

Steel 47

Chapter 47: Lambert's Birthday III

After successfully sending the letter to the Bishop of Innsbruck, Lambert had a wide smile on his face. His otherwise foul mood had taken a turn for the better as he could finally see an end in sight for his brother. He also wrote another letter informing Count Lothar of Tyrol of his plans to involve the Church in their schemes. By branding Berengar as a Heretic, they would essentially get the entirety of the Christian world to unite against him. Or so they believed, at the very least, the Inquisition would not let the young man go so easily.

It was not until the evening that Lambert finally left his room where he returned to the Kitchen to see his family gathered around the table with a German Cheesecake produced for him. It was a relatively recent tradition that popped up in the German world, but it was not until Berengar arrived that it had spread to Kufstein. After all, the man wanted an excuse to eat cake. Since it was a tradition that was bound to spread across Europe eventually and had already taken root in some areas of the German-speaking regions, Berengar took it upon himself to introduce it to Kufstein for Lambert's birthday. It would seem like he was generous; in reality, he just wanted an excuse to cheat on his diet and feast on the delicious cake. It was just a pity that chocolate did not exist in Europe yet. Otherwise, he would have had his chefs cook up some German chocolate cake, which Berengar was accustomed to having during his childhood birthdays from his previous life.

Berengar, of course, took the liberty to add the candles himself and start that tradition a few centuries early. It was a birthday, and Berengar would be damned if he did not do it right! It truly did not matter if it was for his greatest enemy; an excuse to start a tradition is an excuse to start a tradition. The family sat around the table and lit the candles, where Berengar stared at his little brother with a gentle smile.

"Make a wish, Lambert, then blow out the candles!"

As such, Lambert thought to himself.

'Make a wish? I don't see the point, but whatever, I wish you would drop dead!'

Afterward, he did what Berengar had said and exhaled deeply onto the candles snuffing their flames in the process. Unfortunately for him, his wish did not become a reality. Afterward, everyone lined up to give the presents they had acquired to Lambert. From his mother Gisela, he received a fine doublet manufactured in one of Berengar's factories. From his father, he received a new steel longsword superior to the one he previously had, as it was made from high-quality, high carbon Bessemer steel. He received a childish drawing of the family from Henrietta, and from Linde, he received nothing... His fiancée had not given him a gift at all; well, technically, she had. He was just not aware of it. Her gift to Lambert was cheating on him with his older brother in his own bed.

Finally, it was Berengar's turn, and everyone expected him to give something outlandish to Lambert; after all, Berengar was in charge of the industrial sector within the realm. Yet before Berengar gave him the box which contained his present, he said something which unnerved Lambert.

"My present is a trophy from my hunting trip in which I went on with our father not too long ago. Open it up and see what it is, little brother; I'm sure it will amuse you..."

When Berengar said those words, he had a devilish grin on his face which gave Lambert a bad feeling about the present within his grasp. His hands began to tremble as he slowly unwrapped the box and looked inside. In the small box were four mini ball projectiles, slightly bent out of shape and stained with blood. It was truly a curious thing. However, the words that came out of Berengar's words spread terror to every corner of Lambert's mind.

"I managed to dig those out of the corpses of my kills. It's a trophy to the success of my hunt, and I would like to dedicate such a meaningful part of my past to you, little brother!"

It was a weird present to give to Lambert on his birthday, and thus it confused everyone except for Lambert, Linde, and Berengar. He kept looking up between the malicious smile on Berengar's face and down at the blood-stained bullet-like projectiles in his hands. It instantly clicked in his head what Berengar meant. Lambert had sent four assassins to deal with Berengar on the hunt, and there were four bloody pieces of lead in this box. Did that mean that Berengar had killed those men after all? That they had not run away in

the first place? How was that possible? According to Berengar the hand cannons did not have a very effective range and a long reload speed. How did he manage to get off four shots and perfectly kill all four men? This was very clearly a threat by Berengar to Lambert, and there were only three people in the room who realized exactly what Berengar's intent was with this gift.

However, the more Lambert tried to rationalize it, the more he realized Berengar couldn't kill the men with these lead balls; his brother was probably aware of the fact that Lambert had sent assassins after him and was messing with his mind. It was not as if Berengar could fire his hand cannon at the distance of a longbow; that would be absurd! Thus the sixteen-year-old boy finally calmed himself down and returned Berengar's gesture with a gracious smile.

"Thank you, Berengar; I will treasure it always!"

Berengar smiled back to Lambert and nodded in approval

"I am sure you will."

To everyone else in the room, it would appear that the two brothers were quite friendly to one another and were on good terms. Sadly such a thing could not be further from the truth. If they knew that the two boys were fighting tooth and nail to find a way to put one another in the grave, it would surely cause a disturbance. After accepting his gifts, Lambert immediately dug into his cheesecake with a satisfied expression. He did not know the genius who invented such a thing, but it was truly a slice of heaven. The family mingled together as they discussed the future while snacking on the cake. Finally, Berengar mentioned something sure to antagonize his little brother.

"So, little brother, I hear your wedding has been moved up. It should be just around the corner now that you're an adult, should it not?"

Gisela's expression instantly stiffened as she stared menacingly at Linde; by now, Linde was used to such glances from the Baroness and could not care less. Lambert, on the other hand, nearly choked on his cake. Berengar was clearly trying to aggravate him, especially now that Lambert had suspicions about Linde's potential relationship with his brother. However, this marriage was something he could not back out of now. Not unless he could prove he

was not the father of Linde's child. However, that would be not easy to do, and he did not even know where to begin to do so. Essentially it was her word against his, and her father would never believe that the girl had been impregnated by a man other than her fiance. Of course, she would never admit to such a thing, and as such, he was basically screwed. The girl he once admired as the most beautiful woman in the world was not only an enormous bitch, but quite the slut too! At least in Lambert's eyes. From Berengar's perspective, she was an incredibly loyal woman, she was chaste until the night they met, and the only reason things went down the path they had was that she drugged him.

Eventually, Lambert smiled and hissed between his teeth as he could not think of an escape route.

"Yes, I look forward to it every day. Isn't that right, dear?"

he said as he glanced over to Linde, hoping to get a reaction from the girl. Now that they were both 16 years old, she no longer held that seniority over him.

Linde looked over at Lambert with disgust in her eyes. However, despite her true feelings, she pretended to be kind to Lambert since it was his birthday and his family was around.

"Of course, I wouldn't want any other man as my husband!"

The only person in the room who bought that line was Sieghard; even Adela could tell the young woman's disgust towards her fiance. It was not that she was a bad actor; it is just that all of the women in the room already had some suspicion about where Linde's affection truly lied, and Berengar obviously knew her true self better than anyone. Gisela truly detested the young woman who her second son was about to marry. If she had the authority, she would have cast the girl out from her home long ago. Hopefully, when Berengar became regent, she could convince him as a mother to use his authority to move Lambert and his detestable wife into one of the estates within the town of Kufstein, which were built for the lodgings of the noblemen who visited for Berengar's engagement ceremony. Though she suspected that Berengar was having an affair with Linde, surely the boy would end things once the girl had been married to his brother.

Of course, in reality, Lambert would be excluded from the best parts of marriage as Linde would use her pregnancy as an excuse not to sleep with Lambert and would continue to maintain her distance from him even after marriage. After this morning's scramble with Berengar, he truly feared his brother would feed him to the pigs if he forced himself upon the girl. The look in Berengar's eye was inhuman and murderous with intent. He had no doubt Berengar would be so cruel to his own flesh and blood. Especially since they were already both plotting each other's downfall.

After a long day of festivities and celebration, the family finally returned to their rooms. As always, Berengar attempted to get some work done before going to bed. He was currently designing public schools to be built in every populated region of the Barony and the schedule in which not only the children but the adult peasants would have to go through to learn their basic education. It was an expensive investment that would take away from the massive productivity he was currently experiencing, but it would be worth it in the long run. An educated populace was a productive populace. Not to mention He would be able to use the public school system to indoctrinate the population of Kufstein into being loyal to him and his reformist cause.

Thus among the list of blueprints, he was creating was the printing press, so he could give everyone a copy of the bible to study in their own time, and of course, the education materials they would need to cover as a class. The only problem he faced was finding educated individuals to teach the masses. Though he was certain that among the contacts he had made during his engagement ceremony, he could find some educated and pampered nobles to act as teachers for a few hours each day. Thus he spent the remainder of his work hours establishing a proper curriculum, designs for school buildings, the printing press, and of course, the education manuals for each student.

By the time Linde knocked on his door, it was well past midnight; though they were both worn out from their combined exercise throughout the day, they would still enjoy each other's comfort as they spooned together and fell to sleep in one another's arms. After all, it had been a pretty exciting day for the couple. In the coming days, Linde would begin building a case against Lambert for the man she loved. Time was of the essence and it was best to acquire these things before Berengar became regent, thus he would be able to arrest Lambert the very minute he gained the power of a Baron. However, for now, the two were exhausted from their previous playtime, and simply held

onto one another's loving embrace and fell asleep in each other's arms. Whatever threats crossed their path in the future the couple would face it together.