

Steel 511

Chapter 511 - Mountain Warfare Part II

Honorina aimed down the sights of her bolt-action rifle. The beautiful princess turned privateer, held a spare round between her luscious pink lips as if it were a cigarette. She also held several munitions between her fingers on the supporting hand. When armed with a single shot bolt-action rifle, this was a common technique used to reduce reload time.

Any minute now, the Mortar team would launch a shell on the unsuspecting village, thus starting their assault. At the moment, the Byzantine Princess was among her crew of privateers, who were stationed just outside a native village in the Andes Mountains. For the past few weeks they had fought, and struggled to get this far in the foreign land. Now they finally gained some treasure.

Though just a small agricultural village from a primitive stone age society, Honorina was certain there was bound to be something worth scavenging within its confines. At the very least, they could abate their current food shortage. Thus, with fierce determination, and a desire to avenge her fallen sisters, Honorina had ordered the assault on this village.

Whether the people of this village were associated with the war bands that had ambushed her crew since their arrival, Honorina did not know, nor did she care. In the eyes of her followers, all the locals were the same, thus by spilling blood here, they would avenge their fallen comrades.

After what felt like a lifetime of waiting, the roar of the mortar and the fiery blast of its explosion took place; in doing so, signalling the privateers to begin their attack. Thus Honorina stood up from behind her cover and charged towards the village, her crew following behind her. As they approached the target of their wrath, they opened fire on the unsuspecting villagers who believed a natural disaster was occurring.

"Kill them all!"

A storm of bullets went down range, towards the unarmed villagers, riddling their bodies with bloody holes. In the next second Honoria and her girls pulled back the bolts on their rifles, and inserted one round contained between their fingers. Having reloaded their weapons, they raised, lowered their muzzles once more, and aimed at the next target.

By now, the warriors of the village knew they were under attack, thus they rushed out towards the unknown enemy with their shields and spears. However, when they noticed it was a bunch of women attacking them, they hesitated to respond. In their minds, they could not fathom the idea of an all female war band.

Evidently, this tribe was unrelated to the ones who had been attacking Honoria and her crew, thus they were unfamiliar with the weapons and tactics that the girls used. They raised their wicker shields to protect themselves from the enemy's attack. However, the bullets cut through their defenses as if they were completely nonexistent. Striking the village's warriors in the chests and spraying their blood into the air.

Honoria did not know, nor did she care. This village was unrelated to her previous enemies. Instead, she led the charge towards the ranks of what few warriors the enemy could muster, and fired upon them. Luckily for her, there were only a small amount of combat capable men in the village, thus after firing their initial volleys, the girls ran through the survivors with their bayonets, slaughtering what little resistance the village could muster.

In a matter of minutes, the foreign privateers had captured the village, where they gathered the locals in to the center, and bound them with ropes. Honoria quickly dispatched her orders to the troops under her command.

"I want a squad guarding these prisoners. As for the rest of you, search for food, water, and anything of value! This village is ours!"

The crew of Queen Honoria's Revenge lifted their rifles in the air and cheered. This was an easy victory for them, and after weeks of suffering enemy ambushes, they felt like they finally had a secure area to operate out of.

While Honoria's crew were ransacking the village, the Pirate Queen herself pulled out a flare pistol and loaded a green flare before firing it in the air above. Despite weeks of climbing, Honoria and her crew had not gotten far into the Andes, instead they were still within observation distance from the vessel,

and its sailors. When the green flare went off, it signified that the embarked privateers had established a secure base camp.

Those who stayed behind on the vessel had been waiting weeks for this signal, when they finally gazed upon the green flare in the night sky shooting up from a peak in the mountains above. An overwhelming sense of relief filled their hearts.

As for the captured villagers, they gazed at the strange green light, which illuminated the sky above with both fear and reverence. They could not imagine what sorcery these foreigners had conjured to create such an astonishing sight.

After firing the flare, Honoria began searching around the village for something to eat. Eventually, she came across the village's stockpile and opened it up to reveal a strange product. Honoria handled the object in her hand, completely unaware that her husband's obsession with the new world revolved entirely upon this vegetable.

In Honoria's hands was a potato, something that Berengar had been struggling to live life without ever since he had first reincarnated into this world. At first glance, this object was not only unappealing, but quite mundane.

Yet this vegetable, and those like it, were the greatest staple food a society could ask for. If Honoria were to bring these back in ample numbers, they could be grown in Austria on an industrial scale, and provide many benefits to the Kingdom's growing population.

However, to this Pirate Queen, this vegetable was unappealing. If it weren't because she and her crew were running out of food, she would never think about eating such a thing. Despite her internal protests, she brought out troves of potatoes and ordered her crew to cook them.

"I don't care what you have to do, but prepare whatever the hell these things are, and make them edible. They don't appear to be poisonous, so go nuts!"

Elfrun nodded her head and grabbed ahold of the wicker basket which contained the vegetable and peeled the thick skin with the blade of her knife. While she was doing this, her comrades lit up a fire and prepared a cooking pit.

After the area had been prepared, Elfrun reached into her satchel and pulled out a pan, where she poured some cooking oil onto it, before placing the cut potatoes inside. In the girl's infinite wisdom, she had fried the potatoes before topping them off with salt and pepper.

After a large amount of the vegetable had been fully cooked, Elfrun brought a plate over to Honoria and offered the Captain the first taste of this new food. By now Honoria was practically starving, and after sniffing the savory aroma of fried potatoes for the past few minutes, she no longer looked down on the vegetable.

Instead, she was eager to take the first bite, and after doing so, she exclaimed in shock. The crew gazed at their captain with curious gazes. They could not tell whether her response was a good or bad sign. However, after getting an initial taste of the potato, Honoria ate them with gusto.

She did not have to say a word. After seeing their captain's actions, the crew had no further reservations and feasted upon the fried potatoes, savoring the exceptional taste of the completely foreign vegetable. Honoria was certain now that they had found a genuine treasure. Forget gold and silver. This vegetable would be worth a fortune if they were to bring it back to the fatherland.

Thus unknowingly, Honoria had discovered something that would make the King of Austria favor her over all his other wives for quite some time. When she finally returned to Austria with a cargo filled with potatoes, the King would reward her and her crew with their weight in gold for their discovery. An action that would surprise them all.

After weeks of bloody conflict, making their way across the Andes mountains, Honoria and her crew had finally found the treasure that would make them rich beyond their wildest dreams. The discovery of potatoes in the new world would later be seen as a catalyst for the Age of Discovery in this timeline.

When the day finally came that King Berengar von Kufstein, made the existence of the New World public to the Austrian people, and that the potatoes which would become a staple in their diet had originated from their, wealthy entrepreneurs, and nobles alike would invest in expeditions to every part of the new world, in search of fame, and fortune.

Honoria and her crew had unknowingly made their mark on history, forever to be remembered as the first major explorers of the New World. However, their story did not end with this journey. In fact, the discovery of potatoes would inspire the Pirate Queen to invest in new expeditions across the South American Continent.. With such a fearsome reputation, young women around the Mediterranean would be eager to sign up for her crew.

Chapter 512 - Iberian Arms Race

While the Austro-Granadan Forces continued to conduct peacekeeping operations throughout the now conquered Kingdom of Portugal, a new power had risen in the Iberian Peninsula. the Kingdom of Spain, led by King Felipe de Trastámara, was currently undergoing a massive transition. With financial support from the papacy, the fledgling Kingdom had invested heavily into the reverse engineering and improvement of firearms.

By sharing technology with the church, the two factions could complete construction of a series of new weapons that would make their armies closer to that of Austria's allies in terms of military technology. As a fanatical catholic, the King of Spain also received the leaked agricultural tech from his Papal overlord to fight back against the agricultural revolution occurring within the borders of his southern neighbor.

Currently, King Felipe was gazing at freshly trained force, risen as peasant levies. It had taken them a mere three weeks to become sufficient in using the new arms. These levies were equipped with a form of munitions plate armor, copied from the older Austrian designs that had been captured during their war for independence.

In their hands were the new matchlock muskets, complete with socket bayonets. The officer in charge of this platoon quickly issued orders to the soldiers beneath his command.

"Form ranks! Present Arms! Fire!"

With these commands, the soldiers quickly formed two lines, as was inspired by older Austrian tactics, where the first row knelt down, and the second row lowered their rifles above their heads. Once the order was given, they squeezed the lever that acted as a trigger, resulting in lit slow burning match dropping onto the pan which contained the powder.

Thus, igniting the mixture and propelling the small iron ball down range. A loud echo resounded in the air as the iron projectiles flew into the bodies of the Granadan merchants, who were falsely accused of seditious actions. Because of their nationality, they were accused of espionage, and sentenced to death by the King of Spain.

Sultan Hasan Al-Fadl had negotiated for their release, but his Spanish counterpart had demanded a king's ransom, one that Hasan was not willing to afford. Thus, when the gunfire echoed in the air, and the musket balls entered their bodies, the Granadan merchants lost their lives.

Felipe witnessed this public execution and broke out into laughter as his new troops murdered innocents in the name of God. He sipped on a chalice of wine as he called out to the masses who were gathered in the center of Toledo to witness this event.

"These men were heathens of the Islamic faith who had entered our lands under the guise of trade to gather intelligence in our kingdom to report to their demonic masters. Let their deaths be a reminder to all of you that any man, woman, or child who comes from the south is an enemy of Spain. God wills it!"

Unknowingly, to the Spanish Monarch, a group of Granadan Spies were in the crowd, witnessing the murder of their countrymen. They had the desire to pull out their pocket pistols and unleash a volley into the King's chest. However, their wrath remained controlled. Their job was to collect intelligence, not to assassinate.

They would soon return to the Sultanate of Granada and report to their monarch about the development of arms of their northern neighbors.

Days had passed, and Hasan was currently standing within his office, speaking with the agents who had witnessed the deaths of the Granadan Merchants.

"You're telling me they have developed muskets and more powerful cannons?"

The lead agent was a beautiful arabic woman who nodded her head with a bitter expression.

"Indeed, I believe the Church is partially responsible for the rapid development of arms. The Spaniards are currently dedicating as much resources as possible to the manufacture of these weapons, and the training of new levies with them."

Hasan sighed when he heard this. Standing next to him was the Personal Representative of the Austrian Crown, and commander of all forces within Granada. With Arnulf being relocated to the Colony of New Vienna, his position as Allied Commander within the Iberian Peninsula was shifted to Adelbrand von Salzburg, who had recently received a promotion to the position of Field Marshal.

The man was glad to be in Granada, as he enjoyed the climate and the local women. He had also been longing to return to the Iberian Theatre since he departed from the previous campaign. Now that he was here, he had taken a far more brutal role in the alleged "Peacekeeping" Operations within Portugal.

He sneered in disgust as he heard what had transpired within the city of Toledo.

"Absolutely disgraceful, and completely disrespectful to you and your people. Your Majesty, it is of my opinion that we must retaliate. I suggest detonating a bomb in the city center of Toledo. If they wish to murder your civilians, then they should know the consequences.

A simple crate packed with TNT will be enough to cause substantial damage to the trade center of our neighbor's capital city. We must send a message that the targeting of our civilians will be met with greater aggression."

Despite the hawkish suggestion of the Austrian Field Marshal, Hasan's own General Ziyad had a countering opinion.

"And what? Further escalate the violence until an all out war breaks out? No, we need to be more subtle in our approach. Since they are targeting our merchants, we can do the same. With the support of Austrian Privateers, we can target the Spanish shipping and seize their goods, and sell them to the emirates in North Africa. I am sure the Tunisians will be happy to get their hands on Spanish goods for a discounted price!"

Hasan sighed heavily when he heard the two opposing views. They both had merit, and he remained hesitant about how to continue. He was starting to regret marrying his sister off to Berengar, as until

now she had been the real brains behind the Granadan Crown. Without her unwavering support, the young monarch now began to understand the weight of the crown.

After some fierce internal debate, the young Sultan nodded his head before making a decision. As a monarch, he needed to be firm with his stance on Spain's actions. Retaliation would only provoke further conflict. What he needed was to hamper the development of Spain's arms industry, and the best way to do this was hamper the raw materials they were receiving in support from the other Catholic Kingdoms.

"I have thought about both actions, and I have come to a decision regarding our course of action. We will hire Austrian Privateers to attack Spanish shipping, meanwhile our agents will sabotage Spain's arms factories. We can not allow them to equip their entire army with muskets.

As for the manufacture of muskets and cannons in our own realm, increase the construction of puddling furnaces, and continue purchasing equipment from our allies. I will not allow my sultanate to fall behind our Catholics Neighbors!"

Ziyad smiled and nodded his head before saluting his monarch, meanwhile Adelbrand felt slighted, in his eyes blood must be met with blood, though targeting the enemy's trade as retaliation had its own benefits, it did not avenge the lives of those who were murdered by the Catholics.

Despite these reservations, his job was to obey Hasan's commands and support his actions. Thus, the Austrian Field Marshal threw up a regular military salute and responded to his Granadan Counterpart.

"Yes, your majesty!"

After receiving their orders, the two men were dismissed, leaving the young Sultan alone in his office. He sank back into his seat before pouring himself a chalice filled with wine. After taking a large gulp, Hasan spoke to himself.

"Yas, my dear older sister, I hope you are doing well in your new life, because I could really use your help..."

The Arms race between the Sultanate of Granada and the Kingdom of Spain had begun. Meanwhile, the Spanish Crown would continue to supply Portuguese Rebels with the weapons needed to continue their fight, and the Granadans would retaliate by raiding Spanish Shipping.

By hiring privateers to act as pirates, Granada kept a sense of deniability in their actions, allowing them to hamper their rival's armament process. Fortunately for the Granadans, the ruthless Pirate Queen of the Mediterranean was halfway across the world. If she were involved in this conflict, she and her crew would annihilate the entire Spanish trading fleet in a matter of months.

When Berengar's agents reported to him about Hasan's actions, he would be pleased with the Sultan's progress as a ruler. A measured approach to Spain's hostile actions was indeed the best choice at hand. If the young monarch had listened to Adelbrand's advice, it would only spark greater conflict between Spain and Granada, a war neither of the two were ready for.

As for the Princess of Granada, she was enjoying her peaceful life in the Capital of Austria, alongside her new husband and her sister-wives. She would not be aware of the struggles her brother was going through, and even if he asked for her return, she would decline.. Now that she was married, her duty was to her husband first and foremost, a principle that would remain constant throughout her marriage.

Chapter 513 - A Proper Wife Part I

Yasmin Al-Fadl was standing in the kitchen of the Royal Palace of Austria. With the aid of the staff, she was preparing some of Austria's fine cuisine for her husband. Since she had first arrived in the foreign kingdom that belongs to her spouse, she had been interested in learning of its culture, heritage, and how to make the local delicacies.

By now, she was fluent in the German tongue and could effectively communicate with anyone who spoke the language. Despite living in Austria, Yasmin did not take up the local fashion trends. She instead wore the traditional kaftan, with the face veil and headdress that she normally wore. She found the loose fitting silk clothes of her homeland were more comfortable than the intricate dresses of the Austrian Nobility.

Time had passed, and the meal she had made for her husband was complete, thus with a smile concealed beneath the gossamer face veil, the Moorish beauty walked towards her husband's office where he was hard at work managing the realm's affairs. With a soft knock on the hard wooden doors, she alerted the man to her presence.

"Husband, I have prepared lunch for you. I followed the recipe you created in exact detail. I hope you enjoy it."

When Berengar heard this, he dropped everything he was doing and opened the door with a wide smile on his face. He gazed at his beautiful wife with a warm expression and invited her into his office.

"Yasmin, my darling wife, please come in and enjoy this meal with me!"

The Moorish Princess smiled and nodded her head as she entered the room alone with her husband. She then placed the dish on his desk, where the couple sat down. Sitting on the plate were several sausages cooked with a new sauce.

Because of the trade of spice with India, Berengar had now gotten access to curry powder, allowing him to create a staple of German cuisine from his past life, and that was curry wurst. Berengar took one bite of the delicious dish and smiled as he savored the flavor.

Upon seeing the pleasant expression on her husband's face, Yasmin removed her face veil, displaying her natural beauty to the man she married, before elegantly taking a bite of the sausage. She moaned in pleasure as she tasted the dish for the first time in her life. As the two partook of the meal, Berengar made small talk with his newest bride.

"So tell me, how are you finding life here in Austria? Is it to your liking? Is there anything I can help with making your stay more comfortable?"

Yasmin washed down the curry wurst with a sip of purified water before speaking her honest feelings about how she felt since she first arrived in Kufstein.

"Your Kingdom is one of many marvels, and I must say I am impressed with the beauty of your homeland's landscape. However, I must admit I feel a bit homesick. Which is not exactly aided by the way your other wives have treated me."

When Berengar heard this last part, he stopped dead in his track before giving his wife a questioning gaze. He was unaware that she was facing such difficulties and immediately interrogated her about his other wives' behavior.

"Are they mistreating you in any way? I swear to god one of those bitches has been bullying you. I will let them have it!"

Upon witnessing the wrathful gaze of her husband, Yasmin quickly shook her head before clarifying the issue.

"They are not bullying me per se, it is just that they have pretty much excluded me entirely. I feel alienated, as if I don't belong here. However, if there was one girl in particular who had been outright hostile to me, it would be Adela. I think her faith has blinded her, and she perceives me as an enemy at best, and a foreign whore at the worst. Plus, I get the feeling that she is a bit jealous of my body..."

Berengar had a grim expression on his face as he heard this. Though he expected some resistance from his wives to Yasmin's arrival, he had not expected such hostility. He struggled to think of a way to make his newest bride's life more comfortable within his household. However, in the next moment, he heard the woman express a sentiment that he was not expecting. With a heavy sigh, Yasmin rubbed her pregnant belly with a warm smile on her face.

"However, it is nothing I can't handle. I never expected your other wives would be cordial with me, that they have remained distant rather than cruel is a blessing in its own right. As long as I have you, and this child, I will be fine. I promise you, so long as I am your wife, I will always take your side, and support you and your goals in whatever way I am able."

Berengar smiled and nodded his head when he heard this, though he would think of ways to improve Yasmin's living conditions, and the relationship between her and his other wives. As long as she was content, then he was happy. Thinking about this, it reminded Berengar of something important. He quickly opened up his desk drawer and pulled out a letter before handing it to his lovely bride.

"Your brother has sent me a status update on what is going on with his neighbors. As his elder sister, I thought you would be interested."

Yasmine quickly took a look at the letter's contents. As she did so, her expression became grim. The fact that the Kingdoms of Castile and Aragon had united, and were now wantonly executing their citizens, was a cause for concern. Thus, there was a hint of worry in her voice as she asked Berengar what the plan of action was to deal with these newfound developments.

"This is troubling. The outright hostility to my people was something I expected, but to actually bring false charges against our merchants, and brutally execute them is a step too far. How has my brother reacted to this? I hope he hasn't done something foolish like attack Spain's citizens in retaliation?"

Berengar smiled and shook his head before he grabbed ahold of Yasmin's hand and reassured her of the actions the Sultanate of Granada was taking.

"Your brother has surprisingly chosen wisely in his choice of retaliation. It looks like now that his overprotective big sister is out of the picture. He is growing into a capable ruler. He has opted to allow Austrian Privateers to attack Spanish shipping, while covertly sabotaging the Spanish Crown's attempt to modernize their military.

What I'm more worried about is the mines of Collbato. If information is leaked about what we are harvesting there, then it will be a cause for war."

Yasmin had a perplexed expression on her face. Though she was dying to know more information about Berengar's mining operations in Spain, she did not know if it was her place to ask. After all, it appeared to be a state secret, and she did not believe it was her place to meddle in such affairs.

Upon seeing the complicated expression on his wife's face, Berengar relaxed back into his chair before informing her of just what he was doing behind the scenes.

"Yasmin, you are my wife, and the bridge between our two realms. If I can't trust you with such sensitive information, then who can I trust? In the future, if you have questions regarding my operations in Iberia, all you need to do is ask. With that said, allow me to inform you on a little secret that only a handful of people are aware of.

I specifically requested for mining rights within Collbato because it is filled with saltpeter deposits. As far as I'm aware, it is one of the few places in Europe where saltpeter is naturally formed in such vast quantities. I'm sure I don't need to inform you of the consequences that would arise if they were to learn of this."

Yasmin's amber eyes widened in shock as she heard this statement. She did not know how Berengar had found out about such a thing, when even the Crown of Aragon was unaware of it. She nervously bit down on her lower lip before expressing the thoughts on her mind.

"If Spain learns of this matter, they would immediately move to seize the saltpeter mines, and in doing so, violate your treaty. Even if they are not prepared for war at the moment, they can't allow their enemies to have such a vast deposit of such a crucial strategic reserve.

By taking this mine, they could break their reliance on eastern trade for gunpowder, and could even supply the catholic world. Thus, causing a significant threat to both Granada and Austria. No matter what, they can't learn of what lies within these mines!"

Berengar had a smirk on his face as he sat back and listened to his wife's explanation of the geo-political situation at hand. Few men could glean so much knowledge about the world's affairs by simple exchange of words. Even fewer women could display such comprehensive knowledge and foresight. Perhaps only Linde was capable of such a thing. He suddenly had a newfound respect for Yasmin.

Chapter 514 - A Proper Wife Part II

Berengar gazed across from his desk at his fourth wife with newfound respect. Until now, much of his thoughts on the foreign beauty was that she was a graceful, and mature woman who acted as a Proper Wife, and in many ways played the role of the big sister he never had. Thus, he smiled before giving the woman the proper respect she deserved.

"No wonder why your brother could last so long against hostile powers on all sides. It turns out his sister was the true brains behind the Granadan Crown all along. You are correct in your assessment, which is

why I have deployed sufficient assets to silently eliminate any agents of the Spanish Crown who get within a 100m radius of the mines.

I must admit, I have underestimated your intellect. You said earlier that you would support me in any way you can. Though I won't burden you with a powerful government position if you do not desire such a thing. I would very much like your input on important matters in the future. Feel free to drop by my office whenever you desire. Between you and me, I vastly prefer your company over some of my other brides..."

Yasmin chuckled when she heard this before inquiring further about Berengar's statement.

"Trouble in Paradise?"

Berengar merely scoffed at this response before complaining about his martial affairs.

"Don't get me wrong, I love my girls, and I would do anything to protect them. However, each of them have their faults. Adela is so pious that her faith blinds her to the reality of life. She has a very idealized image of the world, and doesn't understand the cruelty of man. Because of this, she must be sheltered and protected at all times; it is also the reason she has such a holier-than-thou attitude.

However, this weakness is also her strength, as it allows her to create a utopian sense of culture for my people. It is because of this glamorous image of Austria and its people that she has become such an effective minister of propaganda.

Honorina, on the other hand, is a free spirit, and a bit of a wild card. She has no mind for politics, nor does she care about anything than her own hedonistic pleasure. While this makes her an excellent lover, she is hardly what you would call a proper Queen. Sometimes It is hard to believe the woman was raised as a Princess of the mighty Byzantine Empire.

Despite not being able to have an intelligent conversation with Honorina about anything other than piracy, her independent spirit and natural curiosity are exactly what allows me to use her as a weapon against my enemies. This is also what drives her to explore the unknown regions of the world without fear in her heart. She has a role to play, even if she is an embarrassment at court."

Yasmin chuckled as she heard her husband's descriptions of his other wives. She had to say from her limited interaction with the women; his words were fairly accurate. However, she noticed that he left out one other wife, thus she asked for his honest opinion on Linde.

"What about Linde? I noticed you are hesitant to speak your thoughts about her..."

Berengar had a grim expression on his face as he looked around to see if there were any unwanted eyes or ears nearby. After confirming they were well and truly alone in his office, the young king took a swig from the beer that Yasmin had brought him for his lunch. After swallowing several large gulps of the hearty lager, he sighed heavily before revealing his honest opinion of his second wife.

"Linde is.... complicated to say the least. She is intelligent, cunning, manipulative, and deceptive, however one thing I've noticed since the day I met her is she is unbelievably cruel, and petty. It is only because of my thorough training that she has tamed her malevolent nature.

Despite this, she is fiercely loyal, and loves her family more than anything. I can honestly say that she is the type of woman who would do anything, no matter how wicked, to ensure the safety of her loved ones. Luckily, I have been able to weaponise the darker aspects of her character against my enemies.

If I am being completely honest, without her, I would probably have died years ago. It is no secret that I owe her a great deal, and I am just happy that she is on my side. I dread to think about what would have happened if she had actually supported my brother and her father. Without a doubt, I would have been dead before I could even have succeeded my father. In a way, I can attribute all of my success to that woman's sacrifice."

Yasmin felt slightly envious when she heard the adoration and respect in Berengar's voice towards Linde. There was even a hint of fear in his tone, which was something she had never actually heard from him before. Thus, she unknowingly bit her lower lip as she asked the immediate question on her mind.

"What about me? What is your honest opinion about my character?"

Berengar smiled when he heard this response. Since he had been so brutally honest with this woman about how he felt about the others, it was only fair that he gave her his genuine opinion.

"If I'm being honest, though we are married, I feel as if I don't know you as well as I should. Part of that is my fault. I have been so busy maintaining and expanding my Kingdom that I have neglected you in many ways.

However, from what I have gathered from the little time I have spent with you, you are pretty much the personification of a proper wife. You're intelligent, mature, kind, loving, and willing to do anything I ask. On top of that, you are quite honestly the most beautiful of my wives, but don't tell the others I said that... Linde would kill me if she found out that I was more attracted to you than her..."

Yasmin began to chuckle as she heard these compliments. She supposed most of those things were true, but one thing Berengar had neglected to mention was her faults. With this in mind, she immediately hounded him for an answer in that regard.

"Your flattery is appreciated, but tell me what are my faults? You complained about all your other brides. Surely you must have something that you think I can improve upon..."

Berengar thought about this question deeply for a few moments before something immediately popped into his mind, he honestly didn't know if he should mention it, but after several moments he decided he would say it anyway, after all he had been completely honest with the woman up until this point.

"How do I put this delicately... I would very much appreciate it if you trimmed your hair... you know, down there..."

A look of surprise appeared on the exotic beauty's face before she broke out into a fit of giggles. The look on Berengar's face was priceless, as if he was embarrassed on her behalf for simply mentioning it. The more she laughed, the more Berengar's face flushed, until finally she had no choice but to respond..

"Very well, husband, if that is your wish, I shall take care of it from now on."

After saying this, the woman rested her chin on her hand as she gazed lovingly at her man. She could not help but tease him about his flustered appearance.

"You are so cute when you're embarrassed. Did you expect me to slap you for making such a comment? You don't have to worry about such things with me. Whatever your desires, I will do my best to fulfill them."

Berengar sighed heavily. He knew if he had said such a thing to any of his other wives, they would have likely become embarrassed and potentially slapped him. It was a relief to see a woman so confident in her appearance she felt no shame at hearing such a suggestive request. However, what the woman did next surprised him. Yasmin raised from her seat and walked over to his sight before sensually whispering the following words in his ears.

"Since that is your request, how about we bathe together tonight, just the two of us, and I will allow you to do the honor of trimming my hair."

Berengar was instantly stunned when he heard this response. Never did he expect a woman to so boldly proposition him with such a strange suggestion. However, he would not let this opportunity pass, thus he gulped down the saliva that had pooled in his throat and nodded in the affirmative before responding with a serious expression on his handsome face.

"If you insist..."

Upon seeing her husband's adamant appearance, Yasmin giggled once more before she raised from her seat and fetched the tray that was used to carry Berengar's meal. After doing so, she walked to the door and left behind one last comment before departing.

"Very well, I look forward to tonight..."

Having said this, she left the young king to his lonesome, as a thousand thoughts flooded his mind. He was amazed at how this woman captured his interest every time she spoke.. He had truly underestimated her, indeed.

Berengar sat in his Royal Bathhouse, clothed in nothing but a towel over his waist, which poorly concealed his excitement. Though Yasmin had not yet joined him, he was certain the woman would live up to her promise. Thus, he was well prepared for the grooming that was about to transpire within this sacred room.

On the ground next to the giant pool of water was a series of wax strips and scissors. Their purpose was simple: trim Yasmin's pubic hair to a classic bikini wax. After all, with the research and development into synthetic materials, it was only a matter of time before his chemists created lycra, and when that happened, he could finally make proper bikinis for his women.

Though he had been planning a honeymoon for some time, for him and his wives, Berengar had ultimately decided to wait longer than he had initially estimated. Why go to Granada in the summer, when they could go to the Caribbean in the winter, and enjoy a tropical paradise free from the cold?

In his mind, he could already imagine the appearance of his wives and their bikinis. He had something special planned for Yasmin, a micro bikini that barely contained her nipples and finely trimmed fur. After all, nobody could view his women on his privately conquered island, so he was free to dress them in as skimpy of swimsuits as he could imagine.

As for what Island he would set out to conquer to act as the home of the Royal Winter Palace, he had yet to decide. Though he knew he wanted a small island with a small local population that he could use as the bulk of his labor force in constructing the mighty palace which he planned to base off of the Belvedere Palace from his past life.

While he was pondering about these things, the door opened. As Yasmin snuck into the room, she quietly made her way over to her husband, who was sitting in the bath, and wrapped her arms around his neck as she kissed him on the cheek.

"I'm sorry for making you wait. Did you get started without me?"

Berengar chuckled as he heard his fourth wife's voice, before grabbing hold of her tan hand and kissing it gently. After doing so, he dragged her into the bath with him. That caused a tremendous splash. The woman rose from the depths of the pool with a smile on her face as she swam over and hugged her husband tightly, pressing her dark pink nipples against the man's broad chest.

It was at this moment she noticed the grooming tools on the side of the bath and giggled.

"You weren't joking, very well, if this is what you want, I don't mind entertaining you." After saying this, she climbed out of the pool and sat on the edge where she spread her legs, displaying her lower lips, and her natural bush to her husband.

Berengar chuckled as he gazed at the beautiful sight. After enjoying the view for a few moments, Yasmin teased him.

"Are you just going to stare the whole time, or are you going to get to work?"

The young Austrian King snapped back to reality with this statement, before grabbing hold of the wax strips he had prepared earlier. He carefully placed them around the areas that would form a classic bikini wax. After doing so, he gave his wife a fair warning.

"I've never done this before, so I don't know if it will hurt or not, so I am just warning you in advance."

In response to this, Yasmin merely scoffed before giving her husband permission to continue.

"I'm a big girl. I can handle a little pain. Go ahead, groom me. This is what you want, isn't it?"

Berengar smirked as he heard this. He did not hesitate and immediately ripped the first wax strip off of his wife's nether regions, causing her to yelp in shock. However, he gave her no reprieve, and quickly peeled off the rest, ripping out the hair in those areas from the roots. It was only after he was finished with the wax that he looked up at his wife's expression, to see her biting onto her fingers.

As a natural sadist, Berengar took a bit of pleasure seeing the woman wince in pain, however, he quickly drowned out that wicked side of his personality, before grabbing ahold of the woman's dainty hand and sucking on the fingers that she had bitten. After doing so, he smiled before reassuring his wife that the painful part was over.

"Relax dear, this next part won't be painful."

After saying this, he grabbed hold of a pair of scissors and began to lightly trim what remained of her pubic hair in order to ensure that it was clean and fluffy. After ensuring he had styled it to his liking, he cleaned the utensils in the bathwater before staring at his work with a satisfied grin. He held up a hand mirror to Yasmin's privates to show off the woman how it looked before commenting on it.

"I have finished, I must say, you are twenty times sexier now that I have groomed this area to perfection."

Yasmin looked at her own lower body with a bit of a flushed appearance. This was the first time she had stared at it so intensely. Even for a woman as calm and collected as her, it was a bit embarrassing. However, she had to admit; it looked better after being cleaned up.

It was at this moment that a vicious idea entered her mind. She quickly pulled her husband out of the pool of water and sat him down next to her before grabbing hold of the wax strips with a wicked grin on her face.

"Okay, since you have done as you pleased to my body hair, it is now my turn to groom you!"

Berengar merely smiled when he heard this. With a smug grin on his face, he accepted his wife's challenge.

"Very well, do your worst."

Upon hearing this, Yasmin did not dare to hold back. She would not stop until she had waxed every bit of her husband's body hair completely away. Only after it was complete did Berengar look in the mirror and nod his head.

He had to admit the clean shaven look was definitely the way to go. As for Yasmin, she wrapped her arms around his shoulder and kissed him gently on the neck before making a powerful suggestion to her husband.

"Now that we have gotten that out of the way, how about we have a little fun?"

Berengar smirked when he heard this before turning around and kissing his wife on the lips. After releasing his hold over the woman, he asked for clarification.

"Just what did you have in mind?"

Yasmin merely smiled as she led her husband back into the bath, where she had him sit on the edge of the pool. She grabbed hold of the body wash before spraying it all over her massive F cup breasts. Only after it was thoroughly soapy did she place her husband's long and thick shaft in between her twin mounds.

The young king was not expecting such a gift, and immediately moaned in pleasure as his wife used her ample assets to please him. She sucked on his tip as it slid in between her soapy breasts, forcing him closer to climax.

After several minutes of this treatment, Berengar could no longer contain his lust, and sprayed it all over his wife's face where it flowed down onto her substantial bosom. The woman skillfully licked herself clean before dragging her husband into the pool, and position him behind her. It didn't matter that she was several months into her pregnancy, Berengar had every desire to make love to her properly.

Thus, without a second's hesitation, he inserted his erect shaft into her slithering cave and ravaged his bride. Perhaps she was pleased with both of their groomed appearances, but the Granadan Princess appeared to be tighter than normal. Her walls clenched around him, forcing him to thrust in and out like a piston as he filled her up completely.

Eventually Berengar could no longer take the pressure, and released everything he had inside of the woman, as if he was trying to impregnate her again. After ensuring that every drop made its way into her womb, he pulled out and sank back into the bath, floating in the water as if he had achieved nirvana.

As for Yasmin, she fell to her knees, soaking in the steaming water, struggling to regain her strength after such intense pleasure. Eventually, the couple came together and properly washed themselves after such fierce physical exercise.

When they finally emerged from their bath, Berengar and Yasmin would witness the sight of two jealous brides glaring at their husband for sneaking off with the tanned skinned beauty. However, before they

could even respond, Yasmin smirked as she walked off, leaving behind a single phrase to the envious girls.

"You will have to be quicker if you girls want to monopolize my husband..."

This statement instantly provoked the two young women, causing them to shift their collective ire from their husband to the Granadan Princess. Berengar gazed in awe at his newest bride's selfless sacrifice and made a mental note to properly thank Yasmin later for acting as a martyr.

As for the Moorish beauty, she simply smirked as she walked away. Not only did she have some quality alone time with her husband, free from these bitches' influence. She also made his life a little easier by redirecting their wrath towards herself. In doing so, she had certainly secured herself in his good graces. After all, she came from a polygamous culture.. Unlike Berengar's other wives, she knew how to play the game of harems.

Chapter 516 - Sensual Bath Part II

Having spent some quality alone time with Yasmin, Berengar's other two brides, who were present to witness them absconding from the Royal Bathhouse, were visibly upset. Adela, more so than Linde, she hated Yasmin. The reason for being was purely religious. As a devout Christian, Adela disapproved of the relationship Berengar had with his Muslim bride, and the alliance he made with her family's Kingdom.

The High Queen of Austria considered Yasmin a poor influence on Berengar and worried that she might try to tempt him to convert to her heretical beliefs. Of course, she did not know nor care that Yasmin was more secular than she was devout. Thus, the moment Adela saw her husband leaving the bath with his Moorish whore in tow, she had every urge to attack the woman verbally..

However, before she could get a word in, Yasmin had made her even more furious with her sly statement. Thus, the young Queen of Austria immediately fled the scene. She was too upset to deal with the aftermath. As for Linde, she took Yasmin's words to heart, noticing Adela leave she planned her attack perfectly. Clinging to her husband with an amorous gaze, the redheaded beauty whispered something in his ear that caused him to become excited once more.

"I want you to do to me whatever it is you did to her in the bath!"

Though he had just finished twice in one hour, he was now as hard as a diamond, causing him to sigh heavily as he led his Second Wife into the Bathhouse for yet another round of debauchery. When Berengar stripped off his clothes, it shocked Linde to see that he lacked any hair on his body. She rubbed his glistening ivory skin with her hands before nodding her head in approval.

"I have to admit, that woman has good taste.... You look so much better this way!"

Upon hearing this, Berengar smiled wickedly. While Linde stripped out of her luxurious gown, he gazed down at her nether regions as he grabbed hold of some spare wax strips before responding to her..

"I'm glad to hear that, because I'm about to give you a similar treatment!"

Linde instantly turned around and saw the wax strips in her husband's hands. She immediately understood what he meant and smiled seductively as she sat down on the edge of the pool and spread her legs for him.

"Go ahead then, do what you want with me!"

A flash of inspiration filled Berengar's eyes as he got to work on grooming his second wife. Unlike what he had done for Yasmin, the Austrian King trimmed Linde's bush in the shape of a heart. After all, if he had multiple women in his harem, he might as well shave them differently.

After finishing his work, he once more displayed his test subject's nether regions with a hand mirror. Upon seeing the heart-shaped design, Linde smiled before grabbing hold of her husband and pouncing on him. Without a moment's notice, she climbed on top of him and inserted his shaft into her slithering cave.

The mother of three took control of the situation and bounced on top of her husband's rod repeatedly as if there was no more pleasurable experience in the world, giving the man a full view of her red, heart-shaped fur as he inched ever closer to climax. When combined with her large E Cup breasts which

swayed with every bounce, and her perfectly proportioned birthing hips, it did not take Berengar long to ejaculate inside the woman's womb.

However, despite doing so, Linde did not stop. Like a hungry wolf who had caught ahold of a lamb, she continued to straddle her husband as she leaned down and kissed him, whispering something in his ear that immediately made him stiffen once more.

"I think it is time you give Hans a little brother!"

Berengar chuckled when he heard this. Just how many children did this woman want? However, since she had asked for it, he would not deny her. He immediately reversed her position so that he was on top. The moment Berengar did so, Linde wrapped her legs around his back, ensuring he couldn't escape as he pounded away at her tight insides with his powerful piston. He would not stop until he had released all of his remaining seed into her womb.

As he continued his thrusts, the young king suckled at his Queen's breast, causing her to giggle as she teased him for his actions.

"That's a good boy. Drink mommy's milk. It'll make you big and strong!"

He did as he was instructed. While Berengar suckled on Linde's breasts as if her milk was the most delectable thing he had ever tasted, the redheaded beauty moaned in pleasure while petting her husband's slicked back golden hair, as if he were her child. Eventually, the couple could no longer contain their lust, and they quivered together as they climaxed at the same time.

After a few moments, Berengar pulled out, where Linde leaned over and placed his shaft in her mouth, thoroughly cleaning it before hopping into the bath. Now that they were all sweaty, she needed to wash the filth from her pristine body. The King gazed at his second wife bathing and joined her for his second bath of the day.

After a while, the couple withdrew from the bath, thoroughly exhausted from their encounter. Berengar swore that if Adela approached him for her own sensual bath time, he would have to refuse. He honestly did not believe he could go another round, at least for another hour or so.

As they exited the Royal Bathhouse, Linde kissed her husband on the lips before whispering in his ear.

"I will see you tonight. Don't forget your promise. We are going to keep going at it until you give me another son!"

Berengar sighed as he heard this before nodding his head and petting the beautiful woman in her silky strawberry blonde hair.

"Very well, I will see you tonight"

Linde began to walk off, however after reaching a certain point she turned around and opened her silk robe slightly, only enough to flash her lower lips. As she did this, she wore a pretty smile before thanking her husband.

"Thanks for the trim. I look forward to your future assistance."

After saying this, she disappeared around the corner, leaving Berengar in a bewildered state.

"I could get used to this... Well, that's two down, two more to go..."

After walking back to his office, Berengar opened the door to reveal Yasmin inside, sitting obediently in front of his empty seat. When she saw her husband's return, she smiled before asking in her mind.

"So, how did it go with your other wives? Judging by how long it took you to get here, I'm guessing you had a bit of fun with them?"

Berengar nodded his head as he closed the door behind him. As he did so, he corrected his fourth wife on her assessment.

"I had some fun with Linde. She's a jealous and petty woman. Obviously, she wanted the same treatment you received. As for Adela, she is a bit of a prude, and has to be coerced into group sex. When

she's upset like she is now, there is no way I will would have been able to convince her to join Linde and me in the bath."

Yasmin nodded her head as she heard her husband's words. She reached into his desk and pulled out a bottle of fortified wine and two chalices. Though she only poured the alcoholic beverage for Berengar, after all, she was pregnant. Instead, she poured herself a goblet of water.

She clinked her cup against Berengar's before speaking a slight toast.

"To you, my husband, I don't know how you have done it, but you have the most civil harem I have ever seen. Normally, there would have been bloodshed by now."

Berengar chuckled when he heard this remark. He was all too aware of the brutal nature of harems. He grabbed ahold of his wife's pregnant belly as he reassured her of his control over his family.

"You don't need to worry about that. I promise so long as I am alive, nobody will lay a hand on you or our child. Anyone who even attempts such a thing will pay the price of their actions with their lives, no matter what their position may be in my heart."

Yasmin smiled and nodded as she heard this promise. Unlike most men, she knew Berengar well enough to know he would not shy away from spilling the blood of one of his wives or children if they dared to target his other family members. The other girls were also aware of this fact, and it was this fear that kept their more vicious nature in check.

After gazing out the window for a few moments, contemplating the future, Yasmin finally voiced her concerns.

"So what now?"

Berengar sighed as he took a sip from his gilded chalice before laying out his plans for the near future.

"Now we wait for our enemies to make their next move. While the Catholic world pulls their heads out of their asses, I will take every moment available to me to further advance my Kingdom. When the day

comes that the enemy finally march on Austria with their little crusade, I will destroy every last man who dares to dream of harming my family."

Yasmin nodded her head with a smile on her face as she responded to her husband's vision.

"Good, I look forward to it...."

Chapter 517 - Returning From An Arduous Voyage Part I

Honorina stood at the ramparts of her makeshift walls. Over the past few weeks, she and her crew had used the resources at their disposal to fortify the mountain village which they conquered. Using the local population as slave labor, they were able to rapidly construct superior defenses as a timber star fort.

Since the establishment of the fortress, she had issued patrols from the mountain pass down to the beaches below to secure supply lines, with the crew maintaining control over the Iron-Clad sloop of war.

There had been several attacks on the village since Honorina and her crew established control, but with superior armament and defenses, these hostile forces who had once ambushed her crew during their long trek were easily defeated.

Although they had brought ample supplies to ensure their survivability in this foreign land, munitions were running low after repeated assaults by the enemy and the supply caravans which had transported potatoes en masse to the ship had become more burdened under the onslaught of native war bands.

It was becoming abundantly clear that any attempt to establish a permanent settlement in this region would require thousands of soldiers and a constant supply of munitions from the Fatherland. An effort that Honorina was unsure whether it was worth the cost.

The Pirate Queen sighed heavily as she turned to her first mate, Melissa, who had been by her side throughout the entire ordeal. She knew they would soon be overrun by the enemy's attempts to drive them from these lands.

Honorina only hoped that their limited contact with the natives would spread disease like it had in New Vienna, and in doing so, wipe out much of the local populace so that future colonization efforts would not end in vain.

"Melissa, it is time to withdraw from our position. We have transported enough of these strange vegetables to our cargo hold. I hope they will be worth something to our King when we finally return to the fatherland."

Melissa nodded her head in silence. She agreed with her captain. Casualties were higher than expected, and the crew was growing more discontent by the day. They were dangerously close to another mutiny attempt.

Noticing her first mate's reaction, Honorina gave out her orders.

"Tell the crew to pack up our supplies and prepare to depart. We will leave this outpost and return to the vessel, from there we will set sail for the fatherland. We have explored enough of the region. The intelligence we can provide to the Austrian crown will surely be worth a fortune."

The former prostitute saluted her captain before responding in the affirmative.

"Yes ma'am, we will dispatch your orders immediately."

After saying this, Melissa departed from Honorina's hut and began giving out the orders. Within a matter of hours, the crew was fully prepared to withdraw from the continent. Though there would be a brief period of conflict as they descended from the mountains, ultimately those who had survived thus far would make it back to the vessel without significant injury.

As for the journey home, it was relatively uneventful. Considering Honorina and her crew were some of the few people who knew about the existence of the new world, the only threat they would have to face would be the weather itself.

However, they were not sailing on wooden ships, instead they used a watertight ironclad. In doing so, they ensured that the weather was less of a concern than it was during the age of exploration in Berengar's past life.

After several weeks, the day finally arrived for Honoria and her crew to return to the fatherland. Where she immediately departed from her vessel and aided her crew in transporting the cargo of potatoes to a railcar which would make its way to the capital. As for the rest of her Crew Honoria addressed them one last time before parting ways.

"As promised, I will negotiate with the King for the price of the information we have got, and the cargo we have gained throughout our exploits. An equal share will be given to all members of the crew, for those who passed away on our adventure. I promise their families will be taken care of.

For now, wait in Kufstein until you have received your pay. Then you are welcome to do as you please until I call upon you again. Just remember that everything you witnessed on this journey is a state secret, and there will be strict punishments for whoever leaks any information regarding what we discovered.

The price to pay for such treachery would be none other than death, so I advise you all to keep your lips sealed. Now I must return to the palace. I will call upon you when I have decided on our next adventure."

After saying this, Honoria departed from her crew and took the next train back to Kufstein. When she finally arrived at the Palace's gates, her appearance was quite haggard. She had seen much difficulty on her expedition to the Andes and had not bathed in weeks. However, she felt confident that her husband would still be pleased to see her.

The guards instantly recognized the Third Queen and allowed her to pass through the gates without incident. It was only after she knocked on the door to the Royal Palace that she finally felt relaxed. A servant quickly answered the door and was shocked to see the disheveled appearance of the Third Queen.

"Queen Honoria, you have returned? Quickly, come with me. The King is in the bath, and I am certain that he will be happy to see you safe and sound."

Honorio smiled pleasantly and nodded her head when she heard this. It had been some time since she had seen her husband, and her body was aching for his embrace. Thus, she was happy to follow the servant into the bath where she stripped out of her muddy clothes, and silently approached Berengar, who was leaning against the edge of the pool.

The Princess of Byzantium stealthily approached her husband, where she placed her hands around his eyes and disguised her voice.

"Guess who?"

Berengar chuckled when he heard his Third Wife's attempt to prank him and quickly answered her question.

"Honoria, I did not know you would return home so soon. You know you smell foul, don't you?"

The young woman released her grip over her husband's eyes and jumped into the pool. As she entered the body of steaming water, the sweat and grime that covered her body soaked away as an oily film floated to the surface.

After rising to the surface and taking a deep breath, Honorio pouted before asking Berengar the question in her mind.

"How did you know it was me?"

Berengar stared studiously at the woman's breasts before answering her question.

"I could tell by the size and shape of what was squeezing against my back. Clearly they were bigger than Adela's, but were smaller than Linde's and Yasmis. Thus, by a process of elimination, there was only one woman who has access to my bathhouse that could pose such a riddle."

Honorina pouted further as she heard the response. So her breasts had given her away? This man really was a pervert, if he could glean such information simply by the size and shape of her chest. Eventually, she smiled before she told her husband of her adventure.

"Anyway, I just got back from my expedition to the new world, and have brought some valuable intelligence, as well as some strange new food that I think you will enjoy!"

Berengar's brows raised as excitement filled his sapphire blue eyes. A single question filled his thoughts as he gazed upon his third wife with a renewed sense of attraction.

Did she find potatoes?

Before Berengar could inquire further about the matter, the young woman approached him and wrapped her arms around his neck before planting a passionate kiss on his lips. After doing so, she whispered in his ear in a seductive voice.

"I expect to be well rewarded for my discoveries..."

Berengar smiled mischievously as he heard these words and nodded his head before responding.

"Very well. I will inspect your goods and determine their value for myself. If they meet my expectations, I promise that you and your girls will be well compensated for your efforts. However, there is an important matter that must come first!"

Honorina could tell by the massive thing pressing against her belly just what Berengar had in mind, but rather than take the initiative, she played coy as she put on a questioning facade.

"Oh? What could that possibly be?"

The young King of Austria broke out into a small fit of laughter as he whispered in His wife's ears after inserting his shaft into her tight, and moist cave.

"You have been severely lacking in your wifely duties. It is time you take responsibility for your absence."

Thus, the King and his third wife enjoyed some time in the bath as they reunited in each other's loving embrace.

Chapter 518 - Returning From An Arduous Voyage Part II

After getting reacquainted with one another's bodies in the Royal Bathhouse, Berengar and Honoria departed from their isolation and entered the dining hall where the King's growing family had gathered for a family meal.

Upon witnessing the Byzantine Princess return from her voyage, Berengar's other brides had varying expressions. As for Hans, he quickly jumped up from his seat and approached the young woman.

"Mommy Honoria is back!"

The Third Queen of Austria smiled lovingly as her husband's eldest son approached her with glee. She quickly picked the boy up and swung him around as she planting a kiss on his forehead.

"My baby boy is growing up so fast!"

In response to this, Linde merely sneered in disdain at her rival before making a comment on her choice of words.

"Your baby boy?"

It had been a while since Honoria had verbally sparred with Linde, and thus she put on a devilish smirk as she made a comment that made the redheaded beauty's blood boil.

"Of course, I consider all of Berengar's children to be my own, even if they were born to another woman. After all, no matter how much of a bitch his kids' birth mothers' might be, it is not a fault of the child. All I see is the offspring of my husband, which I hope grows to be plentiful. Speaking of which, Yasmin, you should be due soon, should you not?"

Before Linde could respond to Honoria's snide remark, she had shifted the conversation to someone else, thoroughly cutting her off from retorting. As for the woman in question, she smiled as she rubbed her pregnant belly before nodding her head.

"Yes, however, this little bugger appears to be taking his sweet time..."

Adela immediately raised her brow in displeasure as she heard this remark and immediately questioned the Granadan Princess.

"How do you know it is a boy?"

Yasmin glanced over at the overly pious woman and made a snide remark of her own.

"Because his father's seed is strong, and I have no doubt that Allah will bless me with a strong and cunning boy much like his father."

The mentioning of the word Allah immediately made Adela's skin crawl as she looked towards her husband for a response.

"Berengar, my dear, are you willing to let such heresy be spoken in your court?"

The Austrian King chuckled in response to his High Queen's assertion before lecturing her on a lesson of tolerance.

"Adela, darling, it is not my place to judge Yasmin for which God she worships, that is between her and her deity. Besides, I think your faith has blinded you. She is not a wicked woman like you perceive her to be. If you put aside that overly pious attitude of yours for a moment, I think you would realize that the two of you have much in common."

Adela did not take this remark lightly, and instead refused to meet her husband's gaze. The fact that he would take this heathen's side instead of hers infuriated her. When Berengar witnessed her furious expression, he merely sighed in defeat. It was impossible to please all of his wives completely.

However, he would not bend the knee to Adela's religious persecution simply because she was a devout christian. Thus he shifted the topic to Honoria's journey in an attempt to establish a degree of cordiality between the women.

"Tell me Honoria about your expedition to the new world. What did you see? What information have you gathered for me?"

Honoria smiled as the conversation shifted back to her. She happily recounted her tales of what she had discovered.

"Well, where I landed was far different from New Vienna. It was a mountainous region that took a lot of climbing to discover anything of value. However, I made sure that my cartographer had created sufficient maps of the land we uncovered.

What was interesting was that there was no attempt by the natives to contact us. Instead, they immediately ambushed us during our climb. We had fought fiercely with them, however, no matter how many times we pushed them back, they came back for more. Their hostility and willingness to enter our gunfire to drive us out is something I have not seen before.

We eventually began running low on rations, but rather than head back to the ship and call it quits, my scouts spotted a village which we seized for ourselves with limited struggle. We ended up using the locals to build a small timber star fort around the village and regularly sent out scouts to map more of the region.

As for what we discovered, unfortunately there was no silver or gold, however we found a new food product that was really tasty when cooked properly. We piled the village's entire stockpile of these vegetables onto our cargo hold. Before we returned to the fatherland, they should be arriving by rail car soon. In the meantime, I have a sample!"

After saying this, Honoria reached into her satchel and pulled out a rather large potato before setting it on the table. Berengar's eyes grew wide with shock as he witnessed this. It had been roughly six years since he first reincarnated into this world, and until now there were two things he missed from his daily life. That was potatoes and chocolate. With this discovery, Berengar could finally make many of the great German dishes that his Kingdom was missing.

The young Austrian King had to take a moment to collect his thoughts and calm his voice before he questioned Honoria further on this matter.

"Just how many of these foreign vegetables did you bring with you?"

Honoria thought about it for a moment before giving her husband an estimated figure.

"Thousands, as well as the means to grow them, the villagers didn't understand our language, but force was enough for them to teach us via gestures how to grow these things, so we brought back the means to plant them in our fields as well!"

It stunned Berengar to hear this. He felt like he was about to have a heart attack from sheer excitement. He spent a few minutes to calm his nerves, which did not go unnoticed by his wives, especially Honoria. She could tell that despite never seeing this vegetable before, he knew exactly what it was.

However, she did not know how he knew, and she also knew he would not enlighten her on that subject. Thus, she was forced to smile before covertly trying to coax some answers from the man about his secret.

"So, what should we name these things?"

Berengar pretended to think about it for a moment before giving them the same name from his past life.

"How about potatoes?"

Honorias brow twitched as she heard this. She did not know what potatoes were, or what the word meant, but it didn't sound like a German word. This instantly made her more curious about whatever Berengar was hiding. However, she knew better than to question him openly and instead nodded her head in agreement.

"Very well, we will call them potatoes. How much do you estimate they are worth?"

The Austrian King was not stupid. He knew Honorias had suspected he knew more than he was letting on, and how he knew these things, thus he attempted to throw her off the trail by not giving her an immediate answer.

"We will have to experiment with these potatoes to see their most effective use, but at the very least I can give you fair price of Austrian Thalers for them, if they prove to be worth more than we initially inspected I can pay you and your crew a further installment on the newfound price."

Honorias smirked as she heard her husband's response. He was very good at pretending, like he didn't know the answer to her questions. His statement was also quite reasonable. If she did not know him so well, perhaps she would have bought his line.

However, she knew Berengar better than most, perhaps only Linde, Adela, and Henrietta knew his mannerisms, and thought process better than her, and thus she, as well as the others at the table, knew he was hiding something.

Despite this common sentiment from the women gathered at the table, none dared to question him about this obvious attempt to deflect from his hidden secrets. The last thing they wanted was to corner Berengar and have him lash out at them.

With a simple smile on Honorias face she prodded Berengar's chest, and change the subject. She had gotten all the answers she could glean for now, thus there was another matter on her mind.

"Daddy, will you spend the night with me? I missed you so much!"

Berengar chuckled as he heard this, he had spent more time with his other wives lately, and though he had just been intimate with Honoria in the bath, that she had brought back potatoes put her in his good graces, and he was more than willing to reward the woman for her efforts, thus he nodded his head before responding.

"Of course! After all, I need to reward you for your efforts."

With this said, the King's other brides instantly became jealous, all of them besides Yasmin. She knew how to share a man, and if she was being honest, she had become physically exhausted from all the intimacy she had spent with her husband over the past few weeks. The man had the stamina of a lion, and she could not satisfy him all by herself.

Thus, after finishing the meal together as a family, Berengar and Honoria would abscond to the Royal Bedchambers, where they would engage in all kinds of intimacy.

Chapter 519 - Tea Ceremony

Hans sat in his room around a small wooden table. Sitting across from him were the Princesses of Bohemia and Poland who had become Berengar's wards, and in many ways the only two friends that the young boy had. While Veronika was quite a bit older than the Austrian Prince, Natalia was of a similar age.

The three youths were enjoying a bit of milk and cookies as they dined together. Since Natalia had arrived in Kufstein, she had a difficult time adjusting. However, Hans had been by her side every step of the way, acting as a listening ear and a shoulder she could cry into. He may be young, but he had learned much about dealing with the opposite sex from his father's actions, and took this time to cement his relationship with the two girls, completely aware of the plans his parents had for them.

The two girls practically looked like porcelain dolls as they elegantly sipped on the milk from their teacups, pretending to be adults of noble stature. To the Austrian Prince, this was laughable, but despite that, he did not call the girls out on their overly formal behavior. Instead, he took a bite from one of the Lebkuchen cookies seated upon his plate while reading a book about German History.

The Austrian Prince was exceptionally gifted, so much so that he would be considered a genius, even by modern standards. Despite being five years old, he could speak in complete sentences, and even use metaphorical language. He could read, write, and perform basic arithmetic. Aside from his academic studies, he had learned the piano under Adela's tutelage, to the point where he could perform basic songs.

It was not just academics, and the arts that the Austrian Prince excelled in. After his near death experience, he had been undergoing daily instruction in hand to hand combat, and displayed natural talent in athletics. So much so that even Berengar was shocked by the boy's progress.

At the moment he was studying the history of the Germanic peoples as per written by Tacitus. While he was studying this ancient history, the auburn-haired princess of Poland raised her voice in discontent. Clearly, she was upset that her little friend was not paying her any attention.

"Hans, you meanie! Don't just read, pay attention to me!"

Despite Natalia's protests, Hans did not look away from his book, rather he licked his fingers and carefully turned the page. As he did so, he responded with a stoic tone in his childish voice.

"Unlike you, I can do two things at once. You are the one who has remained silent. If there is something you wish to speak about, go ahead. Nobody is stopping you."

The smug expression on the boy's lips as he flouted his superior intellect irritated the young girl. While Hans and Veronika were her only two friends here in this enormous palace, she did not like the arrogant attitude that the boy constantly had. Thus, it was no surprise when she lashed out in a childish tantrum.

"Just because you can read those big books doesn't mean you're smarter than me!"

A condescending smile etched itself upon the Austrian Prince's lips as he heard this childish statement. He knew very well he was far more intelligent than the young princess, but he would never openly say it. He had learned much from observing his Father's interactions with his many wives. Thus, he knew better than to openly declare his superiority to a woman.

However, to back away from such a challenge to his intellect was unbecoming of a Prince like himself, thus Hans sighed before setting down his book and gazing at the young girl with a sense of superiority. His response to her claims of being equal in intellect was one of pure condescension.

"Natalia, my dear, I have never once claimed I was more intelligent than you. Perhaps you are making such accusations because of your own sense of inferiority."

The Polish Princess had a fundamental understanding of the German language at best. When combined with her young age, she simply did not understand half of what Hans had said to her. Despite this reality, the young girl refused to admit defeat and looked over towards Veronika with a pleading gaze.

By now, the Bohemian Princess was well aware of the gifts Hans was born with, and would not challenge his intelligence openly. All she could do was look at Natalia with pity. The Polish Princess had dug her own grave by challenging a young genius like Hans.

Upon seeing that she was receiving no support, Natalia broke out into tears and ran away in defeat, leaving behind one simple phrase as she fled from the room.

"Hans, you dummy!"

After she had disappeared from earshot, Veronika sighed before responding to the Prince's ruthless comments.

"Did you have to be so hard on her? She is just a child."

In response to this remark, Hans merely chuckled as he sipped on his milk. After doing so, he wiped his mouth with a napkin before replying.

"You say that as if the two of us are not children as well? Besides, she was out of line. Somebody had to put her in her place."

Veronika had no response to this. It was hard to reprimand the boy when he was the same age as Natalia. Though Hans was intellectually superior to the Polish Princess, he was still emotionally

immature, and was prone to being a petty little shit. The only way to get through to the boy was to get him to think about his future.

"If you are so smart, then you must know the plans your parents have for you and that girl. One day, she will be your wife, and she will remember the arrogance that you displayed in your youth. Aren't you afraid of the consequences that your words will have?"

Hans merely chuckled in response to this comment before responding with a smug grin.

"I am well aware of the plans that my parents have between the two of us, but aren't you included in them as well? Or perhaps you have developed feelings for my father? You are getting to be that age, and he is a handsome man. I'd hate to break it to you, but I don't think he will see you in such a way. To him, you are more like a daughter than a potential lover..."

The Bohemian princess immediately flushed red as she heard this comment. She could not believe that Hans had suggested such a thing. Unwilling to meet the boy's gaze, she shifted her sight to the floor before responding to the Austrian Prince's inappropriate remark.

"Ass..."

Hans chuckled once more before he returned his attention to his book. After a few moments of awkward silence, Veronika regained her senses and asked in her mind.

"Do you really think your parents will betroth me to you?"

With a shit-eating grin on his face, Hans turned the page of his book once more before responding.

"It is what I would do..."

Once more silence prevailed as the young girl flushed with embarrassment for the second time, imaging many scenarios in her head as she thought about the idea of marrying Hans. Ultimately, she slapped her face to force her state of mind back to one of normality. When Hans saw this out of the corner of his eye, he merely smirked in silence.

The two kids were unaware that Natalia was sitting outside the door, sniffing. When she overheard the conversation that Hans and Veronika were having, she flushed red with embarrassment as she envisioned her future wedding with the Austrian Prince.

Ultimately, Veronika was the one to break the silence, as she asked a question that had been a concern to her for some time.

"What about my mother? I doubt she would agree to such a thing!"

Upon hearing this, Hans finally put down his book, where he looked deep into Veronika's mismatched eyes. The girl was visibly shaking. The very thought of her mother and the abuse she had once suffered caused her heart to fill with trepidation. As if all the happiness she had achieved since arriving in Kufstein would fade away the day she was no longer in Berengar's ward.

Hans noted this behavior and grabbed hold of the girl's hand to reassure her before giving her a reassuring smile.

"You think she has any power? My father is the current King of Bohemia, and you are his ward. Your future is up to him, not your mother."

The girl felt a sense of calm in her heart as she heard this words, instinctively she grabbed ahold of the boy several years younger than herself, and hugged him tightly. Afraid that if she let go, she would be forced to return to her mother's cruelty. This action shocked Hans, but he did not dare to break away.

The two of them would stay like this for some time until the young Princess of Bohemia regained control over her nerves.. After that, they continued to have their little tea party as if nothing had happened between them.

Chapter 520 - A Dreaded Peace

Berengar stood in the ballroom within his Royal Palace. At the moment, Austria was seeing its first instance of peace since the days before Berengar's ascension to power. After nearly six years of constant warfare, Austria could finally say they were not officially engaged in any conflict.

While there had been years where no major war occurred that Austria took part in, the kingdom still had its hands, and troops in foreign battlefields supporting their allies, such as the Hussites and the Granadans. Technically speaking, there were currently Special Operations units such as the Jaeger Regiments and the Jagdkommandos that were busy engaging in peacekeeping operations within the Sultanate of Granada.

However, this was not officially an armed conflict in the traditional sense, more of providing security to an allied region filled with unrest. As far as the Austrian public was concerned, their Kingdom was not involved in any ongoing wars, and that was something to celebrate.

As a result, Adela, who is the Minister of Cultural Affairs, put on a massive feast in her husband's honor, and that of the soldiers who have shed blood for the sake of the fatherland. At the moment, various nobles, wealthy entrepreneurs, and a few high-ranking military officers were all gathered in the Royal Palace feasting on fine dining, and drinking their fill of wine.

As the King of Austria, Berengar was forced to endure polite conversation with a variety of people, most of which behaved in a sycophantic manner, which he found displeasing. Despite his actual thoughts, Berengar acted as if he enjoyed every moment of the conversation.

By now he was dreadfully exhausted from pretending to be somebody he was not, and had walked to the balcony for a quick smoke break. He pulled out a hemp cigarette from the container within his jacket and lit it as he smoked his troubles away.

The young King of Austria smirked at the full moon, which illuminated the night sky above as he thought about all the things he had done since he was reincarnated into this world. Even if his social obligations were tiresome, it was nice to have a break from the years of brutal warfare he had led, or so he thought.

However, as Berengar was alone with his thoughts, he thought about all the souls that he had reaped in his tenure as a warrior king, including that of his only brother. His smirk turned sour, and his hands shivered. One memory in particular haunted his mind, and that was the time where he was alone in the dark, wounded, and trapped by his brother's attempt to claim his life during that cave-in at mining town.

Without realizing it, a single phrase escaped his lips as he gazed off into the night sky.

"Never again..."

From the moment the king reminisced about that dreadful past, a river of foul memories he had suppressed throughout all these years flooded his psyche. The thunder of guns, the sound of steel tearing through flesh, the gasps of men who drew their last breath. It all came together in a symphony of war, one that consumed his senses. As he was struggling to find clarity of mind and control over his emotions, he heard a voice calling out to him.

"Big brother... Big brother! Hey Big brother can you hear me?"

When Berengar finally recognized these words, his mind snapped back to its normal confident and ruthless state, suppressing any guilt and revulsion that had burdened him the moment before. As if his battle fatigued mind had recovered in an instant, he turned around with a smile on his face to see the sight of his younger sister, dressed in an azure blue gown, with white leather heels.

Henrietta had a tint of concern on her pretty face as she gazed at her precious elder brother who seemed to have recovered from whatever trance he was in just moments before.

"Big brother, are you alright?"

Berengar seemed to have completely forgotten the overwhelming sense of dread he felt just moments prior and instead took one last drag from his hemp cigarette before tossing it to the ground, and stamping out its light.

"I'm fine Henrietta, I was just thinking about all that I have done to come to this point. Nevermind that, is there a reason you needed me?"

A pretty smile formed on Henrietta's luscious pink lips as she grabbed hold of her brother's hand with both of her own before leading him inside the party.

"Come dance with me!"

Berengar smiled as he followed his little sister onto the dance floor. He grabbed hold of her waist with one arm and her hand with the other and led her through the waltz, which had become the signature dance of the Kingdom of Austria ever since Berengar introduced ballroom culture.

After a while, the music slowed down, and those who were still on the dance floor began to slow dance. Berengar found himself in an awkward situation as his sister wrapped her arms around his neck while dancing with him. However, he chose not to say anything. After all, his wives were busy entertaining his guests on his behalf, thus the least he could do was enjoy the moment.

Henrietta eventually broke the awkward silence with a question that had been on her mind.

"It must be weird for you..."

Berengar snapped out of his uncomfortable daze when he heard this and immediately questioned just what his sister was referring to.

"What is?"

Henrietta frowned when she heard this response. Either Berengar was deliberately playing dumb, or he was not as quick-witted as she thought. Until now, she had tried to divert her attention from the strange moment she had witnessed on the balcony, but her inquisitive nature, and her care for her elder brother, ultimately forced her hand.

"This peaceful era we find ourselves in. For the first time in a long time, you don't have a war to fight, or you are not looking for the next conflict. You are here, in the land of your ancestors, enjoying the safety

and security that you have provided in your realm. Yet, I can tell by the way you look at everything that your mind isn't here... not entirely.

I know nothing about war, or the horrors you must have suffered out there fighting for our family's position in this world. I know also that you have to present an image of strength to your wives, your soldiers, and your kingdom. However, I just want you to know that when you're with me, you can be yourself and if you want to, you can tell me about anything that is bothering you."

Upon seeing her brother's complicated expression, and the silence that remained between them after speaking her piece, Henrietta pouted before accidentally letting her thoughts slip.

"Or not..."

Upon hearing the dejection in his little sister's voice, Berengar sighed before revealing what truly haunted him.

"It is not the blood and death that keeps me up at night, it's the peace that follows."

Henrietta had a look of confusion on her pretty face as she asked for clarification on her brother's statement.

"I'm sorry... I don't follow."

Berengar looked around as he continued to dance with Henrietta before elaborating further on what he meant.

"I have spent so many years, either at war, or preparing for the next one, that during the moment, when I'm on the battlefield, taking another man's life, I feel no guilt, no remorse, no dread. In fact, unlike most men, I enjoy the simplicity of war. There is me, and then there is the enemy, and the enemy wants to kill me, so I must kill them first. It is as simple as that..."

Here at home, in the Palace, in peace, it is not so simple. At the moment, I am finally free from the chaos of battle and now have the time to think about all that I have done and what I have endured. I know that what I have done, no matter how brutal it was; I have done it for the sake of my people.

I also know that if I want this fledgling Kingdom that I have built to survive, then I must continue to act ruthlessly in the face of my enemies. But I have so many enemies, and no matter how much blood I have already shed for the sake of my kingdom, I know that it pales in comparison to what awaits in my future. It seems that God, in his cruel sense of humor, has destined for me to play the part of the villain. So I must ask you... How can one man endure the hatred of an entire world alone?"

Henrietta could not prevent the tears from streaming down her face as she heard the burdens that weighed her brother's conscience. She immediately hugged him tightly, and placed her head into his chest, wiping her tears on his tunic before looking up at him with her azure eyes.

"You are not alone! You have me, and you have your family! Who cares what the rest of the world thinks about you? You are creating a better world for our people, and I know that the people of your Kingdom adore you. That is what truly matters! The rest of the world be damned! You are not a villain, you are the hero that our people need! You are also my big brother, and I love you!"

When Berengar heard this passionate speech come from his little sister's lips, he felt as if all the anxiety he had felt since returning home from the last war had melted away. Henrietta was right about one thing: he may be a warlord, a tyrant, and the devil incarnate in the eyes of the rest of the world.

But to Germany, and its people, he was the hero they needed to lead them from the darkness of the feudal age, and if a few million people needed to die to achieve this, then so be it! A new sense of clarity overwhelmed Berengar's mind as the fatigue washed away. In its place, a renewed resolve to build a lasting Empire took over.

A smile appeared on Berengar's face, as he kissed Henrietta on the forehead before thanking her for her insights.

"You're right, Henrietta, about everything. I can't believe I let my emotions get the better of me. I thank you for your advice, and I promise to speak to you in the future if I ever find myself with any doubts."

Henrietta did not hear a word he said, instead her brain was fried after receiving her brother's kiss on her forehead in front of so many people. It was fine if he wanted to show his affection in private, but they were in the middle of the dance floor, surrounded by society's elites. What if they misunderstood the nature of their relationship?

Berengar paid no mind to this line of thinking and instead finished the dance with his dazed sister.. After it was over, he returned to his guests in a much brighter mood than he had started the evening.