

## Steel 51

### *Chapter 51: Gathering Evidence IV*

A few days had passed and Berengar was currently sitting at his desk in his room; surrounding him were three people, Linde his lover and slave, Ingbert, formerly a close ally of his brother, now a turncoat, and Arnulf von Thiersee, who was an important vassal to his father. All three of these people could provide the evidence in which Berengar needed to justify the cruel actions he had planned for his brother. A Tyrant could do as he pleased, but to engage in cruelty and be praised for it by his people would require evidence of wrongdoing and well-placed propaganda. He did not wish to be known as another kinslayer. Instead, he wanted to be known as the man who was willing to go to great lengths to ensure that justice was acted out against wrongdoers, even if one of those wrongdoers was his own flesh and blood.

He was currently listening to Arnulf discuss his terms for providing the ledger to Berengar with an indifferent expression on his face.

"I desire a position on your Council when you take up your position as Regent and certain assurances that Lambert will be dealt with accordingly. I do not wish to see leniency on his behalf because he is your brother."

Berengar tapped his finger on his desk thrice as he listened to the demands presented to him by the Lord. After sighing heavily, he began to present his counter offer.

"I assure you that there is no love lost between my brother and me. When he is charged and found guilty, he will be given an appropriate punishment for his crimes. As for the position of Councilor, I am a man who rewards merit; if you can prove yourself to be the most suitable candidate for the position you desire, I have no problems choosing you to fulfill it. However, if someone better appears in time, know that I have no qualms removing you from that position."

Arnulf stared into Berengar's icy sapphire eyes and felt intimidated by the pressure he was receiving. Sure enough, Berengar was not an easy man to negotiate with. However, he honestly could not think of a valid retort to Berengar's counter. As such, he acquiesced to his second demand and returned with a better offer.

"Fine, but I want compensation."

Berengar maintained his indifferent expression as he glared at Arnulf; there was no hesitation in his voice as he inquired about the details of such a thing.

"In what form?"

Arnulf gulped at the response; he did not explicitly state he wanted money, he merely desired compensation, and Berengar had caught that immediately. Clearly, the young lord was very shrewd in diplomatic affairs.

The man looked over at the suit of armor Berengar had lying in the corner of his room with envy in his eyes. Though it was only half-plate, it was truly magnificent in design, and he deeply desired a set of his own. A good suit of armor was worth a fortune in this time period, and if he were to march to war alongside Sieghard, he wanted superior protection than the set he currently had.

"Your factories produce plate armor such as that in high quantities, is that correct?"

Berengar scoffed at Arnulf's request; he thought too much of Arnulf and assumed the man would want his armies equipped with such magnificent technology; that was a demand which Berengar would never allow to come to fruition.

"My factories are currently busy producing the equipment necessary to arm my forces; I do not have the means of production to create enough to equip yours."

Arnulf shook his head and stopped Berengar before he could continue with his train of thought.

"You misunderstand my intent, My Lord. What I desire is a single set of plate armor for myself. Can this be arranged?"

Berengar was stunned when he heard this request; it was a far more reasonable offer than what he had initially estimated to be Arnulf's thoughts. Of course, a full set of plate armor was an outrageous expense, but that was

because of the limited ability of this era to produce steel in high enough quantity to create such a thing. Not to mention the intensive labor required for personal fitting of the armor. However, Berengar had more steel than he knew what to do with at the moment. With the use of advanced manufacturing processes like trip hammers in his factories, the labor would be far less extensive, and as such, far less expensive to manufacture a set of full plate armor.

After careful consideration, Berengar agreed to the terms Arnulf had stated; as such, he rose from his chair and extended his hand to the Lord in front of him.

"Then, if that is all, I believe we have come to an agreement.."

The two men shook hands, signaling the dawn of a new alliance united against their common enemy. After agreeing to the terms, Arnulf handed over the ledger to Berengar for safekeeping, and Berengar promised Arnulf that he would get his set of armor within a reasonable amount of time. The style of armor in which he would craft for the man would be in that of the famous Maximillian set, which German Knights and Men-at-Arms used during the 16th century of Berengar's previous life.

After the two had concluded their negotiations, Berengar turned his focus to Ingbert, who was waiting patiently for his turn to speak. When Berengar motioned for Ingbert to voice his concerns, the man kneeled before him.

"My Lord, I confess to conspiring against you alongside your brother in the past and openly ask for forgiveness. I offer you my written and verbal testimonies of the wicked deeds I have witnessed Lambert engaging in as my sincerest apologies for my actions."

The young knight's actions slightly amused Berengar. He never really cared for Ingbert, but somehow Linde had managed to gain his support in the fight against Lambert. After all, he had punished her severely the night before for hugging him; even if it was an act, he could not allow his slave to touch other men. Though he held no grudge against Ingbert for that scene, as such, he motioned for Ingbert to rise as Berengar gave his decree.

"Rise Ser Ingbert. I shall spare you under the condition that you stay true to your words and aid me in bringing down my brother."

Ingbert rose from his kneeling position with a wide smile on his face; he was not doing this for Berengar but for Linde, who desperately needed his help. Or so he thought, the reality is that aside from the one encounter with Lambert in the hallway, he had never laid a hand on her before, nor would he ever again as the boy was so clearly traumatized by Berengar's threat.

With these new pieces of evidence and the letter from Lambert's previous attempt on his life, Berengar now had everything he needed to charge his brother with attempted fratricide and treason. With this evidence in his hands, he could justifiably execute his brother the moment he gained control over the seat of power in Kufstein. Now all he needed to do was wait for his father to march off to war leaving him in control of the Barony.

Of course, first, he would have to deal with the threat of the inquisition breathing down his neck, but to him, the church and their attempts to intimidate him into compliance were merely child's play. If the church wanted to provoke a Tyrant then he was happy to play the part. Berengar would soon show his enemies what happens when they conspire against the Tyrant of Steel!