been excommunicated and condemned to hell by two Popes?"

Once more, the effeminate Prince answered in a way that was contrary to the Austrian King's expectations.

"Not at all. I agree with some of your premises, such as how the right to rule over man is given to man, not the Church. I think if our two Kingdoms formed some form of partnership, we would be able to achieve many great things and throw off the yoke of the Papacy once and for all!"

When Aubry said this, he reached over and started dancing his dainty fingers across Berengar's forearm, which was a step too far for Honoria to handle. She immediately lashed out at her ex-fiance and violently ripped his hand away from her husband.

"Get your paws off my man, you filthy tramp!"

Though Aubry was far from a violent man, he realized he was struggling to contain his desire to slap the bitch for her interference in his seduction attempt. Luckily for Berengar, Honoria had removed Aubry's hands, or else he would have punched the Prince, causing a diplomatic crisis. If there were one thing he would not tolerate from a man, it was forced physical intimacy. Rather than resort to violence, Aubry forced a smile before commenting on Honoria's behavior.

"Princess Honoria, there is no need to be so hostile. I am simply being friendly, as is my responsibility as a diplomat of my father's Kingdom."

However, Honoria was not buying this remark. Instead, she stared at Aubry with a murderous aura as she whispered a vile threat into his ear.

"If you continue to seduce my husband, mark my words. It will end bloody for you!"

Despite these words, Aubry was undeterred and smiled at Honoria in response. Linde and Adela gazed upon this scene of conflict while eating their meals. They had no intentions of interrupting the effeminate Prince who was making a fool of himself.

As for Henrietta, she was also glaring daggers at the young man; the reason being is she would never allow yet another bitch to steal her brother away from her. Even if this bitch was a man dressed as a woman. She would be damned if her precious big brother slept with this tramp before herself! Ultimately, Yasmin broke the tension by making a remarkable comment.

"If there were a man like you in my Kingdom, we would throw him from the rooftop. Frankly, I find your lack of masculinity utterly disgusting..."

When Berengar heard this, he set down his fork and uttered his command to the chaotic scene and the people involved with it.

"Enough! Sit down, and shut up the lot of you! We are having dinner! I will not tolerate any more conflict at this table!"

Honoria immediately sank back into her seat while Aubry crossed his arms and pouted like a woman. As for the others, they went back to eating their food. For a while, there was utter silence until Aubry finally took his first bite of the käsespätzle; as he did so, he moaned in pleasure like a bitch in heat.

This exaggerated action did not go unnoticed by everyone at the table, including Berengar, who struggled to cope with the obnoxious noise. However, ultimately he gazed over sternly at the French Prince and forced a smile.

"Do you like it?"

Without hesitation, Aubry nodded emphatically before digging more of the cheesy-noodle dish into his mouth. After a few bites, he washed it down with a glass of milk before complimenting the meal.

"This is the best thing I have ever tasted. Do you eat like this every day?"

Berengar immediately nodded his head in response with a proud smile on his face; as he did so, he complimented the chefs and their hard work on creating such delectable dishes.

"Of course! The Chefs in Austria are second to none! You will not find finer cuisine in all of Europe! Especially not in your Kingdom."

As he made this comment, a lace of venom was hidden on Berengar's tongue. Partially because he came from a German family in his past life and lived as a German King in this one, he had a particular disdain towards the French, especially towards the claim from his previous life that their cooking was some of the best in the world.

During his previous life, Berengar had enjoyed many great dishes from plenty of cultures, which was one of the perks of being an American. In his view, there were three Nations that could compete for the honor of having the best food, and they were from three different continents. German, Chinese, and Mexican food were his favorite cuisine.

Reflecting upon this he began to wonder how Mexican food would develop in this timeline since he would colonize the Northern Region instead of the Spanish. The alien hybrid of Native and German cuisine was a thought that he was greatly interested in. Ultimately he was snapped back to reality by one of Aubry's comments that immediately filled his stomach with revile.

"I wish I were a woman, then I could marry you and eat this food every day!"

The moment the French Prince said these words, he once more received the death glares from Honoria and Henrietta. However, despite their intense hatred for this slutty trap from the Kingdom of France, they made sure to stay their tongues due to the warning that Berengar had given. Henrietta immediately became intimidated by the presence of this foreign tempter and decided to make a move to get one step closer to her big brother.

"Big brother... I don't feel so good. I think I have had too much wine. Do you mind carrying me to my room?"

Henrietta made sure to properly exaggerate her words and sway her head with a fugue-like gaze to sell the act properly. If Linde was not already aware of the girl's feelings and scheming nature, even she might have bought into the show. Just when she was about to comment on this, Berengar stood up from his seat, walked over to his little sister, and picked her up before addressing the rest of his women and his guest.

"I will be back shortly; in the meantime, I advise the rest of you to behave!"

Berengar was not stupid; he knew his sister well enough to know that she was faking; however, he would rather risk alone time with his sister's seduction attempts than spend a minute longer with Aubry.

Thus he carried Henrietta towards her quarters. As he did so, she rested her pretty face in his chest and inhaled his masculine musk. She had finally been allowed to be alone with her brother, and she swore to make the most of it.

Chapter 454 - Sweet Dreams, My Precious Little Princess

Berengar carried his little sister Henrietta up the stairs to her room as if she were a princess. Now that he thought about it, she was indeed technically a princess. Thus, he had a smug smile on his face as he thought about his sister's prestigious position, resulting from his actions in this life.

Henrietta had no idea what her precious big brother was thinking about as he dodged the ongoing conflict downstairs in the dining room. However, seeing him smile as he carried her away to her quarters was enough to make her happy thus, she clung closely onto his chest and engorged herself in the warmth that his body was exuding beyond his clothing.

Eventually, the King and his Princess made their way into the girl's quarters, where Berengar tucked the allegedly intoxicated young woman into her bed before kissing her on the forehead. He was prepared to leave her behind and head back to the dining room until the moment she grabbed onto his sleeve.

As Henrietta did so, her cheeks were flushed red with embarrassment; however, she had decided to make the most of this moment and thus she made a request of her brother for the first time in a long time.

"Big Brother, will you stay and tell me a story like you did when I was a kid?"

Berengar chuckled as he heard this before sitting down on the bed next to his sister and began spinning a tale about himself from his previous life. He did not know why, but he had an overwhelming desire to spill the truth about his past, even if it was in the form of a bedtime story.

"There once was a boy named Julian who grew up in a faraway land. In this land, there were hundreds of millions of people, and most of them lived their lives without achieving anything of significance. They were truly Cogs in the machine and never managed to move the dirt necessary to bury them."

At this point, Berengar's expression began to shift from nostalgic to slightly distressed. He remained silent for a few moments as he struggled to come up with the words to express the cruelty of the life that he was forced to endure in his youth during his past life.

"This boy came from an impoverished family and was bullied by his peers due to the lack of income that his family had. You see, in this society, the average person lived a life of such wealth and luxury that they tended to take everything they had for granted. The average household lived in such levels of prosperity that even the noble houses of our society could not compete with them.

However, as a result, those at the bottom of society could not afford the lavish lifestyle of the middle class, and thus they were often ridiculed for it. While other kids were receiving the latest fashion and newest toys, Julian was forced to endure through the years making use of the generous donations from those better-off families.

After being ruthlessly berated by those kids his exact age, he would come home to an empty dwelling, where he was forced to cook his meals and clean for himself. However, things were not all bad. He managed to get close to a pretty girl and become her friend. He would even spend hours of his day teaching her how to do her school work.

Years passed by, and Julian had entered his teens; in doing so, he had fallen in love with this girl who was his only friend. One day, there was a big dance to be had at the school, and Julian decided to muster his courage to ask his friend out. However, despite his feelings for her, things did not go as expected. Do you know what her response was?

I am sorry, but I could never go out with someone as poor as you...

Julian was heartbroken; however, the worst part was that their friendship rapidly deteriorated after that until a point where they barely talked anymore. The moment this girl got herself a rich boyfriend as she had wanted, Julian came to a decision, and that was that he would make something of his life, and not live a life of poverty like his parents.

So you know what he did? He spent the next four years dismissing his social life and working hard so that he would have the ability to get into a good college. He also worked on his fitness to ensure a healthy body and mind. After all, no matter successful he was, he would never be able to get a decent girlfriend if he was a fat tub of lard, or so he believed.

However, when the time came to go to university, he selected the Military Academy. Why would he do that, you might ask? Because he could not afford to be in debt for the rest of his life for going to his first choice of a university!

You see, universities were costly in this Kingdom, so much so that you would be selling yourself into debt for decades to afford the tuition fees. However, the military academy was different; they would practically pay for your entire expenses, so long as you pledged to serve eight years in the armed forces after graduation. The difficulty was that the military had a very low acceptance rate, luckily Julian had graduated High School with high enough marks that he was accepted!

Thus Julian spent another four years of his life doing nothing but studying hard to complete his education as an engineer. During this time, he had met a few acquaintances who helped him along his path but in the end, he had never really developed any long-lasting friendships or relationships with women, for that matter. By the time he knew it, those four years passed by, and he was sent into the Army as an Engineering Officer.

After graduating from the military academy and entering his service, he performed excellently at his job, and things were starting to look up in life. However, years of maintaining a distance from others had crippled his ability to form any lasting bonds. Thus he struggled to bond with those beneath his command on any meaningful level. Despite this, he was making a good salary as an officer and was even awarded for his efforts..."

Henrietta could see the pain on her brother's face as he continued the story; however, despite this, she was thoroughly enthralled with the tale and eventually asked for him to continue.

"What happened next?"

Berengar could feel his entire life flashing before his eyes as he reminisced about his past life especially the painful death at its end; after several moments, he finally collected his thoughts and stood up from the bed. After doing so, he ended the story with the truth.

"It is quite tragic, during his last deployment, a month before the war was supposed to come to an end, he was killed in an attack by the enemy while working on a construction project that wasn't even needed to begin with. So much potential, gone to waste... But I guess that is life..."

Upon hearing this ending, Henrietta burst out into tears; she did not know why this story had troubled her to such an extent. However, after listening to her brother tell that tale as if it were about himself, it had broken her heart. The very idea that Berengar had to go through life alone, with such difficulties nearly took the young Princess's breath away.

The young King of Austria noticed his sister's distraught behavior and immediately rushed to comfort her; he climbed into bed beside her and hugged her as he stroked her silky hair while reassuring her that things were for the best.

"Do not cry, my sweet little sister; death is not always final! For all that we know, Julian was born again in a different world, where he used his vast knowledge to become a mighty King and lead his people to glory!"

Henrietta felt better after hearing this and started to giggle; she wiped the tears from her eyes with her dainty hands before gazing at her brother in his deep sapphire eye. As she did so, she made a jest of her own.

"Kind of like you? Huh, big brother?"

Berengar smiled and nodded his head before responding.

"Just like me..."

After saying this, Henrietta wrapped her arms around Berengar and swiftly fell asleep in his arms. Seeing that the girl was utterly unconscious, Berengar sighed before commenting on the situation.

"At least let me get undressed..."

After saying this, he broke free from Henrietta's grasp; the moment he did so, the young woman began to frown in her sleep as if she was aware that he had escaped. Upon seeing this, Berengar sighed before stripping out of his luxurious clothing until only boxer shorts remained. After doing so, he climbed back into bed with Henrietta and kissed her on the forehead; after reflecting upon his past and current lives, he muttered the words in his heart.

"Sweet dreams, my precious little princess!"

Having uttered these words, Berengar soon found himself falling asleep beneath the warmth of the down covers, with his little sister latched onto him like a lamprey. He would sleep this night in her bed, completely forgetting that he had left his wives, along with the French Prince, downstairs.

Chapter 455 - You Are All I Have In...

The following day Berengar awoke to the feeling of something wet pressed against his lips; when he finally managed to open his eyes, he witnessed a face pressed against his, with their lips intertwined.

Immediately he became frightened and pushed the young woman aside to reveal that it was none other than his sister. With a coquettish expression on her pretty face, Henrietta placed a loose strand of her silky golden hair behind her ear before greeting Berengar.

"Good morning, big brother!"

Immediately the young King felt frightened and yet at the same time slightly aroused as he thought to himself.

Has my sister always been this beautiful?

Nevertheless, he instantly looked away from Henrietta's azure blue nightgown, which showed off her cleavage. Though it wasn't as large as Linde or Yasmin's, there was no doubt that her bust was more significant than Adela's, perhaps even more prominent than Honoria's. However, as a proper brother, he averted his gaze, despite his dark desire to get a better glance.

Before Henrietta could make a move on her brother, the door slammed open to reveal the sight of Berengar's various wives, who were enraged that their husband did not find himself in their bed during the previous night.

Adela was practically red with fury as she stared at her Cousin, who had a guilty expression on her face. Henrietta immediately stood up from the bed and bowed before her Kingly brother before departing for the bathroom.

"Big Brother, I had a great time last night! I just want you to know, that was my first time..."

After saying this, she absconded from the scene like a frightened criminal, leaving Berengar to bear the brunt of his wives' fury. The Austrian King's expression sank when he heard those misleading words come from his sister's mouth. Immediately he lifted his hands in defense while asserting his innocence.

"It's not what it looks like; nothing happened between us!"

Despite this truth, none of his women were buying his protests. After Henrietta's comments, they had to be thorough in their investigation before buying such a line. Linde had a murderous glint in her sky blue eyes as she stormed over to the bed and threw off the covers, where she quickly began to scour the scene for evidence of wrongdoing.

"We will see about that!"

Berengar immediately hid his excited little brother with his hands as the girls observed the white sheets to ensure no signs of any incestuous behavior between the two siblings. After confirming that they were clean, Linde sighed in relief before declaring that Berengar was, in fact, innocent.

"They're clean; aside from being a pervert who gets excited over his sister, no crime has been committed here."

Berengar sighed in relief as he heard this. Luckily he would be spared the trouble Henrietta had nearly brought upon him. Despite being found not guilty of the alleged charges, his wives were by no means relieved. After all, he was enticed by Henrietta, which was a fact that they could not easily ignore.

However, before they could adequately scold him, Aubry walked by the room in his gossamer nightgown, which showed off the woman's panties he was wearing beneath them; he immediately gazed over at the scene and became curious; thus, he walked into the room where he witnessed

Berengar's well-toned half-naked body. The effeminate prince practically drooled in excitement upon seeing this and could not help but comment on the situation.

"Oh, King Berengar, you are so manly; won't you impart some of your wisdom unto me?"

Luckily for the Austrian King, Aubry had no idea that this was, in fact, Henrietta's room, and thus he was unaware of the allegations laid against him. Instead, he was too absorbed with the appearance of a striking German man in his undergarments.

Of course, the moment Aubry said this, Berengar's multiple wives immediately shifted their attention to him and forced him out of the room, leaving Berengar by his lonesome. They had forgotten entirely that Henrietta was still in the attached bathroom.

The moment they disappeared, Henrietta appeared before her brother with a sly smile on her face. Berengar was quite irritated by her actions and immediately flicked her forehead before scolding her.

"Just what the hell were you thinking saying such a provocative statement! Do you have any idea the kind of trouble I would be in if they mistook your words for something more severe?"

Despite being criticized by her older brother, Henrietta merely played dumb; in doing so, she put on an innocent expression before asking Berengar why she was being so mistreated.

"What did I say wrong, big brother? I didn't lie! I swear that was my first kiss!"

Despite her convincing act of innocence, Berengar refused to buy it and flicked his sister on the head once more before lecturing her yet again.

"You know damn well what I meant! I swear to God if you weren't my sister-"

Before Berengar could finish his sentence, Henrietta spoke over him with a mocking expression.

"You would pin me down on this bed right now and ravage me?"

Immediately Berengar's cheeks became flushed red in embarrassment as his mind began to melt. He had no idea how to handle such provocation. He tried to shift his head away and avert his gaze. However, Henrietta grabbed ahold of his cheeks and fixed his line of sight on her beautiful azure eyes.

"I can't be the only one who wants this... Can't you be honest with yourself? Who cares what anyone else thinks? You are the King; you can do what you want!"

However, despite her enticement Berengar merely turned away from her and began to get dressed in his clothes on the floor; as he did so, he began to speak his thoughts on the matter.

"No, it is wrong, Henrietta, and you need to move past this fantasy of yours because it is never going to happen!"

Despite his harsh words, Henrietta refused to give up; as her brother was equipping his pants, she latched onto his back with tears in her eyes as she professed her feelings to him.

"Don't you dare leave me! Mom and Dad left me! So did Lambert! I can't bear to lose you too! You are all I have in this world!"

Berengar could feel his back smeared with tears, and thus he sighed heavily. He couldn't bear seeing his sister cry; therefore, he turned around and stuffed her head into his chest as he comforted her.

"My sweet little sister, I will never leave you, but what you want from me is something that I can not give you. Even if a part of me did want to be with you, it could never happen, for if someone found out about our little secret, it would undo everything I have worked so hard to achieve! Everyone would turn on me, and in the end, I would be deposed, and you would no longer be a Princess!"

Henrietta merely shook her head; she refused to listen to reason in her distraught state and gazed up into her brother's one good eye as she continued to latch onto him.

"I don't care about any of that; I only want you!"

Berengar kissed his sister's head before forcing himself apart in response to this. As he walked to the door, he left behind the words that Henrietta would latch onto with hope.

"We will discuss this later after you have calmed down..."

The moment he left the room and shut the door behind him, the young princess fell to her knees and began to break out into tears. After several minutes of crying, she managed to find her resolve. She refused to admit defeat; if Adela could win his heart as a cousin, then surely she could do the same!

Thus despite Berengar's best efforts to let his sister down softly, Henrietta was now more determined than ever to find a way to make things work between the two of them, and she would not stop until she had found a way to make such a thing into reality.

As for Berengar slowly descended the staircase; he was only half-dressed, the remainder of his Kingly attire laid strewn across Henrietta's bedroom floor. He even lacked his signature eyepatch. Instead, he was lost in thought; he knew deep down there was a part of him that was at least attracted to his sister. However, he also knew that such a thing was wrong for many reasons. It was a pity that Henrietta was his sister, or else maybe they could indeed be together.

Ultimately he walked out into the gardens of the Imperial Palace, which were covered in snow, where he sat on a bench in the freezing weather of the Austrian Alps. The Austrian Monarch rested his head in his hands as he tried to find a solution to the problem at hand, one that could make everyone happy.

It would be some time before Berengar returned inside, and by that time, he was nearly frozen solid from the cold. However, despite his foolish actions, he would endure as he always had. As for how Berengar would handle his sister's incestuous feelings, perhaps even God did not know the answer to that.

Berengar sat by the fireplace as he warmed himself beneath a blanket. He had just done something utterly foolish, and that was to enter the cold winter weather of the Alps with nothing but pants on. He had spent more than enough time outside on a frozen bench, thinking through his plight in the freezing weather.

He was indeed in a difficult situation as it appeared Henrietta's infatuation with him was more substantial than he initially believed, almost like she was dependent on his affection to sustain herself. If he coldly rejected her, there was no way of knowing what drastic measures she might take to win his love.

Thus he had come to a decision, he needed to buy himself some time. Time to find a proper suitor for Henrietta, and introduce him to the girl so that she could build a proper bond, with a man unrelated to her. However, it had become obvious that she would insist on an answer from him sooner rather than later. Thus he had hatched a plot within his mind that would allow him to accomplish his goals.

Until he found a proper suitor for his sister, Berengar would be forced to entertain some of her less radical ideas, to give her the emotional fulfillment she needed to prevent any unnecessary actions that she might resort to if she were desperate enough.

As he was thinking of these thoughts by the fire, Henrietta silently approached him from afar. Eventually, she sat down next to her brother without him noticing. It was not until she latched onto him did he begin to see her presence.

Berengar's first instinct was to flee the scene, but like a wolf who had locked onto its prey, Henrietta could smell his fear, thus with a soft voice as if she was hiding her true nature by acting like a sheep, she whispered something in his ear.

"Big brother, please don't leave me..."

Upon hearing this, the young King's defenses immediately melted, and he sat firmly in place, where he began to pat the Princess' head like he had done so many times before. As he did so, he gazed down at her appearance to see that her eyes were red and puffy. She had been crying for some time. With a heavy sigh, he began to put his plan into motion.

"I would never leave you, Henrietta..."

A glimmer of hope appeared in the girl's azure eyes as she heard her brother's words, almost as if she was too afraid to shatter the dream she found herself in; Henrietta cocked her head with a curious expression on her doll-like face.

"Do you mean-"

However, before she could complete her sentence, Berengar gazed at her with firm determination and nodded his head before revealing his plan.

"If it is what you desire, then I can be with you, however, we must keep it a secret from the others. If anyone were to find out about our relationship, it would be the end of everything we hold dear..."

Henrietta immediately nodded her head thrice with a broad smile on her face. However, Berengar interrupted her once more.

"We will take this slow, and in the meantime, I will find a suitor for you to keep up appearances as if everything is normal between us, you must agree to be courted by a man of my choosing."

The young Princess immediately began to frown as she heard this condition, her cheeks puffed up as she pouted before expressing her discontent.

"But I don't want to! I only want to be with big brother! The thought of talking to another man disgusts me!"

Berengar chuckled when he heard this, however, in his mind, he was cursing himself; it would appear he still underestimated his sister's obsession with him. However, to get his plan to work, he would need to convince her of this condition.

His grand scheme was that he would pretend to date his sister in a secret while, in reality, setting her up with a man that she could grow close to and form a healthy bond with. Thus he put on an intimate facade as he grabbed ahold of her chin with a smile on his face.

"Henrietta, my dear little sister. You are now of the age to marry, and if I don't at least create an attempt to get you a husband, then not only will my wives grow suspicious, but so will the people of Austria. For us to be together, there must be some sort of cover..."

Berengar's little sister gazed at him with a distraught expression; Though she did not want to see another man, she could understand her brother's reasoning. After careful consideration, the young Princess decided that she would tolerate this condition but she vowed to herself that this was merely a facade to mask her illicit affair with her brother. Thus she slowly nodded her head with downcast eyes.

"Okay... I will do whatever is necessary to be with you!"

Immediately after saying this, she jumped into her brother's arms and tried to kiss him once more; however, Berengar immediately shrugged her off and made some distance between them. When he did so, Henrietta became confused and inwardly questioned his actions. Despite this, the young King cleared his throat before making his stance clear.

"If we are to do this, Henrietta, then we need to take it slow; for now, there will be no kissing or physical intimacy of any kind; aside from holding hands, and hugging okay?"

This response was not what the girl was looking for and she immediately began to pout once more; despite this, Berengar grabbed ahold of her hands with his own and smiled. Ultimately Henrietta could not resist her brother's charming face and sighed before agreeing to his terms.

"Fine... we can take it slow for now..."

After agreeing to these terms, she latched onto her brother and shoved her head into his chest as she sniffed his masculine musk. Berengar had no choice but to wrap his arms around his sister, all while asking the question in his mind.

How long can I keep this up before she demands more from me?

Thus, for now, Berengar had bought himself some much-needed time to deal with the complex issues that stood between him and his sister. As for potential suitors? He had a few men in mind who had

proven themselves as valuable members of Austrian society and were relatively young. After all, he would never set up his dear sister with an old man or a scoundrel.

While Berengar and Henrietta were making up from their brief fight earlier, Linde was sitting before the French Prince with her legs crossed; if Lambert were still alive, and witnessed this scene, he would be all too familiar with the domineering expression on the woman's face.

For whatever reason, Aubry brought out the latent sadist inside Linde's heart. After dealing with her husband's nonsense early in the morning, she was not forced to admonish the French Prince for his action. The young queen utterly refused to have this femboy strutting around in negligé attempting to seduce her husband.

Upon gazing at the beautiful woman's frightening expression Aubry was absolutely petrified; he had never met such a terrifying woman in his life. Thus he lay prostrate on the floor begging for forgiveness from the Second Queen of Austria.

"Please forgive me, your Highness, I know now of my misdeeds, and I swear, I will wear appropriate clothing henceforth!"

Despite his apology, Linde glared at him with a cold expression on her face; as she did so, she placed her heel upon his head and slammed the effeminate Prince's skull into the ground. After doing so, she spoke with a tone of voice she had not used in some time.

"Pathetic! You call yourself a man, yet here you are dressed like a woman; I honestly don't know what you intend to accomplish by being here in Kufstein, but it ends now. Pack your bags and return from whence you came.

If your father wishes to deal business with Austria in the future, he is best to send a more impressive diplomat, for you are an utterly disgusting creature. If I catch you within the borders of my Husband's Kingdom after you have been expelled, then I promise you, only pain and death await!"

The French Prince shivered upon hearing these words; in all of his life, the only woman he had ever feared was his elder sister, and yet the redheaded lass sitting in front of him deeply reminded him of that woman. The difference was, that she was more mature, and had far more tool at her disposal to accomplish her threats.

Another point that instilled dread into the boy's heart, was that, unlike his sister, he had no familial bonds with Linde to stay her hand; instead, she gazed upon him with total contempt and cruelty. Thus, he knew that she would remain faithful to her words if he were to risk staying in Austria any longer.

After kneeling his head on the floor beneath Linde's feet, Aubry vowed internally to never return to the Kingdom of Austria nor attempt to sway its King ever again. Upon seeing that she had utterly broken the Prince, a wicked smile etched itself upon Linde's lips as she pulled out a knife and cut the bonds that tied him up. As she did so, she spoke in a cold and murderous tone.

"You are free to leave, but remember my warning, for you will not be given a second chance!"

After hearing these chilling words, Aubry returned to his room where he frantically packed his supplies; having done so, he quickly fled the Palace of Austria with his host, leaving behind a letter to Berengar, which acted as an apology for his swift retreat.

Now that the Prince was gone, Linde narrowed her gaze in the direction of Henrietta's room. One threat was now removed. All that remained was to figure out a way to deal with the other little brat appropriately. Her hands curled in rage as she thought about her husband's scandalous actions on this past night.

Though nothing had happened between the two siblings, it would not be long before something troublesome transpired if things were left as they were. Though she could not harm the Princess, there were other ways to deter the girl from the treacherous path that she walked upon. While Berengar had hatched a plan to deal with Henrietta's incestuous fantasies, so too did Linde.

Chapter 457 - Family Reunion Part I

Months had passed since that fateful day when Berengar entered into a relationship with his sister in secret, and things had become normal once more. Though he worked tirelessly behind the scenes to find an appropriate suitor for Henrietta, it was not as easy as he was initially led to believe.

Due to his fearsome reputation as a conqueror and a man with a severe sister complex, it was difficult to find any man worthy of his sister who had the stones to pursue the Austrian Princess. Thus at the moment, he was overseeing various dossiers compiled by Linde on men of high nobility or merit who could be considered acceptable suitors for Henrietta.

However, as he was glancing over these documents, a slight knock resounded upon the thick wooden door, interrupting his studies. Thus the young monarch elected to take a short break as he looked over at the intrusion before replying to the person whose identity was concealed on the other side of the door.

"What is it?"

Immediately he heard a somewhat irritated yet feminine voice behind the door, who he knew to belong to none other than his Second Wife, Linde.

"Master, your parents are here..."

Immediately Berengar rose from his seat before approaching the door; upon opening it, he witnessed the captivating sight of his beautiful redheaded bride. She was not very happy with her in-law's arrival, and Berengar did not blame her; after all, his mother had treated her quite cruelly in the past, and since their marriage, things had not gotten any better. Thus without hesitation, Berengar assumed his role as mediator between the two women and gave his wife an order.

"Lead the way!"

Linde nodded silently before leading her husband to the Dining Hall, where the entire family was gathered. An awkward silence prevailed in the room, aside from the sound of Sieghard speaking with Yasmin about how she had come to marry his son in secret.

"I have honestly never found tan skin to be attractive myself, but I must say you are gorgeous! My son is a lucky man to have a Moorish Princess as another one of his brides!"

Immediately upon saying this, Gisela glared at her husband, while she was playing with Adela's twins. She could not believe that the man supported their son's outlandish behavior. As far as she was concerned, Berengar had one wife, her niece.

Eventually, she noticed her son's arrival and glared at him menacingly as he entered the room. Though Berengar had no idea what he had done to invoke his mother's ire this time, he was glad to see that she at least remained civil with his various brides. Thus the Austrian King put on a broad smile as he greeted his parents, whom he had not seen in some time.

"Father, Mother, it is good to see you here in my home! I assume you are here to visit your grandchildren?"

Immediately Gisela handed off the twins to their mother before she approached her son and grabbed ahold of his ears as she yanked on it with force. The moment she did so, Berengar winced in pain as she began to rebuke him for his actions.

"You little bastard! You end up having children with your wife, and you don't even write a letter to inform us! I had to find out via the local newspaper, and they are far behind on the Capital's events! The next time you and your wife have children, you write me a letter ASAP. Do you understand me?"

Upon saying this small rant, the woman let go of her grasp over her son's ear, resulting in the young King rubbing it with a pained expression. He silently nodded his head in response to his mother's harsh words.

"Yes, mother..."

Upon witnessing this interaction, Henrietta smiled and giggled; no matter how powerful her precious big brother became, he would always react the same around their mother. It was good to know that though he had grown more ambitious with his ever-increasing power, fundamentally, he was still the same kind and caring big brother she had always known and loved.

As for Berengar's brides had mixed expressions; they noticed how the old Baroness had used the term "wife" rather than "wives" and were less than pleased with her assertion. Despite this, Adela walked over to her Aunt, with the twins in her arms, and smiled.

"Aunty Gisela, it is always nice to see you!"

The two women appeared to be on better terms than all the others, including the mother and daughter. Henrietta bit her lip as she witnessed her cousin getting along with her mother. She was not exactly on the best terms with her parents after they moved to the countryside and left her in the care of her brother all those years ago.

Upon seeing the awkward display, Berengar decided to get involved; as such, he approached his wife and mother and hugged the two of them before trying to soothe the tensions between them, his other wives, and his sister.

"Mother, it is good to see you. Have you said hello to Henrietta yet? She has grown into quite the beautiful young woman in your absence!"

Truthfully Gisela did not even notice her daughter sitting quietly at the table; she had been too enamored with her niece and the two twins. Thus when Berengar said these words, she gazed over at Henrietta and was stunned by how much she had grown.

"Henrietta? Is that you?"

The young Princess glared at her mother as she called out to her. It was clear from her expression some serious issues had to be worked out in their relationship. As such, she stood up from her spot and approached her mother, however when she came close, she veered away from her mother and latched onto Berengar's arm before making a spiteful remark.

"Big brother, who is this woman? I don't recall ever seeing her before!"

The moment she said this, Gisela's expression sank, and Adela became visibly enraged at her cousin's behavior. As for Berengar's other wives, they began to giggle; it served the woman right for treating them like they were nothing more than their husband's mistresses. Berengar immediately flicked his sister on the nose before scolding her in front of everyone.

"Henrietta, behave yourself!"

After saying this, he looked over at his mother and apologized on his sister's behalf, which immediately caused the girl to pout.

"I'm sorry, mother, though Henrietta is now of age to marry, she is still a bit immature..."

Immediately Gisela frowned at Berengar before scolding him.

"Whose fault do you think that is? My baby girl is already sixteen, and you have not even found her a man. If I knew you were going to neglect her, I wouldn't have left her in your care!"

Berengar struggled to maintain his smile as he listened to his mother's harsh words; though he wanted to criticize her for abandoning Henrietta to his care, he chose not to do so. However, in the next moment, before he could smooth things over, Henrietta took the opportunity to enrage her mother further.

"What do you mean? Big brother is my man!"

After saying this, Henrietta pecked her brother on the cheek in front of everyone; the moment she did so, everyone was shocked, including Berengar. After hearing this, he flicked his sister on the forehead once more before lecturing her on her behavior.

"Not funny!"

In response to this, Henrietta stuck out her tongue as if she were joking the whole time; she knew she could not reveal the secret relationship she had with her brother. Thus the moment she did so, everybody present sighed in relief; Gisela nearly had a heart attack from this announcement.

Therefore when she finally recovered, she felt the need to slap her daughter; clearly, Berengar had failed as her guardian. As she raised her hand to do so, Berengar caught ahold of her wrist and glared at his mother before speaking coldly to her.

"No offense, mother, but the moment you abandoned Henrietta to my care, you forfeit any parenting rights you may have; disciplining my sister for her errant behavior is my responsibility, not yours!"

Sieghard gazed upon his wife and children with a stoic gesture; it was confirmed that he had abandoned them to focus on his health, but his wife was taking things too far. Thus, he intervened in the conflict before it escalated any further.

"Leave the kids be, Dear. So the girl has a bit of a mischievous streak in her, that will disappear in time. I'm sure our son has done a wonderful job raising our daughter. Now, how about we all get something nice to eat and come together as a family."

With that said, the tensions were eased, and the family began to sit down at the table for a nice meal. Though Sieghard had defused the timebomb that was his familial relations, for now, it would not take much to set off at least one of the many women present. Thus Berengar and his father would have to navigate through the following lunch perfectly to avoid any future conflict.

Chapter 458 - Family Reunion Part II

At the head of the table sat Berengar; to his left was Linde, to his right was Adela; as for his other two wives, they flanked both sides of the table, followed by Henrietta and Berengar's parents. On the other edge of the seating, was where all of the children were sitting in high chairs since they were far too young to sit in a regular seat, aside from Hans that is, who sat in his own seat with his small feet dangling from the air.

For the past few minutes, since they began to eat the lunch prepared for them by the kitchen, this large family sat in complete and utter silence. An awkward silence prevailed as the only sound that could be heard was the people gathered munching on their food. While this was going on Henrietta glared across the table at her mother with a bitter stare.

Though Henrietta had enjoyed her time in Kufstein, growing up under the tutelage of her precious big brother. There was no doubt that her current infatuation for her sibling stemmed from the abandonment issues resulting from her parents' up and disappearing after Lambert's death and leaving her alone with Berengar and Linde.

However, it appeared that both her mother and father were aging well after their retirement and were living safe and secluded lives in the heart of the Tyrolean Alps. This was something that the young Princess had contention with; if not for their poor parenting, then perhaps Lambert would still be alive.

Neither Henrietta nor her mother was aware of the true origins of Lambert's death. Of course, even if Berengar informed his sister how their brother passed, she would undoubtedly take his side. After all, by now, she was greatly enamored with her big brother and willing to engage in an incestuous relationship with him. What was a little fratricide in the face of her unconditional love?

However, Berengar wanted to maintain the memory in Henrietta's heart that Lambert was not the backstabbing scoundrel he was. In doing so, he had unwittingly created a divide between the girl and her mother; after all, she shifted the blame on her parents for Lambert's passing. While Henrietta scowled at her mother, Berengar noticed this and immediately tried to mend the void.

"Henrietta, my dearest sister, you know it is rather rude to stare at our mother in such a manner..."

However, despite his words, Henrietta did not cease her activity. Instead, she cut into the jaeger schnitzel, which sat on her plate, and elegantly took a bite from her fork. After doing so, she merely snubbed her mother and responded to Berengar with an excited expression.

"So, Big Brother, when will we be going to Gibraltar?"

Berengar immediately had a stunned expression on his face as he glanced over to the gazes of his four angry wives. He had planned to take the girls on a honeymoon to Gibraltar in the summer, but he had not voiced this concern.

In fact, due to his political circumstances, he not only rushed three weddings in the span of as many months, but he never actually took his girls on the trip they deserved. Now that his schedule was reasonably open, he had decided that he would take some time to enjoy a vacation with all four of his wives on the beaches of Gibraltar, where the villa was given to him by Hasan lie.

Either Henrietta had gotten wind of his plans, or was merely creating conflict, for the sake of it. Either way, he had to put his foot down and explain his plans before any of his wives got the wrong idea. As such, he presented a calm facade as he swallowed the scoop of käsespätzle on his spoon. After washing it down with the taste of a hearty lager, he began to inform his family of his plans.

"Well, it was supposed to be a surprise, and I don't know how Henrietta figured it out, but I intend to take all of you on a trip to Gibraltar this summer..."

Various gazes of excitement filled the eyes of Berengar's wives; as for Yasmin, she had a look of nostalgia as she remembered all the times she and Berengar had made love on the beach during his stay in Iberia. After a few lively exchanges, Adela finally came up with an essential question in her pretty little head.

"Will Henrietta be coming with us?"

Berengar immediately exchanged glances between his sister, his wives, and his mother as he thought through the answer to this question. He sincerely hoped to find a suitor for Henrietta before he went on a honeymoon with his wives. Otherwise, she was bound to interfere and demand some special attention of her own due to their "secret relationship." Thus he cracked a joke in an attempt to shrug off the responsibility.

"That is unless I can find a proper suitor for her in the meantime... It is just a damn shame..."

Immediately Adela latched onto the last part of Berengar's statement and inquired further about it with a curious gaze.

"What is?"

Berengar shook his head and merely chuckled in response to his wife's question.

"Nothing, I was just thinking that if Henrietta and I weren't related by blood, then I could marry her instead..."

Immediately everyone's expression sank as they heard this, especially Adela. Henrietta was the only person among their ranks who did not react gravely; unlike the others, she gazed upon her brother with a lovestruck appearance—as for Gisela, she responded by smacking her son across the back of his head before rebuking him for his inappropriate comment.

"Don't even joke like that! It is unbecoming for a man of your position!"

Berengar chuckled in response to this while Sieghard gazed upon his son and daughter with a complicated expression. Judging by his two kids' reactions, something was going on between them. However, immediately after thinking this, he shook his head and dismissed the thought. While Berengar may be a womanizer, there was no way he was that far gone.

As for Henrietta, he did not know his daughter well enough to predict her feelings on the matter accurately. However, he was not foolish enough to miss the intimate glances that the girl shared with her brother now and then.

Eventually, a frown appeared on the older man's face as he thought about what Berengar had said. It was indeed a damn shame that the two of them were related by blood because nobody was better for his daughter than a man like his son. Unfortunately, there was only one man like Berengar in this world, and he was the blood-related brother of Henrietta.

Thus he tried to shift his thoughts elsewhere, as his gaze landed on Linde, he was well aware of the difficulties between his wife and Berengar's second Queen. Though his opinion of the woman was initially bitter, he had come to see how beneficial she was to his son's life and Kingdom over the years. Thus, he began an attempt to bridge the gap between her and his wife as he brought up memories of the past.

"I must say, Linde, you have changed a lot over the years. I have known you since you were a small girl; after all, you were engaged to my second son at one point, and I must admit I was not fond of you at the time. However, now you seem to have grown into a fine young woman!"

Linde was shocked upon hearing her father-in-law's praise; she was well aware that her in-laws despised her almost as much as her own family did. To hear that at least one of them had pleasant views of her was something she greatly appreciated. As such, she put on the dignity of a Queen before addressing Sieghard's comments.

"Father, you have no idea how much that means to me. What remains of my own family views me as a traitor, and I know for a fact that your wife does not care for me either. To hear that someone besides Berengar views me in such a kind light is truly a great honor!"

Gisela did not respond well to this statement; calling her husband by the term "father" implied that the temptress was indeed married to her son, and the old Baroness had never approved of Berengar's playboy nature or his legalization of Polygamy. In response to Linde's statement, Berengar's mother merely scoffed, letting everyone in the room know just what she thought about Linde and Berengar's other "wives."

The only woman among Berengar's harem to not care in the slightest about Gisela's opinion was Honoria; the only person whose opinion she cared about who was in this room was her husband and him alone. As for her rivals, her in-laws, or even her own family, they could shove their opinions where the sun doesn't shine. The Pirate Queen had been severely influenced by the Austrian King's "to hell with the world, I do what I want!" attitude.

Thus, she merely watched her husband's and his family's engagements with a slight sense of interest. She enjoyed seeing Linde get a taste of her own medicine. While they had been intimate with one another during Berengar's absence, and the Byzantine Princess generally found Linde to be more agreeable than Adela; they were frenemies at best and outright rivals at the worst.

As for Berengar, he continued to eat his food and keep the conversation going in a healthy direction; after all the meal was far from over, soon they would move onto the desert, and there was much conflict to be resolved between Berengar's large family. He sighed in exhaustion as he could only imagine the difficult conversations he would be having in the future when his children were grown up and vying for power.

Chapter 459 - Family Reunion Part III

Dessert arrived at the table, and it was in the form of various cakes, pastries, and cookies. Berengar was delighted to see such a large variety of sweet foods to snack on. The only problem was that he missed his favorite chocolate dishes from his past life due to a lack of access to the new world.

Nevertheless, he quickly dug into the cake prepared for him and enjoyed the bite. As for those around him, they were somewhat tense; after all, the King's mother was not exactly fond of Berengar's multiple wives, nor was she in the best relationship with her daughter.

Thus, Berengar and his father were left to smooth things over between their family. Of course, Berengar knew there was no conceivable way to get so many women to come together for an extended duration of time. Where there were multiple women; there was bound to be conflict; it was simply in their nature.

Nevertheless, after a few bites, he began to speak up and try to mend the gap between his mother and sister; at the very least, he could fix their relationship. Thus with a heavy sigh, he gazed fondly upon his sister before speaking the words he had been meaning to tell her for some time.

"Henrietta, Mother, it is time you learned the truth..."

After saying these cryptic words, the two women gazed upon him with confusion in their blue eyes. They did not understand what he was referring to, and Gisela was the first to speak up on the matter.

"What are you talking about?"

Sieghard gave Berengar a cold glance; he knew exactly where this was headed and quickly placed down his fork and knife as he mentally prepared himself for the conversation that was about to be had. As for the Austrian King, he immediately began to clarify what he meant.

"Lambert didn't die on the Eastern Front in service to the Teutonic Order; he returned home to Tyrol with an army in one final attempt to claim my life and exact vengeance upon his family. He and I fought at Oberstdorf, where he claimed my right eye with his blade. In retaliation, I shot him through the chest with my pistol.

Henrietta, you should not blame our parents for Lambert's death; they gave him an act of Mercy by sending him away to the Teutonic Order. It was his own vengeful heart that caused him to meet his end so soon. After all, what he did warranted a death sentence.

On numerous occasions, the boy attempted to claim my life so that he could have my position as heir to the Barony. At least twice he damn well nearly succeeded. If he had achieved this, he would have sold our home to Linde's father; in doing so, Lothar would have used our mines to overthrow Duke Wilmar.

Lambert was a traitor to his family and his people until the very end; Father and I have hidden this from the two of you to spare you some grief. However, I have seen what this secret has done to you, my dear little sister, and I have decided you are now old enough to know the truth."

Henrietta was amazed by this revelation; the very idea that her two brothers had fought each other to the death was simply unbelievable. However, when she reflected on the past, she immediately began to piece together some information and thus quickly concluded. Immediately the young woman asked her brother for clarification on a particular issue.

"Then your affair with Linde was..."

Berengar smiled bitterly and nodded his head as he admitted to the truth behind the origins of his relationship with Linde.

"You could call it an act of revenge on Lambert; after all, he had poisoned me to the point of death. It is a miracle that I survived. Hell, if not for Linde and her actions, Lambert most likely would have succeeded on his subsequent assassination attempts."

While Henrietta appeared to be processing the information by thinking it through to its logical conclusion, Gisela was in tears. She had known that her sons had been in a bitter battle of intrigue, and that was one of the reasons she convinced Berengar to agree to exile instead of execution as punishment for Lambert's crimes. Yet, to find out that her baby boy had returned to Austria with an army in an attempt to enact vengeance on his family indeed sent her heart into the depths of despair.

Sieghard immediately comforted his wife, he had lived a life filled with grief and guilt these past few years, and one of the primary reasons for this was the continued lies he had told his wife about Lambert's demise. Now that the truth was in the air, the family could properly mend their grievances.

As for Berengar's wives, they were all aware of the story of how Berengar had killed Lambert; aside from Yasmin, she stared in awe at her husband. Indeed, he and Hasan had many similarities; it was no wonder

that Berengar and her brother had become such good friends, despite massive differences in culture, religion, and heritage.

Berengar continued to eat his dessert as his mother and sister worked through their feelings. While a significant point of contention in Henrietta's heart towards her parents had been dissolved, she still had to deal with the fact that they abandoned her during her youth. Thus she immediately raised her tone of voice as she began to yell at her mother.

"Fine, Lambert's death is not entirely your fault, but the fact remains that you two abandoned me! I was ten years old, and you left me to live with my big brother and his mistress! Do you have any idea the kind of effect that had on me! Even then, if you two were better parents, perhaps you could have prevented Lambert's treachery!

Hell, even as grandparents, you are making the same mistake, mother! You are isolating Berengar's kids with his other wives because you disapprove of his relationships! How do you think they will feel growing up with their grandmother despising them for being the product of secondary marriages! They will grow to hate the children of Adela!"

Berengar was surprised when his sister addressed this point, as were his wives. None of them wanted to say it out of respect for their husband's mother, but Henrietta was right; if Gisela continued to treat their children as if they were unrelated, it would indeed affect them as they grew. Up."

Hans immediately looked over at the conversation and towards his grandmother as he felt a bit confused. He curiously raised his brow as he asked his sobbing grandmother the question on his mind.

"Grandma? Do you hate me?"

The accusation of being responsible for Lambert's fate combined with knowing how he passed away, how she had abandoned her daughter during her grief, and the problematic question asked by her grandson immediately caused Gisela to have a mental breakdown. She continued to sob in her husband's arms as Sieghard attempted to soothe her.

Berengar did not have words to say about this situation; after all, Henrietta was right, and he was growing sick of his mother's behavior towards his wives and children. Instead of consoling his mother

during her grief, he looked upon his sister and smiled while giving her a thumb's up. Somebody needed to say something to the woman, and he was glad it was not him.

Hopefully, now that all of these grievances had been addressed, Berengar's wives and sister could repair their relationship with his mother. Thus they waited for a while for the old Baroness to calm down. Afterward, Berengar would have his wives, sisters, and grandchildren spend a significant amount of time with his mother, talking through their differences.

As for him, he eventually walked away with his father towards his private bar, where the two began to drink together. After all, men don't talk about their feelings, at least not in the presence of women. They drink away their sorrows and confide in their brothers. However, Berengar was severely lacking in the department of having friends his age, and thus he had to share his grief with his father.

Sieghard pounded a shot of whiskey before sighing heavily; as he did so, he immediately began to chastise his son for his behavior.

"While I know it was good for them to hear the truth, I can't help but feel like breaking your mother's heart was not the most appropriate course of action..."

Berengar chuckled before responding to his father's complaint.

"Don't blame me; Henrietta was the one who was harsh with mother; I had no intention of seeing her in such a state. Hopefully, they can move past this and begin to mend their relationship. I don't want to spend the rest of my life with a group of wives, a sister, and a mother who all despise each other. I have enough on my plate as is!"

Sieghard laughed as he heard this before responding casually.

"Well, what did you think was going to happen when you married four women? Did you actually think that they would live together in harmony? Are you really that naive, my son?"

The Austrian King took a shot of whiskey before responding to his father with a wide grin on his face.

"Hell, if you were in my position, can you honestly say you would make a different choice?"

His father did not respond to this question. Instead, he merely downed another shot before placing his hand on his son's shoulder and staring at him silently. This gesture was enough for Berengar to know the answer within his father's mind.

With this, the father and son would continue to drink and complain about their lives, while the various women of the von Kufstein family hashed out their problems over a rather fierce debate. For now, some semblance of peace among women had been established within the dynasty, though for how long it would last, Berengar was uncertain.

Chapter 460 - Preparing For A Critical Voyage

At the moment, Berengar was within the confines of his study; for the past few days, he had entertained his mother and father. While carefully navigating through the confines of his social obligations. All while balancing his industrialization process. At the moment, things were going so smoothly that there was not much work required on his part.

However, after nearly a week of dealing with intense family drama, the King finally had enough. So much so that he had begun to chart a course for the New World with a single purpose in mind, and that was to escape his chaotic family temporarily. With each passing day, Henrietta had begun to pressure him for more intimacy, and he could only come up with so many excuses to deny her.

Thus he had taken drastic measures. Initially, he had planned to begin exploration and colonization of the new world after defeating the Catholic Church and its stranglehold over Europe. However, with his current predicament, he felt now was a good time to begin exploration, while saving the colonization for years down the line.

Thus he and Honoria avoided the rest of the family while plotting their course and going over the supplies and manpower needed to sail to the new world. Looking upon the map Berengar had made of the so-called new world, his wife began to scoff at him before commenting on the insane voyage.

"You're crazy; you know that? Do you actually believe that Vinland exists? You do know that it is an old legend from Scandinavia, right?"

Despite this, Berengar had an eager smile as he gazed at the map and the trade winds he had established based upon his memory of history from his past life. He expressed his views on the matter to his loving Pirate Queen as he did so.

"Oh, it exists, alright! However, if we are going to travel to Vinland, we are going to need more than an old sloop of war!"

Honorina immediately frowned upon hearing these words and crossed her arms as she scolded her husband.

"Is my ship not good enough for you?"

Upon hearing this, Berengar smiled before sprawling a document across the table; as he did so, he nodded in agreement with Honorina's words.

"Not in the slightest!"

Honorina was about to smack her man across the head for his insults, that is until she laid eyes on the blueprint he had stretched out. It was a plan to completely retrofit her ship "Honorina's Revenge" into an Iron-Clad Steam-Powered sloop of war. Her mint green irises sparkled as they gazed upon the improvements that Berengar planned to make to her ship.

"You've got to be kidding me?"

Berengar chuckled when he heard his wife's words. After doing so, he began to point and list out the improvements one by one.

"I started by redesigning the interior of the ship, the main guns, the boiler, and the engine will be housed in a teak citadel which will be constructed by 5-inch thick steel plates bolted to 18 inches of teak

planks! It will then be mounted on the 1-inch thick plating of the hull itself, behind which lies the timber frame and lining. The bow and stern will be connected to this citadel and be made out of 1-inch thick steel plates!

As for the engine, it will be a single vertical triple expansion engine, with a coal fire maritime boiler for the support! It will also utilize a single screw propeller as the primary source of propulsion for the vessel. With such an advanced engine this baby should be able to exceed 20 knots easily!"

Honorias gazed at this upgrade in shock; her husband was essentially stripping her precious vessel to the bare bones and rebuilding it from the ground up. Could it even be considered the same ship at that point? Despite this, Berengar then placed his finger on the next significant improvement.

"I will be replacing your obsolete muzzle loading guns and outfit the vessel with a specialized Naval variant of the 7.5cm FK 22 guns currently in use by the armed forces. These will fire HE shells on our journey, but for your future privateering operations they can be operated with inert or shrapnel shells instead."

Honorias gazed at the redesigned vessel with a wide smirk on her face as she expressed her interest in the project.

"When will my ship undergo this massive upgrade?"

In response to his wife's question, Berengar had a smug smile on his face as he proudly declared his actions.

"It is already being retrofitted as we speak!"

Honorias could hardly believe her ears as she heard this. Did this bastard seriously make changes to her ship without her permission? She was going to have to pay him back for this favor later. However, what was done was done; thus, she calmed her nerves before asking the following question on her mind.

"So obviously, we can't bring my girls on this voyage; they can't be trusted with such a high level of security clearance... Who do you have in mind for the journey?"

Berengar smiled as he pulled out a pile of envelopes; inside of these folders were the identities of the Naval Personnel he had chosen to accompany them on the voyage. It included not only his best sailors but also the most trustworthy marines; an entire company of the Austrian Marines would be present for the journey.

Honorina quickly read through the files with a smile on her face; she trusted her husband's judgment and thus nodded her head in agreement with his decision. After reading up about the details of all the sailors and soldiers accompanying them, she handed the folders back to Berengar while crossing her arms. She had just one final question on her mind.

"If we're going on a journey to the mythical Vinland, then tell me, who will look after our son?"

Berengar was stunned when he heard this; he had not thought about such a subject, after all to him the answer was obvious, thus with a wide grin he answered his wife with an appropriate response.

"What do you mean? Obviously, our son will be taken care of by Linde while we are away. After all, we are one giant family, and Linde already has three kids, and years of experience as a mother!

Honorina snarled in disgust as she heard this before commenting on Linde and her children.

"You want my infant son to suck on that woman's cow udders while I'm away? I've seen what has become of Hans, one day, he will be as perverted as his old man, and it's entirely because that red-headed bimbo breastfed him for too long!"

Berengar chuckled when he heard this harsh response before reminding Honorina of an embarrassing piece of her history.

"Really? You don't approve of Linde? Because according to her, you are quite fond of her so-called cow udders as well..."

Upon hearing this remark, Honorina's face immediately flushed red with embarrassment, she wanted nothing more at this moment than to hide her head in disgust. She had no idea that Linde had revealed their intimate secrets to Berengar behind her back. Ultimately she controlled her embarrassment and clicked her tongue in disgust.

"Tsk... that bitch! I'll make sure to get her back for this!"

Berengar chuckled once more; though Honoria used harsh words to describe her rival, he could tell that they actually had a good relationship, much better than that between Adela and the others. As such, he wrapped his arms around his wife's waist from behind before whispering in her ear.

"Oh really, why don't you tell me something embarrassing about her that I don't already know?"

In response to this, a wicked grin appeared on Honoria's face as she revealed one of Linde's embarrassing secrets in retaliation.

"Linde has an exhibition fetish; now and then, she goes out into public without any panties! Luckily nobody has found out... yet!"

Berengar had an awkward expression on his face as he heard this; after all, he could guess that this was probably a result of the training he put Linde through. On more than one occasion, he had done things to her in a public setting. Thus he immediately switched the topic as he gazed over at the information that had been compiled.

"We need about a month for the ship to be retrofitted and the supplies to be gathered. However, after that is finished, we can set off for Vinland; I can't wait to see the legendary land with my very own eyes!"

Honoria responded to this enthusiasm with a simple joke.

"If we manage to find a lost Kingdom, you better not bring back its princess as another one of your brides!"

The moment she said this, Berengar had an awkward smile on his face. Ultimately he decided to let this snide remark pass. After all, there was still much more work to be done before he could step foot on the soil of the new world. For the time being, he would have to find a suitable candidate to court his sister, and he already had somebody in mind.

