

Steel 481

Chapter 481 - Improvements To The Settlement

Berengar awoke the following day with his queen in his arms. Honoria was latching on to him like a lamprey. Though spring had arrived, she still found the weather too cold for her liking, and thus instinctively held onto her man, sucking away the warmth in his body.

Upon seeing this, a smile etched itself on Berengar's face as he stroked the woman's indigo hair. It was nice to have at least one woman in his harem who dyed her hair with crazy colors. In his past life, Berengar had partially grown up during the scene fad of the mid-2000s. Though he wasn't a part of it, at the time he found the girls who dressed in such an unusual manner to be quite attractive.

While Berengar was gazing at his wife with a sense of nostalgia, she opened her mint green eyes at this moment and gazed at his expression with a hint of confusion. Just what could have caused him to look at her in such a way? In the end, she made a joke about the whole thing.

"You know you can do more than just look at me, right?"

Berengar chuckled when he heard this before grabbing ahold of his wife's pretty face and kissing her luscious lips. After a few moments of passion, he broke away and sighed heavily before expressing the thoughts on his mind.

"I must say it is nice being here in the new world, just the two of us. It is just a shame that we will have to go back soon."

When Honoria heard this, she bit her lip in discontent. The days she had spent in the new world were some of the most exhilarating she had ever experienced. She dreaded the idea of returning to the Palace and taking part in court politics once more.

Berengar noticed the expression on his wife's face and immediately became curious. He raised his brow over his scarred eye before asking about the woman's thoughts."

"What is it?"

Honorias sighed heavily before realizing what she had been fantasizing about ever since her first step foot on the new world.

"It's nothing. I just want to go exploring. There is so much we don't know about this land, and I want to be the first one to uncover its secrets. I was just thinking that after we return home, it would be nice if you would allow me to take my girls and sail across this new landmass and see what treasures I can uncover!"

Berengar's first instinct was to reject such a notion; piracy was one thing, but allowing her to explore the Americas by herself and her crew was a hazardous task. However, the more he thought about it, the more he felt he could agree to these conditions.

After all, plenty of famous men in his past life such as Ponce de Leon, Hernan Cortez, and Francisco Pizarro had explored vast swaths of territory and even toppled empires with only sailing vessels and primitive firearms.

In comparison, Honorias and her girls were much better equipped; as long as they kept their wits about them, they could easily survive the dangers of the new world. After careful consideration, Berengar agreed to his wife's wishes.

"Alright, if you swear, ensure that your crew swear a vow of secrecy on pain of death about everything they see here. I will allow you to do as you please. However, any information you come across must be sold to the Austrian Crown! I don't want this information being leaked to any other kingdoms ..."

Honorias smiled when she heard her dream would become reality and quickly nodded her head with an emphatic expression.

"Of course, I will oversee my girls and ensure that they don't do anything stupid. You know damn well I am not above executing one of them if they do anything detrimental to the Kingdom of Austria!"

This statement had brought a sense of calmness to Berengar's otherwise restless heart; he could ill afford to allow the information of the New World to leak to his rivals and allies so soon after its discovery. He knew Honoria would take the precautions to ensure that the existence of this land and all others would remain an Austrian secret.

Having agreed, Berengar sealed it with a kiss as he leaned over and passionately intertwined his tongue with that of his wife's. The couple continued began to engage in a passionate display as they embraced each other's warmth.

Thus, Berengar and Honoria entertained each other once more. By the time the two of them were done with their activities, it was close to noon. Though it wasn't the regular morning exercise routine that Berengar went through, it was more than enough to sustain him for that day.

After they had completed their actions, Berengar got dressed and exited from his cabin, where he immediately noticed that the fortress had begun the process of being retrofitted, the crude log cabins were being replaced with precise half timber houses in the style commonly found throughout Germany.

The large felled tree trunks used to crudely construct the cabins were being recycled into expertly crafted timber frames by the Army engineers. As for the foundation of the structures, they were made via a combination of coal-fired clay bricks and type M mortar, which was imported from the fatherland.

In the end, solid structures that would last the test of time would replace the frontier-style log cabins and form the fortress's interior, barracks, a chapel, houses for officers and long-term residents, even a tavern was being constructed within the settlement. Aside from the Type M mortar, all the resources for making these buildings could be found within the immediate vicinity of the settlement.

When Berengar witnessed these plans in place, he had a broad smile on his face; he kept smiling as he strolled through the fortress; after stepping upon the ramparts, he noticed that another group of army engineers had taught the native workforce how to create a four-field system, with draft horses and a steel plow.

After the fields had been plowed, they would be appropriately seeded with a horse-drawn seed drill. The fact that Berengar had brought over the necessary equipment to mechanize his colony's agriculture via animal power from the start was a big plus. This meant that he could easily use a small labor force for farming large swaths of land.

Though he could not implement the use of combine harvesters for the time being; such innovations could be fielded in the coming years when larger cargo ships capable of ferrying vast amounts of animals were constructed.

Thinking upon this, Berengar shifted his gaze towards the coast and noticed that the crude dock that had been established was being expanded into a much larger port, intending to accept multiple large vessels for future efforts. By the time his entire navy had been retrofitted into ironclads, its ships could dock successfully in the colony.

Frankly, Berengar's current ship designs were limited by cargo capability; even his clippers could not carry much to and from the new world. He needed his Dominion class ships to come to fruition if he wanted any massive expansion into the new world.

However, those all-steel ships were still a few years away from being constructed. Thus, he was left with warships and clippers to transport goods across the Atlantic. For the time being, Berengar would use the limited cargo capacity of his warships to ferry men, supplies, and livestock over. The need for secrecy was paramount, and Berengar would only trust his military to keep it that way.

Having gazed upon the improvements that were taking place in his Colony, Berengar felt satisfied with the results; in a few months, this colony would look like an actual Austrian Town. With this in mind, he climbed down from the ramparts and noticed a team of jaegers was about to set forth from the settlement.

Berengar took this opportunity to step forward and speak with the men, where they immediately jumped to attention and saluted their King. After seeing the appropriate response, Berengar responded in kind before questioning them about their task.

"Are you departing from the fortress?"

The squad leader immediately nodded his head before responding to his King.

"Yes, your majesty, the various Jaeger squads who have arrived are being deployed for the search of valuable resources. Our objective is to travel into the unknown and seek out granite to begin building proper fortifications instead of these poorly constructed timber walls that we currently have!"

Berengar immediately nodded his head in response; the sooner proper walls could be constructed around the settlement, the better. After reflecting upon his knowledge from his past life, he quickly issued an order to the men.

"Hand over your map; I have received intel from the natives that might be valuable for your search."

The squad leader did not hesitate and handed over his map and pen; it was a relatively crude map based upon scouting reports from the Marine reconnaissance teams and information that had been traded with the native tribes.

Berengar made a rough estimate of a granite location which he knew about from his tenure living in the State of New York during his previous life, before marking a red x. He then handed the map back to the officer and said with a stern expression on his face.

"You may find what you are looking for in that location; however, what lies between here and there is a mystery to even me. So keep your heads on a swivel, and don't be afraid to shoot anything that poses a threat, understood?"

The soldiers immediately nodded their heads in response to their King's statement.

'Yes, sir!"

Berengar left one final remark before allowing the men to begin their journey.

"Alright, you boys, come back safe; I don't want to ferry a body back to the fatherland! Hail victory!"

The Jaegers immediately threw up their salutes once more before responding to their King in kind.

"Hail victory!"

With those words spoken, the Jaegers entered the unknown, searching for valuable resources. Whether they would return to the settlement, and with viable intel, remained unknown.. However, their journey and what they encountered on it would be exciting.

Chapter 482 - Massacre At Krakow

Eckhard gazed upon the destruction with a sense of overwhelming disdain. Since he had begun his defense of the Teutonic State, the Eastern Coalition had thrown wave after wave of men at his defenses only for them to be continuously shredded apart by the overwhelming volume of fire that the Austrians unleashed upon them.

By now, the leaders of the Eastern Coalition had learned a valuable lesson. A frontal assault against the Austrian army was the equivalent of suicide. Since they could not capture the fortifications or the cities that once belonged to the Teutonic State, they had begun to raid the local villages.

The village lying before Eckhard was one of the victims of these assaults. The fields were burnt to a crisp, the buildings were razed to the ground, and the people were slaughtered or enslaved. Such mindless destruction weighed heavily on the conscience of the old Field Marshal. As he was reflecting on this, an officer beneath his command approached him to comment on the situation.

"Marshal, we must retaliate for this offense... The fact that they have raided these villages after we have proclaimed them beneath our protection is an insult to our Kingdom and its Monarch!"

A single sigh escaped the lips of the veteran Field Marsha while he contemplated the best way to deal with these new tactics. While his army held onto the Cities and Castles with great skill, they could only do so much to protect the many villages of the region.

After several moments of silence, he nodded his head in response to his Officer's remark; with a grim expression on his aging face, Eckhard gave forth the order that would be infamous throughout the rest of history.

"If they wish to raze our villages to the ground, then we will do the same. Prepare to march on Krakow; let us show these Polish fools what happens when they march on Austria!"

Terror was a weapon constantly wielded by the Austrian Crown since Berengar had first crowned himself King. Under the control of Austria's current monarch, retaliation was dealt with via the tenfold doctrine.

This was a military strategy that operated under the belief that if civilian casualties had occurred to Austria and the people within its territories, the Austrian Royal Army would retaliate with a response that claimed the lives of at least ten times what they had suffered.

In the eyes of Eckhard, this was utter madness, but Berengar was a man of extreme action; he greatly despised civilian casualties; however, if his civilians were to be targetted, then he would do the same to his enemies. After all, there was a saying from his past life that he greatly admired.

"An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth."

Without any universal standard of international law regarding warfare, Berengar would respond in greater intensity to anything unleashed against him and his people. Eckhard was aware of this and knew that if he did not fulfill his obligation to his King, he would be punished severely.

To allow a massacre of Austria's citizens to occur without following up with swift and severe retaliation was a failure of one's duty regarding military command. Thus, Eckhard had designed a plot in his mind to march his army through the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and to attack their capital city.

With the artillery beneath his command, he could bring the City of Krakow to ruin in a matter of hours, and that is exactly what he planned to do. Thus over the course of the upcoming weeks, Eckhard had consolidated his forces on the Teutonic Region's borders and began a march across the Polish landscape, raiding any town they came across and ensuring that its people suffered the same horrific fate as those within the Teutonic Region.

Thousands of lives were claimed on this horrific march until finally, the Austro-Bohemian Forces were gathered at the gates of Krakow; it did not take long for the hundreds of artillery pieces to set up their positions. Once everything was in order, Eckhard commanded his soldiers to unleash hell upon the unsuspecting city.

"Open fire!"

This order was relayed across the army's lines until finally, a thunderous barrage echoed in the air. Hundreds of shells fell upon the city, detonating within its confines. The Fiery explosions could be seen from miles away as the Artillery crews rapidly unloaded their spent shells before placing a new round within its horizontal sliding block.

The moment the next shell was in place, the Officer would pull on the lanyard and unleash another round onto the city. While the barrage continued, Eckhard turned his gaze away from it; he could not bear to watch the destruction and suffering his orders had caused to the people of Poland.

If only the Eastern-Coalition had not resorted to raiding tactics, then he would be able to conduct this war with a hint of civility. However, with an amoral Tyrant like Berengar at the helm of their Kingdom, it was inevitable that such senseless slaughter would occur.

The age of Chivalry was long dead at this point, and Eckhard had witnessed its demise. However, as the years passed, the weapons in his hands became more advanced and more destructive to the point where his army could shell an entire city into oblivion in a matter of hours.

Despite their horrific actions, much of the Austrian army gazed upon the fiery death and the screams of the innocent with a stoic expression; to them, this attack was justified. They had agreed to conduct warfare under the terms that no civilian shall be unnecessarily harmed. However, their enemies did not play by these rules, and as a result, they were now forced to inflict pain and suffering upon them in a far greater manner.

The more cruel members of the Austrian army smiled upon the collapse of the city's structures; to them, this was the ultimate symbol of Austrian Power and authority. If anything, Poland-Lithuania should have surrendered to the terms that were initially presented to them. Had they done so this senseless slaughter could have been easily avoided.

Perhaps this event would never have occurred if they had not resorted to raiding Teutonic Villages. Yet, the Eastern Coalition had massacred innocents and, in doing so, justified Austrian retaliation. If there was one lesson that could be learned from this massacre, it was that the enemies of Austria should never target their civilians, even if it were in a region that was only recently annexed.

The Echo of the guns continued to fire well into the evening; by now, the city's walls were brought to ruin, so were its structures. The destruction of Krakow was thoroughly completed; in fact, it was in worse shape than Berengar had left Venice. Nothing remained but a smoldering ruin of a once-proud city.

Cities could be rebuilt, and people could be replaced, but this was a stain on the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth that was not easily removed, with much of its forces depleted in Iberia and the Teutonic Region as well as their Capital City in ruins. The leaders of the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth would find themselves in a difficult position in the upcoming days.

As for Eckhard, he immediately rounded up his army and marched them onto Warsaw, his retaliation was complete, but the war against the Eastern Coalition was still very much alive. He had promised his King that he would seize much of what was now Northern Poland and the Baltic in an attempt to unite the German people who dwelled within its lands.

The veteran Field Marshal would not rest until this objective was complete. Thus, he sat on horseback and drank from his canteen, filled with alcohol as the Austrian army marched onto its following location. Retribution had been served, and hopefully, now he could fight a more conventional war against the enemy.

As for the Defense of the Teutonic Region, that responsibility now fell to Alexej Kaspar and his Bohemian soldiers. After all, they were now equipped and trained in use in the same weapons and tactics that Austria utilized.

While Eckhard began his conquest of the East, Berengar was still within Vinland, where his scouts searched for valuable resources to continue the settlement's development and potentially ship back to the fatherland.

Whether or not the Austrian King would join this war in the future had remained to be seen. However, when Berengar finally learned of the Massacre of Krakow, he would be pretty pleased that Eckhard had chosen such a vital target as the location of Austria's wrath.

Ultimately the Field Marshal would be awarded another honor for his actions on this day, one that would cause him much regret every time he gazed upon it. However, orders were orders, and he could not very well disobey his King, even if he felt that the methods used were unnecessarily cruel.

The Massacre of Krakow would forever serve in history as a reminder of how far advanced Austria was over its neighbors and the level of cruelty they were willing to engage in to accomplish their goals.

Chapter 483 - Peacekeeping Operations

Captain Jonas Giering was currently standing within a village inside the Kingdom of Portugal; months had passed since the war had officially ended. Still, the various Brigand and Rebel groups loyal to the former Royal Dynasty continued to fight for control over the region.

While most Austrian Units had been pulled out of Iberia, there were still a few specialized units remaining behind acting as peacekeepers and advisors to the Royal Granadan Army, who by now had reformed into a relatively modern and exceptional force.

Jonas Giering had taken a liking to the Portuguese region, as well as the farm girl he had saved months prior. He had opted to stay behind in Iberia and continue to ensure this girl's safety to who he had become close. Perhaps one day soon, he would even marry her and take her back to Austria.

However, such thoughts were at the back of his mind at the moment. Instead, his attention was focused on the operation at hand. He was currently in charge of his company of Jaegers, who were working alongside the Granadan Royal Guard to secure the southernmost regions of Portugal.

The Portuguese Loyalists had shifted from a campaign of open warfare to unconventional methods, and the Austrians had become their most prominent targets. Thus, at the moment, the Jaegers were the spearhead of the Austro-Granadan War machine and were kicking down doors as if they were in Fallujah.

Following the example portrayed by his King, Jonas had opted to be the first man into the fray and the last man out. When his breacher brought forth the sledgehammer which would breach the door, he was steeling his nerves for combat.

The breacher battered away at the door with the sledgehammer in his hands. After several powerful strikes, the lock broke apart, and the door was opened. After this had occurred, Jonas entered the room with his G-22 aimed down, ready to clear the space.

The moment he entered the building, a loud bang resounded in the confines of the small area, and Jonas felt the impact of an arkebuse ball upon his trench armor; luckily for him, such primitive firearms were incapable of piercing through his armor, and thus he immediately squeezed the trigger, and sent a round blindly into the room.

Though the smoke had yet to clear, the .45-70 projectile had blasted apart the torso of the attacker. Despite this, the soldiers beneath Jonas' command fired in the combatant's direction, sending another four rounds into his chest.

As the soldiers entered the room, they noticed that the target who their captain had eliminated was a boy no older than twelve; he was carrying a primitive arkebuse that the now-defunct Iberian Union likely manufactured.

The lifeless look in the child's brown eyes sent chills down the spines of the Austrian Jaegers, who now realized that they were not only fighting men, but children too. Losing such a young boy immediately caused the men to grieve.

However, in the next moment, Jonas got up from the ground clutching his chest. Though the projectile had failed to pierce into his body, it had left a significant blunt force trauma on the area of impact, and thus he cursed while in a state of utter fury.

"Fucking bastard!"

After saying this, he withdrew his service revolver and pointed it at the boy's corpse before plugging two extra rounds in his skull; the rage in his heart could only be released by venting it upon the hostile child's corpse. After Jonas had recovered from his fragile mental state, he looked over at his soldiers, who were gawking at him in shock before issuing his commands.

"What the hell are you idiots waiting for? Clear the rest of this fucking building!"

Immediately, the soldiers snapped back to reality and checked their weapons before walking through the rest of the building. Despite his condition, Jonas quickly shouldered his rifle before leading his men through the rest of the building.

He promptly kicked down a door to see a pregnant woman and a young girl huddling in fear. It was her son who had attempted to gun down the Austrian Soldiers. Jonas immediately shouted in Portuguese towards the civilians, issuing his commands as he did so.

"Get on the ground now!"

The various Jaegers pointed their rifles at the unarmed civilians; they could never be too careful when clearing a room; after all, they had just witnessed the tenacity of the Portuguese People in their resistance against their new Granadan Overlords.

The mother screamed in fury as she cursed the Austrians for killing her son; though she had not confirmed his death, the fact that they were now standing here after an exchange of gunfire was enough evidence to support her claims.

"Youth heathen bastards! How dare you kill my boy! I hope you burn in hell for your sins!"

Jonas was in a foul mood after having been shot and immediately wrestled the woman to the ground, where he placed a pair of cuffs around her wrists; the soldiers followed suit and forced the young daughter into a similar position. After doing so, they immediately searched the two civilians' bodies, checking for weapons.

While Jonas led two of his soldiers in these actions, the other members within the fire team went throughout the rest of the building, clearing it. Before long, another exchange of gunfire resounded throughout the corridors, causing Jonas to rush towards the sound of conflict.

In the building's corner, the family's father lay dead, with a crossbow in his hands; multiple rounds had ripped his skull and internal organs apart, leaving a gruesome scene behind. By now, the Austrian

soldiers were well accustomed to bloodshed and did not react in the slightest to the stage. Upon seeing that none of his troops were wounded, Jonas sighed in relief; he checked on his soldier's well-being after doing so.

"Anybody hurt?"

The soldier who had been shot by the crossbow shook his head before responding with a look of contempt on his face.

"I was lucky; if that bolt were an inch lower, it would have been stuck in my eye; fortunately, it hit my helmet and bounced off!"

After saying this, the soldier spat upon the corpse of the Portuguese man. Jonas nodded his head in affirmation before giving his troops the rest of their orders.

"Alright, search the rest of the building; this is the first of many that we have to work through today!"

The soldiers immediately saluted their captain and responded in the affirmative before doing as they were told.

"Yes, Sir!"

After saying this, they cleared the rest of the building. However, they had already killed all the hostiles; thus, there were no other sounds of conflict within the household. Having secured the building, Jonas and his fireteam grabbed ahold of the bound civilians and brought them into the center of the village, where they handed them off to the Royal Granadan Army.

These men were now dressed in their new uniforms and had begun to resemble a semi-modern force. Though when compared to the Austrian Jaegers, who were dressed in advanced camouflage patterns, they still looked quite antiquated.

When the prisoners were brought forth and handed over, the Captain of the Granadan Company saluted his Austrian Counterpart; he noticed the dent on Jonas' breastplate and immediately commented on his condition.

"Are you alright?"

Jonas nodded his head and sighed as he responded to this question.

"I'm fine, but it appears there are more firearms in the hands of the enemy than we had initially estimated. I will relay this information back to intelligence; it is up to them to find out where they are gaining such weapons."

The Granadan Captain nodded his head and ordered his troops to take charge of the prisoners; after doing so, he questioned the Austrian Captain once more.

"Are you going back out there?"

The Jaeger captain immediately pulled out a pack of hemp cigarettes and smoked one; after releasing a large plume of smoke, he nodded his head with a bitter expression on his face.

"Somebody has to kick down these doors..."

Having said this, Jonas dropped his cigarette to the floor and stamped it out before checking his rifle's chamber to ensure that it was still loaded. Having confirmed this detail, he slammed the bolt home before walking away and giving further orders to the troops beneath his command.

"One down! Twelve more to go. Look alive, boys!"

With this said, the Austrian Jaegers once more approached another building, unaware whether it was filled with hostiles, and prepared to breach its entrance. This urban warfare would later inspire Berengar to design and issue shotguns to his forces.. After all, sledgehammers were not the most efficient means of breaching a building.

Chapter 484 - Locating The Granite Quarry

Two weeks had passed since Berengar had first dispatched Jaegers in Vinland to search for critical resources. As of right now, the team that he specifically sent to a prominent granite quarry location was standing upon atop a hill gazing in awe at the beautiful sight.

It had recently rained, yet now the sky was a clear crystal blue, the sight of a rare double rainbow hovered over the location of the rocky ravine, the trees surrounding the area were a vibrant green, as it was now spring, and the natural landscape was filled with life.

The Sergeant in charge of the unit gazed in awe at the splendid scenery as if he had stepped foot into heaven. The mild weather of the New York Spring, combined with the natural beauty of its landscape, was indeed a sight to behold. Here in this new world, which was wealthy in new natural resources, one gained the feeling that a man could be anything he wanted to be so long as he worked hard enough.

The Sergeant immediately descended from the hill into the ravine; his task was simple. He and his soldiers needed to confirm the location of granite which was required to build the stone fortifications around the military outpost. With this in mind, he carefully climbed down to inspect the bedrock of the area.

Having tied a rope to a sturdy tree near the edge of the cliff, the Sergeant was the first to repel down the hill, and into the ravine below, as he slowly but surely descended, he gazed in wonder at the beautiful granite that revealed itself. Should they build their fortifications and houses out of such material, it would make the settlement in Vinland a highly desirable place to live once its existence was revealed to the general public.

Such was his thought process as the Jaeger Sergeant descended from the cliff and into the ravine; before long, his squad followed him into its depths, where they stood ankle-deep in water, gazing upon the massive quantity of granite nearby.

Having confirmed that this location was rich with granite, the squad leader immediately pulled out his map and marked the site; when they finally returned to the settlement, they would dispatch workers to

begin the construction of a good quarry so that the materials could be mined and brought back to the territory to be used in the establishment of the most significant fortifications.

Unbeknownst to the Jaeger Squad, several pairs of eyes were gazing upon them from within the tree line above. The Algonquin scouts had watched as the pale-skinned foreigners descended into the ravine; though they did not know what these people were looking for, they knew it could not be suitable for them.

Remaining entirely unaware of the nearby hostile scouts, the Austrian Jaegers continued to dredge more, plunging into the ravine; up until this point, they had not only been scouting for resources but creating a detailed map, and this location was no exception. The soldier in the group who was skilled in cartography walked around the area and jotted down the details onto his piece of scrap paper.

While he was doing so, the rest of the squad were on guard. They were far from the known territory that the Expeditionary force had established, and danger lurked in every corner, from the wildlife and the natives that had proved hostile.

While they were searching through the area and taking up defensive positions, the Algonquin scouts had trekked through the tree line to set up an ambush; the moment the Austrians climbed up the rope from the ravine below, the native warriors planned to beset upon them.

As per usual tactics, the Austrian squad comprised a Sergeant equipped with a g22 rifle, and a 1422 service revolver. As for the rest of the soldiers, they were issued G22 bolt action rifles. Since they were not a company sized unit, they were seriously lacking in explosive firepower.

While gazing around the vicinity, the Sergeant realized the Natives' presence; in doing so, he raised his fist and communicated silently with the squad that hostiles were approaching and preparing an ambush. No words were spoken, and instead, the Austrian Jaegers communicated via sign language as they prepared themselves for combat.

The individual soldiers flicked off their safeties as they climbed the rope. Before doing so, the Sergeant pulled out a smoke grenade and threw it with all his might onto the cliff above. A pool of smoke filled the air when the device went off, obscuring the Native Warriors' sights. Afterward, The Sergeant began to rapidly climb onto the cliff above, where his soldiers immediately followed suit.

By the time the smoke dispersed, the squad had made it to the cliff with their fingers on the triggers. The moment they could contact the enemy, the sound of gunfire echoed in the air as bullets roared down and towards the concealed Algonquin warriors. Blood splattered as the Sergeant was the first to pull the trigger; in doing so, an .45-70 round pierced straight through the skull of his opponent.

Immediately after, he racked the bolt back and loaded another round before acquiring his next target, where he sent another round into the man's torso. The Algonquin panicked as their initial wave was cut down so quickly. Despite this, they unleashed a volley of arrows down onto the Austrian soldiers; arrows filled the sky and fell on the Austrians, who braced for impact, with their heads, necks, and vitals protected by the steel armor.

While some arrows pierced through their limbs, they were far from mortal wounds; with this in mind, the Austrians ripped the projectiles from their joints and opened fire once more on the Native war band. While not every bullet hit their mark, there was too high of a volume of fire for the natives to counteract.

With each soldier having the capability of firing 10-15 rounds per minute, it did not take long for dozens of rounds to be sent into the treeline towards the native ambushers. Eventually, survivors of this barrage had broken ranks and fled back into the forest.

One soldier was too eager for blood and immediately sprinted off towards the opponents, however before he could get far, a bullet shot past his head and hit the tree in front of him; the Jaeger looked back to see his NCO staring at him with a frown on his face, and a smoking gun in hand.

"What are you, a moron? They have probably set up traps for us! Fall back in line; we have done our damned job; it is time to return with the intel!"

The soldier immediately swallowed the saliva pooled up in his throat as he thought about what his NCO had said and immediately obeyed his orders as he fell back into line. The more able-bodied members of their squad carried away those who were too wounded to make the journey as the Austrian Jaegers fled back to the settlement; this would not be the only ambush they came across on their journey back to the main force.

Nor was this the only squad under attack by the native tribes; there would be several losses on the expedition to locate and secure resources for the Austrian settlement. However, Conquest was never achieved without bloodshed; the resources these young Austrian Men gave their lives for would become the backbone of the Kingdom of Austria for years to come.

Berengar would later declare any man who gave his life in service of exploration to be posthumously honored with an Iron Cross Second Class. While Berengar's soldiers were locating and securing natural resources, he was overseeing the ongoing construction efforts of the settlement. This fortress in the New World was designed to be self-sufficient, with monthly exchanges between the Fatherland and the Colony.

As for the Native Tribes of New York, what remained were preparing for war, and these ambushes would soon become par for the course. The more Austrian soldiers that arrived in the new world, the more threatened the pre-existing inhabitants would become. This would cause a larger number of small conflicts between the old world and the new.

Berengar was well prepared for this eventuality, and before long, the fortress in the new world would be impregnable, at least when dealing with the primitive people of North America. Without gunpowder, it would be impossible to bring down the granite and mortar walls of the massive star fortress that was being constructed.

While the rest of the American wilderness was an unknown factor to Austria, its fortress would be a beacon of hope for the soldiers living in Vinland and future generations to come.. After all, this was a land rich in natural resources, and the only enemies the Austrians had to face were various stone age societies.

Chapter 485 - There Must Be War!

Emperor Vetrans gazed upon the sight of his mangled son with an expression that was filled with pity. Decentius had invoked the ire of the Austrian Crown and, in doing so, paid a hefty price for his hubris. However, the true identity of the perpetrator of this attack was left unknown to the Byzantine Emperor. Instead, an Austrian Intelligence report had successfully pinned the blame on the neighboring Mamluke Sultanate for the attack on the Second Prince.

Few people in this world knew the truth about the attack, and one of those men was none other than Decentius. However, he would never outright inform his father that Austria had maimed him and killed

his supporters; after all, to do so was to announce his guilt in attempting to assassinate his sister. If his father were to become aware of such a nefarious plot, he was liable to lose more than just his hand and leg.

Instead, the two men stared at each other in silence, neither one wanting to speak first about the circumstances they found themselves in. With the great Warrior Prince of Byzantium maimed, the hawks in the Byzantine Court had lost their candidate for the throne. Despite this, now more than ever, they were adamant about going to war with their neighbors.

Though Vetrans was not the wisest man, even he could see that there were holes in the report that Austria had made about the origins of the attack, if not for the support of Palladius and his spy network, he never would have believed his allies to the west. However, he was still uncertain, and thus the aging Emperor broke the silence within the room.

"Tell me the truth, Decentius, who is responsible for your current state?"

The Second Prince of the Byzantine Empire immediately turned his head towards his father, in doing so revealing the massive wound that existed on his once handsome face. Not only had the explosion blasted apart one of his hands and lower legs, but it has also severely damaged his face and blinded him in one eye. Decentius refused to elaborate further and merely retorted with a rhetorical question.

"Who do you think?"

Though there was not an outright admission, Decentius' words were enough to convince Vetrans that the attack on his son was not, in fact, from the Mamluke Sultanate but rather from their most prominent ally. This caused the father to be stricken with a combination of grief and rage as he pounded his hand upon the table nearby.

"Why? Why would he do this?"

There was a tinge of guilt in Decentius' one good eye as he avoided his father's gaze before trying to deny his fault for such vicious retaliation.

"Your guess is as good as mine..."

Vetranis curled his fist, so much so that his fingernails began to dig into the palm of his hands, causing him to bleed. He did not understand what his family had done to Austria to warrant this vicious attack. Were they not allies? The pitiful Emperor steeled his resolve the next second as he began to voice his discontent with the situation.

"If that bastard seeks to harm my household, then it is only fair that I do the same to him!"

This reckless comment was so loud that it had garnered the attention of a passerby, who silently made his way into the room where he watched his brother and father conspiring against the King of Austria and his family.

Quintus leaned against the edge of the door, going entirely unnoticed by his father, and brother until the point where he interrupted their little meeting. He had a wide smirk on his face as he began to intervene on behalf of their western allies.

"If Austria attacked Decentius, and the men who support him, then there was a proper reason for doing so. Berengar is not reckless and would not take such violent action against an ally unless provoked. As for his little spymaster, she is even more cautious; the real question is, what did my dear little brother do to warrant such a vicious attempt on his life?"

Quintus was aware of the allegations against Decentius; after all, Palladius had come to him for support after the Second Prince had murdered the late Strategos Arethas in cold blood. However, he lacked any significant proof on the matter and thus Quintus stayed out of these affairs.

Despite this neutrality, there was now an attack on the Byzantine Imperial Family, and he could no longer ignore the accusations against his brother. As a significant rival in the war for succession, Quintus made sure to take advantage of this crisis and use it against his little brother, who sought to usurp his birthright.

Decentius gazed at his older brother with a look of contempt across his wounded face, he knew exactly what Decentius was implying, and he was hoping to avoid this conversation with his father for as long as possible. However, his brother was a sly bastard and had begun to kick him when he was down. Immediately the second prince denied any fault, with an innocent expression on his face.

"I have done nothing to warrant such a ruthless attack on my life! You best be careful, brother; you are close to speaking slander against my character!"

In response to this, Quintus merely smirked before tossing a document on the bed, where Vetrans immediately gazed upon it with wide eyes. His first instinct was to question what he was reading.

"Is this true?"

Quintus did not hesitate and instead nodded his head before further digging a grave for his little brother.

"Palladius has confirmed it, and his spy network, one of my brother's dear underlings had placed a bid for our dear sister's assassination, and the Austrians had even made arrests of the potential assassins.

They likely were unaware that Decentius was meeting with the scoundrel responsible when they launched their attack. You could say this is Austria's way of gaining justice against the perpetrators who tried to kill Honoria.

Whether or not Decentius was involved in this conspiracy remains unknown. Though it does beg the question, why exactly was Decentius meeting with a group of people who were responsible for an assassination plot against our sister?"

Vetrans immediately ignored his eldest son's implication and instead switched the subject; he could not bear to think that Decentius had knowingly taken part in an assassination attempt on his sister. Instead, he asked the second most important question on his mind.

"Then why did Austria pin the blame on the Mamlukes?"

Quintus broke out into a brief fit of laughter; he did not believe his father was indeed so foolish as to ask such an obvious question genuinely; after seeing the perturbed expression on the Emperor's face, the Crown Prince immediately bowed his head and responded obediently.

"My guess is the moment they found out that Decentius was wounded in the attack, they began to panic, fearing that you might dissolve the alliance between our two realms. Such a thing would neither benefit them nor us.

I suggest we accept the Austrians' gift and use this as an excuse to annex the remainder of the Mamluke Sultanate. After all, this appears to not have been an intentional attack on Decentius; he was simply in the wrong place at the wrong time."

Vetranis thought deeply about what had transpired; if what Quintus said was true, then the maiming of his second son was unintentional, and as a result of his son associating with conspirators who attempted to murder his daughter.

Even then, few men in this world knew the actual perpetrator behind the attack; if they wiped this incident under the rug and accepted the casus belli against the Mamluke Sultanate, it could aid them in reuniting long-lost portions of the Empire. After careful deliberation, the Byzantine Emperor nodded his head and turned to gaze at his wounded son.

"There must be war! We will pay back the Mamluke Sultanate tenfold for what they have done to you, and as far as anyone is concerned, they are indeed the responsible party. Make sure you take this as a life lesson; I would hate to see what becomes of you, my son if you were to further associate with traitors to the Empire."

After saying this, Vetranis left, leaving Quintus and Decentius to stare at each other with mutual hatred. Ultimately Quintus was the one to break the silence.

"Consider yourself lucky; if your attempt on Honoria's life had succeeded, then there is no force in this world that could protect you from the wrath of the Austrian King. His armies are far more powerful than ours, whether it is the result of witchcraft or divine inspiration, I do not know, but you have stepped on the tail of the devil, and if you ask me, he let you off easy..."

Having said this final thought, the First Prince of the Byzantine Empire retreated from his brother's quarters, leaving the second Prince alone and bitter with his fate.. Little did those present know that Berengar was on the other side of the world, entirely unaware of the events that had taken place.

Chapter 486 - Founding Of New Vienna

Months had passed since the Expeditionary Force to the New World, currently referred to as Vinland, had procured natural resources. In this time, they had made substantial improvements to the settlement.

For starters, the fortifications were now made of granite and type M mortar as a star fortress. A proper garrison had ensured that it was well defended, using 1422 Schmidt Guns and artillery pieces spread throughout its ramparts.

Inside the star fortress were the quarters of the soldiers, which were as barracks, cookhouses, chapels, and other institutions. The half-timber structures and the baroque cathedrals combined to form a settlement the likes of which the New World had never seen before.

Outside of the confines of the star fortress was an important port that extended out into the New York Bay, acting as a harbor for any Austrian ships that would make the trek to Vinland. Aside from the dock, several extensive fields with horse-powered mechanized agricultural devices were set up in the four-field system. These fields used advanced fertilizers, which we're currently importing from the fatherland.

As this settlement grew with an increase in Austrian overlords and native laborers, it caught the eye of the nearby tribes. Aside from some minor skirmishes out in the wilderness, there had not yet been another attack on the settlement. Now that its fortifications were established correctly, Berengar was confident in the ability of the Garrison to maintain control over the region.

The mighty Austrian King stood upon the ramparts of the Star Fortress, gazing upon the vast landscape in front of him. In half a year, he had successfully established a permanent settlement in the new world. With this in mind, it was finally time to name this location; as a response, he raised two flags high into the air above the fortress.

The top flag was none other than the Kingdom of Austria's, while the bottom banner was a new design, a Colonial flag that he had created to show off the evolution of the Kingdom of Austria. With this colony under their control, they now had overseas territory, making them an Empire. However, he would not

boldly declare himself an Empire in European Politics just yet; such a proclamation would indeed cause backlash and investigation into the claims.

Regardless, a new flag represented the New World Colonial Territory of the Kingdom of Austria. This flag was like the German Empire's colonial flags from his past life. The differences were that the bottom color was gold instead of red, and the von Kufstein double-headed eagle was in the center of the flag.

As the Austrian soldiers stood below, they saluted the raising of the two flags. Berengar immediately called out to his people and declared the official establishment of a new overseas colony.

"Let today be known as the day that the Crown of Austria has formally established the Colony of New Vienna! Glory to the Kingdom of Austria, glory to our newfound Empire!"

As Berengar said these words, the soldiers beneath his location shouted in unison the following phrase.

"Glory to the Empire!"

Having heard these words, a smile formed on Berengar's face as he quickly made another announcement to those who were gathered.

"It is with a heavy heart that I must inform you I will return to fatherland shortly after this ceremony. Please make no mistake; your work here in Vinland is of vital importance to the continued prosperity of our Empire. Thus, I will leave control of the colony into the hands of a man well renowned for his capabilities as both a military and civil leader.

After saying this, a familiar face came forward and stood before his King; he was dressed in a field uniform alongside Berengar. He had only recently sailed across the Atlantic to visit the new world for this purpose. Major General Arnulf von Thiersee kneeled before his King as he waited to be rewarded with a mighty title for all his years of hard work, and Berengar was eager to give it to him.

"I confer upon you Arnulf von Thiersee, the military rank of Field Marshal, the Civil position of Colonial Governor, and finally the Noble title of Grand Duke of New Vienna! I look forward to your progress here in Vinland, now rise!"

Upon hearing these rewards, a broad smile spread across Arnulf's face. He was no longer a meager Lord or a simple General but a full-fledged Field Marshal, a Grand Duke, and Colonial Governor. These three titles gave him immense power within the Kingdom of Austria and elevated his family's prestige considerably. With this in mind, the young Field Marshal nodded his head before responding to his King's decree.

"I promise I will not let you down, your Majesty!"

Berengar smiled and placed a hand on his friend's shoulder before leaving him with a few words.

"See to it that you don't..."

Having said this, Berengar dismissed the gathered soldiers to get back to their jobs and began to descend from the Ramparts, where he saw Honoria, Kahwihta, and Ojistah, who were waiting for him at the docks. Honoria's ship was well prepared to make the 12-day journey back to Trieste, and she had a tired expression on her face. They had been through much together here in Vinland, and she knew that her man did not want to return home so quickly.

As for Kahwihta and her sister, they had pouting expressions on their faces; they knew that Berengar would return whence he came without them; after seeing the construction of this settlement with their own eyes, the two native girls were eager to see what the homeland of these golden-haired gods looked like.

Despite their desire to see Austria, Berengar would not take them with him. These two women spoke German better than any of the other natives and were his best translators. Thus they were forced to remain behind in New Vienna, and act as an intermediary between the Austrian Colony and the Mohawk Tribes. Thus, Berengar left them with some parting words.

"I must return to the fatherland; it is your duty to act as translators for my dear friend Arnulf and the native people of this land. Do not fret, for I will be back soon enough, and when I do, I hope to hear all about the adventures you will have between now and then."

Kahwihta nodded her head in silence. Though she was disappointed that she would not get to see the home of her newfound deities, it satisfied her with just being able to help maintain diplomacy between their two peoples.

She was pretty happy that she and her sister had been blessed with the benevolence of the one-eyed god. Without his support, they likely would have died from influenza. Since he was a divine being, surely he would live up to his words and return to them one day. Having made his intentions clear, Berengar left the two women and called out to Arnulf, who was watching him depart.

"My friend, these two young women will be instrumental to your ties with the locals. They speak our tongue well enough, and one of them is fluent in fifteen other languages. Make sure they are well cared for during my absence."

Arnulf would not have risen to such a prominent position if he was incapable of following orders. Thus, he saluted his King and smiled before commenting on his remarks.

"I wish I could fight with you against the church, but it appears you have selected me for a far more noble task. It is both an honor and, at the same time, a point of contention to be placed here so far away from home. Nevertheless, I assure you no harm will come to these girls so long as I am in charge of this land."

Having heard this response, Berengar smiled before departing into Honoria's ironclad sloop of war. The King and Queen stood on the bow as they watched the ship leave from the shores of New Vienna and the mysterious land known as Vinland. A colony was established, but Berengar could only be away from home for so long; after all, he had a vast family to take care of, and without their father, his children were bound to be led astray.

Honoria, on the other hand, felt relieved; she would take a break at home for a while before returning to the new world with her crew. The adventures she would undergo as she explored the vast depths of the New World would forever resound throughout history.

She had to admit, if not for her choice to run away to Kufstein, then she never would have been given such freedom and adventure. She only had one man to thank for all of this; with this in mind, she leaned onto her husband's shoulder and kissed his cheek. For a brief moment, Berengar could have sworn he heard the girl whisper in his ear.

"Thank you for everything..."

However, when he looked over at her pretty face, it was as if she had never said a word. Instead, she gazed at him with a questioning gaze. In response to this, Berengar chuckled as he glanced upon the horizon; the journey home would be uneventful.. As for what awaited him back in Kufstein, he would only find out when he finally returned.

Chapter 487 - Little Rabbit

Within the Summer Palace of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth dwelled the royal family of Poland, having narrowly escaped the massacre at Krakow, the King of Poland stared at a map across his table that showed the latest intelligence he had received on the Austro-Bohemian movements.

With Krakow brought to ruin, the King of Poland had lost his Capital and had thus moved it to Warsaw. Despite this, Eckhard showed no signs of ceasing his advance. Why would he? The Austro-Bohemian army was roughly 100,000 men in total, all of which were armed with vastly superior weapons to the medieval armies of the Commonwealth.

A defeated expression was worn across the aging King's haggard visage. Just what nightmare had he brought upon himself? The rumors were true; Berengar von Kufstein was the physical incarnation of the Devil, a man whose armies wielded supernatural powers to defeat any opponents they came across.

However, he could not easily sue for peace, as the Austrians had made their demands clear, and such requests would force the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth not only to cede all of the gains it had made against the Teutonic State but also a substantial sum of their pre-existing territory. As he was lamenting his options, his young daughter no older than five approached him with a worried expression on her doll-like face.

"Papa? When are we going home?"

A bitter smile formed on the King's face; after all, he had not yet informed the girl that there was no home to return to in Krakow. Thus he knelt and placed his hand on the little brown-haired girl's shoulder and attempted to comfort her.

"My sweet Natalia, we will return home soon enough. You must be patient; some evil men are looking for us; it is up to the brave Knights of Poland to fight against them so that we may return home in peace..."

The girl gazed up at her father with her steel-blue eyes with a curious gaze; she did not quite understand what was going on or why they had to flee their homes so quickly. Nevertheless, her father had told her to be patient so that she would do so. The young girl latched onto her father's leg and hugged it tightly as she expressed the thoughts on her mind.

"Okay, Papa..."

While this heartbreaking scene was occurring, the girl's older brother entered the room, clad from head to toe in plate armor, while wearing the tabard of the Royal House. Judging by the stern expression on his face, the King of Poland was able to guess that he carried unpleasant news, and thus he ordered his daughter to go elsewhere.

"Natalia, my dear, go find your mother and sister; I have much to discuss with your brother..."

The little girl immediately smiled and nodded her head before doing as instructed; she waved to her elder brother as she passed by him and proceeded towards her mother's location. The Prince of Poland broke his silence only after the girl was out of earshot.

He did this by tossing a letter over to his father, its seal was broken, but it carried the sigil of the Austrian Military; the King briefly read through the contents before the Prince summarized what it contained.

"The Austrian Field Marshal implores us to surrender and give in to the conditions he had previously laid out. If not, he vows to march on Warsaw and destroy every semblance of Polish civilization..."

Immediately the King's eyes grew wide in fury as he tore the letter apart before cursing out his rivals from the West.

"God damned Austrians, who do they think they are intervening in our war with the Teutonic Order? For centuries we have had to suffer abuse at the hands of those bastards, and right when victory is in our hands, it is denied us by this upstart from the south!"

Despite his father's harsh words, the Polish Prince was far from hostile towards the Austrians, unlike the King he had witnessed firsthand the destructive power that Eckhard and his soldiers wielded, there is a reason why he had personally delivered the letter to his father, rather than dispatch a messenger.

He did not desire to engage in combat with the enemy; thus, he had marched his army back to the capital to personally deliver this letter. After recalling the Austrian troops' brutality and the explosive firepower they wielded, the Prince dropped his facade of strength and began to implore his father to make peace.

"Father, I suggest we yield to their demands; Austria is too powerful to contend with. You are lucky they are just asking for the regions occupied by the German people. I have seen the weapons they use on the field of battle; before our knights can even get close, they are consumed by Austria's hellfire.

I hear the Austrian King has a young son who is roughly Natalia's age, and perhaps we could buy some peace by arranging a marriage between the two of them! Maybe they would even reduce the amount of territory they desire?"

The King of Poland did not react as his son expected. Instead, he immediately backhanded the young man across the face as violently as he could muster. The impact sent the boy to his knees as he gazed upon his father's enraged appearance with shock.

"You suggest I give all which I have conquered over to the Austrians and sell my beloved daughter to this lowly Baron who dares to call himself King as if she is some common whore! If you weren't my son, I would have your tongue removed for suggesting such a farce!"

The Prince spat out a puddle of blood from his mouth and shifted his jaw. The level of force that his father had hit him with was no joke; despite this, he continued to remain defiant. He was desperately trying to convince the King of Poland to yield.

"Father, you have not seen their army as I have; they have 100,000 men who are capable of slaughtering our army as if they were mere insects! What remains of the battlefield after our defeat is a scorched wasteland as if hell itself had been conjured onto the land!"

As the King heard these words, he erupted into a state of fury once more; he nearly struck his son again before forcing himself to calm down; after taking a deep breath, he exhaled heavily before lecturing his eldest son.

"I do not remember raising such a cowardly son; you have dishonored yourself and this household, not only from your actions but also your words! Iwan, my son, I hereby order you to take charge of what remains of our army and ride out to meet the Austro-Bohemian forces in open battle; you will either return victorious or not at all!"

The Polish Prince known as Iwan could hardly believe his father's words; this was essentially a death sentence. Nevertheless, he was honor-bound to fulfill the King's orders to the best of his ability; the man clutched his fist in grief and anger as he slowly came to accept his fate. After spending a few moments in silence, he sighed heavily before nodding his head in agreement.

"If that is your command, your Majesty..."

After saying these words, Iwan departed from the room where his father dwelled; he briskly walked towards the castle's exit, where he witnessed his little sister Natalia peeking out from behind a door. The girl quickly rushed over to her elder brother, where he caught her in his iron-clad embrace. A bitter smile formed on the Polish Prince's face as the young girl innocently asked where he was headed too.

"Big brother? Where are you going?"

Though he tried not to show his grief to the innocent and naive princess, his dark blue eyes ultimately revealed the lament deep within his soul. He forced a smile upon his lips before patting the girl on the head.

"Natalia, my sister, I have been ordered by our father to go reclaim the land stolen from us by the Austrians and their Bohemian allies! I am afraid I must leave you behind yet again..."

The girl was too young to realize that her brother was marching off to an unwinnable war and thus cocked her head in a curious expression before asking the question on her mind.

"You will return, though, right?"

Though Iwan wanted to reassure the girl that he would be returning home safe and sound, he knew deep down that this was, in fact, his swan song. Thus he choked on the sentence he had prepared and merely nodded in silence.

Upon seeing the grim expression on her older brother's face, Natalia knew something was wrong and immediately handed him her favorite toy, which was a small stuffed rabbit. With a cheery smile on her face, the girl spoke to her eldest brother with a glint of hope in her eyes.

"Here, hold onto Kacper for me! Make sure you both come home safe and sound!"

Iwan grabbed ahold of the stuffed rabbit and clutched it tightly to his chest; after doing so, he nodded thrice and patted the girl on her little head, trying not to break out into tears. After doing so, he turned towards the door and opened it; the last words he spoke to his younger sister would forever resound in her head.

"I will make sure to return this little rabbit to you!"

After saying this, the young Prince of Poland departed from the Summer Palace within Warsaw. He would lead what remained of the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth's soldiers into battle against their enemy to the West.

Chapter 488 - Inner Workings Of The French Court

Within the Royal Palace of Paris knelt the young Prince, before his elder sister Sibila; the princess had a scowling expression on her face as she repeatedly tapped her hand on the armrest of her seat. Though

she had dispatched Aubry to seduce the Austrian King and win over his support in the war against the various rebels, as well as the English crown, he had returned empty-handed, and quite frankly, in a state of disarray.

Since then, she had been disappointed with her little brother, and had been scheming a new way to ensnare Berengar into her service. As far as she was aware, a superior man had intimidated Aubry, causing him backed down from his usual flirty self.

The very sight of Aubry kneeling before her made Sibilla both aroused and frustrated at the same time. Just how come her little brother was so much prettier than she was? These were the thoughts that had always accompanied her every time she witnessed Aubry cross-dressing.

As for King Giles, nobody had seen him in days; perhaps he had finally croaked on the chamber pot. Frankly, the Princess did not care about her father's unusual disappearance, though she supposed eventually she would have to search for the missing King, but for now, she needed to discipline her brother for his failure.

"So let me get this straight. You got to Austria, embedded yourself in their Royal Palace, made physical contact with their King, and yet still he did not fall for your cute appearance?"

Aubry nodded obediently when he heard these words; he tried to raise his head but was immediately stepped on by the white leather heels that his sister wore. His dainty head was immediately slammed back down onto the cold tile as she grabbed ahold of a whip and lashed it at his petite back.

"Who told you to raise your head!?!"

Aubry immediately shook upon the impact of the whip; despite this, he did not cry out in pain; after all, he had endured Sibilla's abuse for so many years that he was well accustomed to it by now. Instead, the French Princess immediately commented on her brother's untimely return.

"What I don't understand is why you didn't keep at it? What did he threaten to castrate your or something?"

The effeminate French Prince immediately shivered upon hearing this. Berengar had indeed threatened to remove a body part from him if he dared to continue his advances. Though he was not so cruel as to imply castration.

"I am sorry, Sibilla, that man is terrifying!"

The moment the French Princess heard these words, she became enraged. If there was anyone that the boy should fear, it was her. Despite being aware of this, Aubry had failed her in the face of a superior man. Of course, Berengar was terrifying. That was why they called him the Tyrant of Steel. Yet to crack under such pressure just proved how worthless her little brother really was. Upon thinking about this, Sibilla only became more enraged and pressed his head even further onto the stone tile with her spiked heel.

"That is not an excuse for your failures!"

Immediately Aubry tensed up as he heard this; he knew better than anything that his sister was an incredibly domineering young woman. If she expected him to succeed, then he should have succeeded. To fail her was every bit as terrifying as trying to seduce Berengar. In the end, he had made his choice and merely remained silent as he suffered his elder sister's abuse.

Sibilla felt as if she would have an aneurysm after witnessing her brother so spinelessly accept her thrashing. So much so that she completely lost interest in tormenting the young man. Instead, she threw her whip away in disgust before asking further questions about Berengar's nature.

"Surely you must have gotten some valuable intel on Berengar's behaviors while you were under his care. If you tell me what you know, I will spare you..."

Despite her harsh tone, Aubry knew better than to withhold information from his sister. Because of this, he quickly spoke about anything that might be seen as helpful to Sibilla.

"There's not much that I can say. I had little interaction with him. However, he appears to be weak towards pretty women. However, he took no interest in me. Apparently he has a disdain for same-sex couples."

This was hardly news to Sibilla. She had already received such information from her brother when he first returned home from Austria. Because of this, she had become irritable as she stepped on her brother's head once more.

"I'm losing my patience!"

Aubry quickly kowtowed further to his sister before apologizing, he truly did not have any additional information to provide her with.

"I am sorry sister, I know nothing else! Please spare this miserable servant!"

Sibilla sighed heavily as she rested her head in her hand. She could not believe that her brother had failed so miserably to seduce Berengar. At the very least he could have collected some valuable insights about his character that would aid her in her efforts to force him into submission.

To terrify Aubry in such a manner, Berengar must be a truly frightening and dominant personality. After all, she had trained Aubry to be incredibly submissive. This was the only useful information she could gather from this entire ordeal. She could not entirely blame Aubry for his failures, she was at least partially responsible.

Thus she smiled as she immediately descended from her father's throne, where she grabbed ahold of her brother's face and locked lips with him. If anyone else were to witness the strange relationship between these two French siblings, they would immediately be disgusted.

However, they were, in fact, alone, and thus she could openly display her more egregious affections. After kissing Aubry for some time, Sibilla released her grasp yet still maintained a firm grip over his jaw; as she did so, she whispered something in his ear.

"There is nothing to fear, my dearest brother; so long as I am here, nobody will harm a hair on your pretty little head!"

This response immediately caused the anxiety in Aubry's heart to fall away; however, in the next second, a wicked smirk appeared on the girl's face, causing him to grimace once more. Sibilla proudly stood up and declared her intentions to her brother.

"Well, since you have failed to properly seduce the King of Austria, I suppose it is up to me to win over his heart! After all, I hear that King Berengar can't seem to keep his dick in his pants; it should be easy enough to charm him!"

Though Aubry tried to protest, the moment he let out a gasp, his sister stared at him with a chilling gaze, which immediately caused him to shut his mouth. All he ended up doing was sighing in response before asking the question that was on his mind.

"What about father? Is he even aware that you want to enlist the aid of Austria in this conflict?"

Sibilla immediately scoffed upon hearing these words before speaking the thoughts on her mind.

"Nobody has seen that feeble old man in over a week; he is probably dead already, which means that soon you will be King of France. Make sure not to fuck things up while I'm gone!"

Aubry could not believe that his father, the King of France, had gone missing; if that was true, then he was desperately needed by the Kingdom; of course, the effeminate Prince didn't know the first thing about the ruling; his first instinct was to seduce the various rebel leaders and bring them to his side. However, that was easier said than done when one considered that the most powerful of these rebel leaders were in open revolution explicitly because of the prince's amorous nature.

The French Prince was forced to agree to his sister's demands; he bowed his head respectfully as he led the young woman down from her father's throne, where the two siblings departed towards their quarters. Much preparation would be needed if she genuinely intended to win Berengar over to her side.

Whether she was interested in the man was unimportant; what truly mattered was that Sibilla believed that the Austrian King had a purpose to serve, and thus she planned to milk him dry before tossing him aside as she had always done. For what man could impress her and her high standards?

While Sibilla was preparing to depart towards the Kingdom of Austria, Berengar and Honoria were halfway through their journey back to the Fatherland; when the couple finally arrived, they would be introduced to the many problems that had occurred in their absence, such as the maiming of Prince Decentius and the arrival of yet another French Harlot.

By then, Berengar would have little patience for Sibilla's games and would be far blunter in his methods of hosting her presence when compared to her slutty and effeminate brother.. He did not have time to entertain the advances of the French Royal Family, as more important matters were at stake, such as the War against the Eastern Coalition, Colonization of the New World, and assisting Byzantium in its newest campaign against their rivals to the Southwest.

Chapter 489 - Things Are About To Get Interesting

Berengar and Honoria had already begun to sail from the Colony of New Vienna back to the Fatherland. After roughly two weeks, the King and Queen of Austria arrived in Trieste; the moment they did so, a telegraph was sent back to the Capital informing them of the King's arrival.

Berengar decided to take in the sight of progress within the major port city. He witnessed the expansion of the shipyards and the factories nearby designed to produce their components. With a silent nod of approval, he and his loving wife made their way to the train, where they began to depart from the Port City to the Capital of the Kingdom of Austria.

After several hours, the steam-powered locomotive and the train cars behind it successfully navigated its way across the Austrian Alps and into the City of Kufstein, which after all these years had become a flowing metropolis, surrounded by acres upon acres of fertile farmland. Berengar had not made it publicly known that he was gone during his absence. Instead, there was a constant image of him being stuck within the confines of the Palace while being hard at work.

Thus when he stepped off the train, people did not think much of it. Instead, they assumed he had been visiting another city for business purposes. Nevertheless, as per usual, a significant-sized crowd gathered around him and his security detail. After all, it was not every day that the common folk could witness the glorious presence of their monarch.

Having been led by his Royal Guard to the Palace, Berengar quickly opened the doors to his home, where his family immediately greeted him. This was far from the first reunion he had with them after disappearing for months; despite this, it was no less emotional.

Berengar's children, or at least those who could walk, immediately rushed forward into his embrace, much at the chagrin of their mothers who were fighting to be the first to welcome their husband home. However, Berengar did not mind this and welcomed Hans and his sister Helga with open arms. The young boy had a broad smile on his face as he jumped into his father's arms.

"Father! Welcome home!"

Berengar immediately patted the boy's strawberry blonde hair and began to joke around with him.

"Hans, you have grown quite a bit since I last saw you! Before long, you will be fighting wars in my stead!"

This comment brought an even wider smile to the boy's face as he proudly declared his thoughts to his father.

"Don't worry, father! I will show the world the strength of Austria and its people!"

In response to this, Berengar chuckled before rustling the boy's hair once more; after doing so, he shifted his attention to his eldest daughter.

"Helga, have you been behaving yourself?"

The girl was quite timid and hid behind her brother as she silently nodded her head in response to her father's question. Hans immediately noticed this and dragged his sister forward before boldly stating what she had been up to in her father's absence.

"Helga, show our father the picture you painted!"

The little girl immediately shook her head before hiding behind her brother once more. Berengar broke out into laughter as he witnessed his daughter's shy behavior; after doing so, he smiled before encouraging her to show him the art.

"Go ahead, Helga; I promise you I won't be disappointed!"

The little girl looked up at her mother, who gave her a warm smile of encouragement before she reached into her satchel and pulled out a sketchbook where she showed a painting she had made of her family.

Berengar immediately noticed that the only ones in the childish painting were himself, Linde, Hans, Helga, and Ilse; as for Berengar's other wives and their children, they were noticeably absent. When Berengar saw this, he did not mind and instead complimented the girl for her work.

"Very well done; I suspect you will be a great artist in the future."

Truthfully the only thing impressive about the art is that it was a step above what kids her age would usually be capable of creating. Nevertheless, it proved the girl had some natural talent, and if nurtured correctly, she could bring a level of prestige to the von Kufstein name in the future.

Helga smiled and nodded her head in silence; evidently, she was not much of a talker. Having given his two eldest children with Linde the attention they deserved, Berengar immediately shifted his gaze onto his second wife, who wore a pretty smile.

"Welcome home, master..."

Berengar immediately grabbed ahold of the woman and planted a kiss on her luscious pink lips; after doing so, she whispered something in his ear in a voice so low that only the two of them could hear it.

"We need to talk... in private."

Berengar immediately nodded his head in silence upon hearing this before shifting his gaze to Adela. The woman had a pouting expression on her face as she begrudgingly hugged her husband; she began to scold him with a furious look in her eyes.

"I hope you behaved yourself while you were away!"

In response to this, the young Austrian King wore a mischievous smile before addressing his wife's concerns.

"Of course! Who do you think I am? Some kind of playboy?"

Adela merely rolled her eyes when she heard this and handed her two children off to Berengar. These two babes were still too young to speak; despite this, Berengar showed them affection by kissing them on their foreheads before handing them back to their mother.

After doing so, he approached his fourth wife, Yasmine, visibly pregnant; her round belly contained the fruits of their love. She wore a satisfied smile on her face as she greeted her husband.

"Welcome back, husband; I hope that your travels went well?"

The young Austrian King nodded his head and hugged the woman and kissed her on the cheek before responding.

"Of course!"

Before he could speak any further, Berengar noticed Henrietta running down the stairs at full speed; the girl immediately jumped into his arms and knocked him to the floor while latching onto him like a lamprey.

"Big brother! You're finally home!"

A defeated smile spread across Berengar's face as he tried to struggle out of his little sister's embrace; this girl was seriously too forward. If only they weren't blood siblings, then maybe he would consider being with her. However, his parents had confirmed that they were blood-related, and they wouldn't lie to him... would they? After all, he would think he would remember if she was adopted...

After thinking about this for a few seconds, Berengar finally ripped himself away from Henrietta's grasp before flicking her on the forehead.

"Behave yourself; I have only been gone for a few months!"

Though Henrietta wanted to protest, she did as she was told, thus leaving Berengar to dust himself off and stand proudly once more among his family. After doing so, he made a bold declaration to the members of the von Kufstein Dynasty.

"How about you all go wash up and meet for dinner? In the meantime, I have something important to discuss with Linde, so I will see you all in the dining room shortly after I have concluded my business with her."

Though the other women in his harem were impatient, after all, it had been many months since they last saw their husband; they could tell by the glint in his eyes that something serious had occurred. Thus they obediently nodded their heads and did as they were told.

As for Berengar and Linde, they walked to his office; it was only after the door was sealed behind them that Linde began to reveal what had transpired in her husband's absence.

"I've got some bad news and some worse news; which do you want to hear first?"

Upon hearing these words, Berengar frowned before sighing heavily and answering the question.

"Let's go with the bad news first."

There was no hesitation on Linde's part. Instead, she immediately began to clarify what she had been made aware of.

"Princess Sibila of France is on her way to Kufstein, evidently after that boy Aubry failed to charm you, she had decided to come in person..."

A loud scoff resounded in the room as Berengar heard this; he immediately began to unfasten the medals around his neck and break open his collar as he sat back in his leatherbound chair and relaxed.

"What do the fucking French want from me now? I have already given them weapons, and the munitions to use them! If that harlot wishes to meet with me, she can get in line! Now, what is this worse news you have to tell me?"

Linde bit her lip as she struggled to express the thoughts on her mind; after a few moments of steeling her resolve, she quickly spouted out the ongoing situation with the Byzantine Empire.

"Our retaliation on the conspirators who attempted to assassinate Honoria has gotten a bit complicated..."

Berengar's brow immediately raised as he heard this before speaking in a cold tone.

"Go on..."

Linde could tell that her husband was not pleased with this news and thus immediately began to confess to what had transpired.

"Decentius was in the room when the bomb went off. He has been permanently maimed, but he has survived. Luckily, we were able to pin the responsibility of the attack on the Mamluke Sultanate, but I am certain that Emperor Vetrans suspects our involvement. Relations between our Kingdom and the Empire in the East will be strained for some time."

Silence existed in the King's office for some time before he finally remarked.

"Is that all?"

Despite his calm tone, Linde knew a hint of fury in his voice; as such, she bowed her head respectfully before speaking her mind.

"I will assume full responsibility for this failure..."

Berengar scoffed as he heard this before uttering the words on his mind.

"You are dismissed, Linde..."

Linde quickly left the room upon hearing these orders, leaving Berengar alone with his thoughts. After several minutes of silence, he finally let out a sigh before expressing the words on his mind.

"It looks like things are about to get interesting...."

Chapter 490 - Absolute Authority

Berengar sat upon his Throne while tapping his armrest; to his left was Linde, Adela to his right. The three of them stared down below Austria's seat of power to witness the French Princess bowing her head with respect. With one glimpse of Berengar, she could tell that he was nothing like her own father. This was a man who wielded absolute power with both fear and respect.

However, the one who truly caught her eye was the redheaded lass by his side; Linde gazed upon Sibilla with a look of complete and total contempt. This gaze did not go unnoticed by the French Princess, and if she were as mentally weak as her brother, she too might have succumbed to the pressure this woman was exuding. Instead, she merely behaved with the respect afforded to a foreign monarch. However, Berengar's following words immediately caused the young woman to become enraged.

"I have no time to entertain the daughter of the French King. I am dreadfully busy at the moment; the fact that I have taken time out of my busy schedule to greet your arrival is the most respect I will afford a lady of your position.

After the sheer level of disrespect, your brother showed me you are lucky that I had not claimed his head. Now your father sends you in his stead? For what purpose do you interrupt my peace?"

Sibilla was surprised when she heard the cold and callous tone Berengar used to speak with her; she had never been so disrespected before; in fact, he did not even bother to comment on her beautiful appearance. Then again, why would he? When he had two women far more attractive than her by his side.

The very thought that she could not compare to the women by Berengar's side further instigated the flame inside Sibilla's black heart. Ultimately, she was forced to calm her growing wrath and sighed heavily before responding.

"I have come to negotiate for your continued support in the ongoing war my Kingdom faces against Rebels and the English alike. Please do consider what an alliance between our two houses could mean!"

Upon hearing these words, Berengar immediately scoffed and rested his face on his fist. After doing so, he responded in an equally stoic tone of voice as he had done prior.

"I have already given your family sufficient arms and munitions to win your little war. By now, my weapons should have arrived and should currently be in service by your brother's retinue. If your father wants Austrian troops on French soil, I am afraid that is not something I am inclined to do.

In case you are not aware, we are currently fighting a war with the Eastern Coalition and will be soon thrust into a defensive war against the Catholic World, which I suppose would include your Kingdom, would it not?"

Sibilla bit her lip in displeasure; she was not accustomed to verbally sparring with someone who had such a sharp wit and a complete disregard for her people. As far as the Medieval world was concerned, France was a significant power, yet Berengar gazed upon them as if they were worthless.

The idea of an alliance with France was laughable to him, which further stoked the rage that the French Princess was currently enduring. However, like a skilled diplomat, she put her pride aside and offered Austria incentives to support her family.

"I don't know if you are aware of this, but my father, King Gilles, is missing currently. My brother Aubry is acting as regent in his stead. If you pledge your support to the House de Valois, I promise you there will be ample rewards, money, territory, women, whatever you want, you shall have it!"

Berengar did not respond to this offer immediately. Instead, he took a drink from his skull chalice, an item he had not dusted off in some time because of its more intimidating nature, yet in a meeting with a member of the French Royal Family, he felt it was appropriate to break out this old relic and show it off. Having swallowed the red wine within its cup, Berengar placed the chalice down on one of his armrests and leaned forward before responding to the French Princesses' claims.

"Do you think I am lacking in any of those things? I have told you before; I have no intentions of placing Austrian soldiers on French soil; however, since you say your brother is acting as regent, surely he has given you some negotiating power? Else why would you be here in my domain?"

Sibilla immediately nodded her head and responded with a charming smile.

"Of course. What is it you desire? As long as it is in my family's power, I shall grant it to you in return for your support!"

Berengar leaned back in his chair and play with his skull chalice as he pretended to dwell upon the woman's offer for some time. After a while, he wore a smug grin before expressing his thoughts.

"I will not send troops into France; that is something I am unwilling to do. I have already sold you a substantial stockpile of arms so that you can equip your levies with some decent weapons. What more is there I can offer?"

Sibilla nodded her head upon hearing this result; truthfully, although she wanted Berengar's unconditional support to herself, she knew she could not immediately require such a thing. Instead, she had to play the long con. Because of this, she made an uncommon request of him to break the ice.

"I would like to hire some veterans of your army to provide training and tactics to my brother's soldiers. Name your price, and whatever it is, I will fulfill it to the best of my ability!"

A wicked smile appeared on Berengar's face as he gazed at the French beauty before him. Since she had said he could ask for anything, he would not be polite about it.

"My terms are simple. I want you! Hand yourself over to me as my fifth wife, and I will do as you have requested."

This request shocked Sibilla; she had not expected Berengar to be so forward, nor did she desire to be his plaything, rather she yearned for the opposite. As for Linde and Adela, they immediately glared at their husband. Did he seriously make such a request in front of them? They were unaware that Berengar had no intentions of making the French Princess his own.

He could tell by one look of the woman that she was most likely a slut, just like her brother, and he had no desire to be with a woman who had such a massive body count. This was merely a test of her resolve to see how far she would go to secure what she wanted. After careful consideration, the Princess sighed before nodding her head. She had resolved herself to agree to his demands, and slowly manipulate the man into becoming hers.

"Fine! If it means saving my Kingdom, then I will gladly give myself to you!"

Berengar's brow raised in curiosity; he had not expected such a result; clearly this woman scheming against him. If he did not want to prey to her games, then He needed to decline her offer; despite his internal hesitation, he kept a calm facade as he boldly declared his conditions for his previous demands.

"Very well, so long as you are a pure maiden, I don't mind adding you to my collection of beautiful wives. You are a virgin, are you not?"

The moment Sibilla heard these words, she felt as if her mind was going to explode. Did this man seriously have the audacity to ask her that question? She did not know how to answer him satisfyingly. Of course, she wasn't a virgin! Berengar's estimation of her was right on the money; every night, she enjoyed the company of a man, more often than not multiple at the same time.

The panic on Sibilla's face became apparent after being asked this rather inappropriate question. Linde had a cruel smile carved on her luscious lips; she immediately understood what her husband's intention was; he not only was testing the French Princess but was openly trying to humiliate her.? Ultimately,

Sibilla could no longer play the part of a dignified Princess of a foreign Kingdom. Instead, she completely snapped as she scolded Berengar for his mockery.

"You dare question my purity! What gives you the right!?! After all, I highly doubt any of your wives were pure before you got your filthy German hands on them! After all, what kind of loose women would marry a scoundrel like you?"

However, the moment after she said these words, the French Princess became filled with regret as Berengar snapped his fingers, causing his Royal Guards to surround the young woman and restrain her. As they pinned her to the ground, he stood up from his seat and walked down the steps before he was staring down at her.

"Out of respect for your family's power, I restrained myself when your brother sexually harassed me; in fact, I was willing to let anything you said about me slide; after all, I am not a petty man who cares about the opinions of fools.

However, you made one major mistake; you dared to compare my women to a French Harlot like yourself? I am pretty sick of dealing with your family and your lack of manners. Have this bitch locked up in a labor camp; you can release her after the year is over. That ought to teach her some fucking respect!

As for supporting your Kingdom, I am now more inclined to arm the rebels than I am your wretched household. Perhaps the Duke of Burgundy will be capable of showing a proper degree of respect to his superiors!"

After saying this, Sibilla was dragged out of the Royal Palace while kicking and screaming by Berengar's guards; while this occurred, the young King sat down on his throne once more and drank from his skull chalice. Having finished his drink, he let out an enormous sigh before complaining about the current situation.

"I should have done that while her brother was here..."

Adela immediately gazed up at her husband with a look of worry as she asked the question that was on her mind.

"By locking up the French Princess, aren't you worried France will declare war on us?"

Despite the dire question, Berengar was unmoved; instead, he scoffed in annoyance before educating his High Queen on the geopolitical situation.

"You heard her, Gilles is missing, and that twink of a Prince sits on the Throne. If her father were still in charge, maybe I would not have reacted so harshly, but so long as Aubry sits on the French Throne, I can do whatever the hell I want to his sister. That boy doesn't dare to step on my tail..."

Linde immediately hugged her husband after pouring another cup of wine for him; as she rested her head against his shoulder, she complimented him.

"I love it when you act so ruthlessly..."

Having said this, Berengar gazed in the direction of the entrance to his throne room. Without Sibilla, France's ability to conduct intrigue would be substantially worsened. After all, the woman was a lesser version of Linde.. Without the ability to identify his agents among the French Populace, his plans for the Kingdom of France could continue unchallenged.