

Steel 521

Chapter 521 - A Botched Assassination Attempt

Berengar and Henrietta continued to slow dance for some time in silence, enjoying the mood. The sight of which caught the gaze of the onlookers, many whispered behind the king's back about the intimate display. To Berengar, there was nothing inappropriate about what he was doing. He was merely dancing with his sister.

However, in the eyes of his guests, he and Henrietta were a bit too close. Despite this, they would not openly comment on the King's affection for his little sister. Thus, Berengar and Henrietta continued to dance for some time. After all, his wives were too busy entertaining his many guests, and this was a chance for him to escape such social obligations.

With a wide smile on the King's face, he spoke to his sister about something that had been plaguing his mind as of late.

"So Henrietta, my dear sister, there has been something that I have been meaning to talk to you about for some time now..."

The Austrian Princess looked up at her elder brother with an inquisitive gaze before responding.

"Oh, what could that be?"

It took Berengar a few moments to gather his thoughts, as this was a conversation he had been dreading. Eventually, he took a deep breath and exhaled before speaking his thoughts.

"You are no longer a child. In fact, you have grown into a beautiful young woman who I am proud to call my sister. It is because of this that I have been wondering if there is anyone you might be interested in?"

Upon hearing this question, Henrietta averted her gaze and flushed red from embarrassment. While biting her lower lip, Henrietta struggled to come up with an answer to her brother's question. The truth was there had been one man she was interested in for some time, but she knew it was completely unacceptable, and until now had been suppressing her innermost desires.

With her precious big brother finally asking her this question, it put the young princess in an awkward situation, as she did not want to outright lie to him. Instead, Henrietta sighed heavily before deciding to tell her Berengar the truth that lay hidden in the depths of her young heart. The blonde beauty grasped hold of her brother's sleeve as she looked away towards the ground before muttering the truth of the matter.

"There is someone I'm interested in..."

Berengar's brow raised when he heard this, he could not for the life of him think who it was, after all Henrietta had limited interaction with the opposite sex, he would think that he would know whoever it was who had gotten closer to his darling little sister. Thus, with a look of overwhelming confusion, he searched for an answer to this question.

"Oh, who might that be?"

Henrietta bit her lip once more, her heart was pounding as she struggled to voice her feelings. Just when she opened her mouth, a firm hand grasped onto the young king's shoulder and spun him around. Berengar gawked at the man in question, as he noticed this stranger was brandishing an old flintlock pepperbox revolver which used to be issued to his agents. With a scowl on his face, Berengar interrogated the man who had dared to approach him with a weapon.

"Now, just where did you get that?"

However, the man did not answer, and instead pulled back the hammer on his weapon and pointed it toward's Berengar's chest before boldly announcing his intent to everyone present within the ballroom.

"Your majesty, The House of Luxembourg sends their regards!"

After saying this, the man squeezed the trigger, forcing a projectile out of the barrel of his weapon and towards his target. Berengar sighed heavily in the face of death, with a stoic expression on his handsome features. This was not the first time he had met death, however he deeply regretted passing away from this world so soon before he could accomplish his goals.

However, in the next moment, he noticed there was no pain in his chest where the bullet should have struck. It was at this point he looked over to see Henrietta standing in front of him, with a bloody hole in her abdomen. She had taken a bullet meant for him.

Before the gunman could react to this unexpected change, Berengar grabbed hold of his weapon and pushed it out of the way before striking the man in the temple so hard it knocked him unconscious. After doing so, he tossed the gun aside and knelt down next to his sister, who was bleeding out on the ground. Tears crashed around him as he screamed out in a voice as loud as he could.

"Medic! Get a fucking medic!"

Henrietta had a bitter smile on her face as she felt her brother's hand press tightly against her wound. Seeing her life flash before her eyes, the girl struggled to give what she perceived to be her last words to her brother.

"Big brother... you asked me who I am interested in as potential partner.... I'd hate to drop this confession to you right now, but it looks like I am running out of time... The only person I have ever thought of being with is you... I love you, big brother..."

Berengar could not help the tears fall from his eyes and onto his sister's face. The girl used the last of her strength to pull her big brother in close and kiss him gently on the lips. After saying this, the girl passed out from blood loss.

It was at this moment the medics who were on standby arrived and dragged the Princess off to the Royal Physician Ewald. If there was anybody in this world who could save the girl, it was him. Berengar collapsed to the ground in shock, completely unaware of how this had happened.

Rage and Depression fought a major battle in Berengar's mind to see which emotion would dominate the young King of Austria's next actions. After several moments of doing nothing but staring at the blood on his hands, the victor was decided.

The King of Austria trembled in wrath as he stood up from his collapsed position and glared towards his Second Wife who was currently working damage control. He quickly gave an order to his guards with a voice of fury.

"Lockdown the palace, and bring this man to the secluded area for interrogation. I will find out who is responsible for this attack, and how many conspirators there are. Until I am satisfied with the results, nobody is to leave this room! Anyone who attempts to flee will be shot on sight!"

The Royal Guard trembled as they heard their orders. They had utterly failed in their duties to protect the Royal Family, and there were sure to be dire consequences. Nevertheless, they did not stand by in petrification; they had to make up for their mistakes. Thus, they quickly threw up their roman salutes to the King before responding in the affirmative.

"Yes, your majesty!"

After saying this, two men dragged, the unconscious would be assassin off to a secluded area of the palace, while the others gathered all the guests in attendance into the ballroom, keeping them under guard until the King ordered their release. The only people able to move around freely within the palace at the moment were the Royal Family and their Royal Guard.

As for the rest of Berengar's family, they were brought to safety in the most secure area of the Royal Palace. A secret underground bunker that had been installed in the event of some form of enemy attack. While the Royal Family was safely protected underground, the King himself was filled with fury as his first priority was checking up on his little sister's condition.

Berengar find himself outside the room where Henrietta was stationed, speaking with one of Ewald's nurses. By his side were his parents who had visited Kufstein for the occassion, they had equally worried expressions on their faces.? Berengar was in no mood to waste time and quickly inquired about Henrietta's condition.

"How is she? How is my sister?"

The Nurse had a surgical mask on her face as she calmly explained what Ewald had told her.

"There is a lead ball lodged in her abdomen. If it is not properly removed, she will die..."

Berengar immediately cursed as he vented his frustrations.

"God fucking dammit, I swear to god, if she dies I will burn the entire northern regions of Germany to the fucking ground! You better fucking save her! Isn't there anything that can be done?"

The nurse sighed heavily before revealing the extent of what the Physician had told her.

"Ewald has been experimenting with surgery, and because of the efforts of the chemistry department, we have sedatives that can ensure your sister is in a safe state for operation. As we speak, he is doing everything he can to save your sister, but these are new practices in the experimental stage. The likelihood that Princess Henrietta will survive is slim. You need to prepare for the worst."

As Berengar heard this, his heart sank to a new depth, one that he had never imagined possible. There was nothing else to say to the nurse, thus he turned away and walked off. Sieghard had a solemn expression on his face as he thanked the nurse for her efforts.

"Thank you for everything that you are doing for my daughter. I apologize on my son's behalf. He is just a bit emotional at the moment. I hope you didn't take offense."

The nurse shook her head before sighing.

"No apology is necessary. I can not even begin to understand what you are all going through. We will do everything we can to save your daughter, but you need to have realistic expectations."

Sieghard nodded his head with a defeated expression before making one final comment.

"She is in God's hands now... I need to go have an important discussion with my son."

After saying this, Sieghard departed from the area and ran off to catch up with his son. He had witnessed everything that had happened, including Henrietta's last words. It would appear that it could not be avoided. He needed to tell Berengar the truth. After grabbing hold of his son's shoulder, Sieghard said the words that would forever change Berengar's fate.

"Son, we need to talk...."

Chapter 522 - A Long Forgotten Family Secret

Berengar turned around to meet his father's gaze. There was a primal rage in his eyes, one that belonged to a man who had lost all reason. He had every desire to massacre everyone present for this ceremony in a bold attempt to kill those responsible for daring to harm himself and his family. He meant every word he said to the nurse. If Henrietta perished, he would massacre millions of people to calm his wrath.

Between his gritted teeth, Berengar somehow responded to his father's question, every word spoken was laced with an unbridled hatred, one that could not be quenched without the blood of innocents.

"What is it!?!"

A deep sense of fear entered Sieghard's heart as he witnessed the rage that could consume the universe in darkness within his son's eery pupil. The militaristic eyepatch only further enhanced the tyrannical aura exuding from the enraged King.

"Son, we need to have an important discussion about your sister."

Berengar could no longer hold back his heightened emotions and spat his vile words at his father.

"I swear, if she dies, I will not rest until I have personally tortured every person responsible for this atrocity, and their extended families, to death! I will bury entire lineages and defile a hundred generations of their family's graves to get back at them for this atrocity!"

Sieghard could tell that fury had replaced reason in his son's mind. If he did not do something soon, the young man's hatred would consume him and compel him to commit unprecedented atrocities. Thus, he firmly gripped his son's shoulder while staring down the primal fury in the King's eye, with a look of compassion, and understanding in his own.

"Son, it is time you learned the truth about your sister..."

Such a bizarre statement momentarily snapped Berengar back to reality as he looked at his father with an inquisitive gaze.

"What the fuck are you talking about?"

Sieghard sighed heavily before sitting down at the bench in the middle of the hallway. He motioned his son to do the same; it was only after Berengar had sat beside his father, and cooled his wrath, did the old man tell the long forgotten secret of their family.

"Henrietta isn't actually your sister, not by blood, anyway. She is, in all actuality, your aunt..."

This statement confused Berengar. He could not fathom such a thing being reality. While his memories of this life were mostly intact, he had no recollection of Henrietta being adopted, thus he asked for clarification on this statement.

"What the hell are you talking about? How is my little sister, my aunt?"

Sieghard chuckled as he recalled his memories of how he first met his little sister.

"Your grandfather was always a bit of a playboy, just like you are. Of course, he did not have the luxury to legalize polygamy, so he always kept a mistress. Despite this, he was careful not to father any bastards. At least, as far as I am aware, Henrietta is the only child he had from one of his mistresses.

In his final days, after my mother passed, he grieved her loss by taking a servant girl as his final mistress. In the end, the young woman became pregnant with his child. Ultimately, she passed away in childbirth, and my father died shortly after that.

Leaving this baby girl alone in the world with no parents, I took sympathy on her since she was technically my sister, and adopted her into our family. Much to the chagrin of your mother. You were roughly ten years old at the time.

You remember how, because of your sickness, we sent you away to a monastery in the mountains to treat you? You were gone for around a whole year, and by the time you returned, we had already adopted your aunt. I didn't want you or your brother to treat her any differently than you would each other, so I told you she was your sister who was born while you were away.

As for Lambert, he was so young at the time that he ended up forgetting we adopted Henrietta. Thus, your mother and I could keep the secret of the girl's birth, and officially make her a member of our dynasty. I intended to take this secret to the grave, but when I saw her kiss you, I knew I couldn't allow you to continue to believe that you were blood related siblings. If Henrietta miraculously survives this, I want you to know that you have my blessing to be with her."

Berengar struggled to cope with this new information. It completely shifted his views on the relationship he had with Henrietta. Now that Henrietta's life was endangered, and she had perhaps spent her last moment kissing him, it had made his head spin. Feelings he did not know existed emerged from his otherwise blackened heart. If he weren't so consumed with rage, he would perhaps be conflicted with his feelings towards his own flesh and blood sister.

Yet, now that the Berengar knew the truth of Henrietta's lineage, it simplified things within his troubled heart. It would not be that abnormal for him to be with his aunt. After all, plenty of Medieval Monarchs had married their aunts. In fact, his predecessors, the Habsburgs, were quite renowned for it. He was already married to his cousin, so what was the difference between Adela and Henrietta now that the truth had been revealed?

Of course, that was assuming she survived this ordeal. Thus, his mind instantly snapped back to rage as his furious gaze swept towards the room where the would-be assassin was being held. Berengar shifted his sight back to his father before nodding his head.

"I understand, if Henrietta gets through this, I will make her a happy woman, but for now I have a prisoner I need to interrogate. If you will excuse me, we can talk further about this when the girl wakes up."

After saying this, Berengar departed towards the target of his vengeance, leaving his father in a state of bewilderment. He did not know what Berengar planned to do to the assassin, but he knew it was not anything good. Still, to see his son taking interrogation into his own hands, that was something he thought he would never see in his life.

The door to the room crept open to reveal the young king of Austria. He had a cold gaze on his face as he inspected the prisoner who was tied to a chair, while surrounded by a pair of Austrian Royal Guards. Berengar quickly dismissed the guards who were acting on stand by.

"Leave us!"

The guards eyed one another with caution. They were about to leave their king alone with a man who had tried to assassinate him. Was this really the wisest course of action? Yet the glare they received when they remained in the room struck fear in their hearts, and instantly spurred them to action as they left Berengar alone in the room with the man who had critically wounded his beloved sister.

After the door was shut behind him, Berengar snarled as he kicked the prisoner in the calf

"You can stop pretending. I know you're awake!"

When the man tied to the chair heard this, he opened his eyes and sighed before responding.

"To think I would shoot the princess of Austria instead of my target. Man, my employer will have my head for this one..."

Berengar scoffed when he heard this. He remained utterly silent as he took off his jacket before hanging it on a coat rack within the room. After doing so, he rolled up the sleeves of his finely pressed dress shirt, as he grabbed a hold of a knife that was brought to the room by his guard, along with various other torture instruments.

"I think you should be more worried about what I will do to you!"

The man smirked when he heard this. He was confident that Berengar was an amateur in torture, and thus did not fear what the Austrian King would do to him. While Berengar sharpened the knife in his hands, the man made a bold retort.

"Either you kill me, or my employer kills me. Either way, there's not much incentive for me to talk. Go ahead, do your worst. I'm a dead man, anyway. However, you won't get a single word out of me. At the very least, I die as a professional."

Berengar wore a wicked smile as he heard this. He approached the man with his knife in hand, almost as if he were a butcher. He leaned close and whispered into the man's ear.

"We will see, for now... This is where the fun begins! Do me a favor and try not to die of shock before I am finished with you!"

After saying this, Berengar brought the knife to the man's thigh, slowly flaying the skin from his flesh.. The assassin's screams would continue to echo throughout the room for the entire night."

Chapter 523 - Intense Interrogation

Berengar sighed heavily as he cleaned the blood off of his blade. The subject of his torture was sitting on his wooden chair bound to it with steel chains. There was no way for him to escape without help from a third party.

The Austrian King had a cruel smile on his face as he gazed over at his bloody work. The would-be assassin's left thigh was completely stripped of its skin, and instead had been salted, and wrapped in a linen bandage which was treated with alcohol.

The white dress shirt that covered Berengar's torso was stained with blood splatter as he gazed at the whimpering man. This assassin had been rather resilient and, because of this, Berengar had taken a break from his vicious actions. The Austrian King wiped his bloody hands onto a nearby rag before picking up his gilded skull chalice, which was filled with a viscous crimson wine.

After taking a sip from the cup, Berengar dug into a piece of curry wurst which had been prepared for him by the kitchen staff. Under the supervision of the Royal Guard, they could cook for Berengar as he ruthlessly tortured his victim to glean some important information, particularly regarding how he came to possess and smuggle such a weapon into his palace. After taking a single bite, a satisfied smile presented itself on the King's elegant, but twisted face as he lectured his victim.

"Do you know why the Ancient Assyrian Empire collapsed? Judging from your attire, you should be a nobleman. Surely, you should be at least somewhat educated on history?"

The assassin spit out his saliva onto the floor, which had traces of blood mixed into it. His face was heavily bruised from the beating Berengar had inflicted upon him, so much so that it was hard to make out his appearance. Despite his condition, the man smiled before egging his captor on.

"Why don't you enlighten me?"

Berengar sighed before grabbing hold of a handsaw, and walking towards his victim with a cruel smile etched upon his lips. He used this tool to cut away at the man's left pinky finger, slowly slicing away at flesh and bone alike, causing the man to scream in agony. As the King dug away at his opponent's digits, he continued his historical lesson.

"The Assyrian Empire was renowned for its brutality and its mastery over psychological warfare. You could even say they were the inventors of many of the world's first recorded torture methods. Because of this, their subjects and neighbors alike despised them.

Ultimately, this vicious reputation was their downfall, as during their decline, all the people they had victimized for so long eventually rebelled against them, and made their mighty Empire a thing of the past. However, despite this unfortunate fate, they left behind some particularly brutal torture methods carved into their temples and palaces that I have come to admire.

You could say their vicious nature has inspired me. So allow me to explain what is going to happen to you. Before I flay you alive, I will remove each of your fingers, and toes, as well as your nose. Then I will blind you and castrate you.

So, rather than having to go through all of this messy business, how about we save ourselves some trouble, and you just tell me what it is I want to know? If you do, I promise I will show you mercy. How about it, now that you know my intentions, are you willing to talk?"

It was only after he finished saying these words did the pinky finger finally drop free from its roots. Falling to the floor in a pool of blood. Seeing the man panting in silence, Berengar frowned and raised his saw to the next finger on the man's left hand. A demonic smirk curved itself upon his lips as he asked one more question before proceeding to see away at the man's next finger.

"Still don't feel like talking? So be it!"

The man screamed at the top of his lungs once more while the finger was slowly removed. When the second digit collapsed to the floor in another puddle of blood, Berengar raised his saw with the same vicious smirk on his face before asking once more.

"Are you ready to talk now?"

The assassin had a horrified gaze in his swollen eyes. Was this madman was really going to do as he said? What kind of sick bastard was he? Before he could give up information, Berengar once more saw away at the man's middle finger. However, this time, the man was far more willing to be cooperative. Before Berengar could get halfway into the bone, the man cried out in agony.

"I'll talk! For God's sake I'll talk, just stop!"

When Berengar heard this, he sighed heavily before placing down the saw on his table next to his other torture instruments. It slightly disappointed him to see how quickly the man broke, thus he gazed at the assassin with disgust before condemning him.

"You're no fun... Fine, enlighten me. Where did you get the gun?"

The assassin quivered as he gazed at his two missing fingers, and his third one, which was sawed nearly in half. After collecting his thoughts, he swallowed his bloody saliva before giving Berengar an arrogant answer.

"Contrary to what you might believe, your Kingdom is far from free of corruption. Where there are people, there also exists greed, and avarice can be exploited. It would surprise you how much decommissioned ordinance goes missing from your storehouses every month.

Some of it ends up in the hands of the black market, others ends up in the hands of foreign kingdoms. My benefactor went through much difficulty to get that pocket pistol. It is a shame I wasted his efforts on your sister..."

Berengar's brow raised as he heard this remark. It would appear that there were plenty of heads that would need to roll. If the soldiers in charge of the warehouses were smuggling old weapons out of the Kingdom, he would need to make an example out of them.? However, Berengar had other questions, and quickly asked away now that he had pacified his victim.

"Tell me how you sneaked your weapon past my Royal Guard? Surely you were searched before you entered my Palace?"

The man had a proud smile on his face as he revealed how he had entered the Palace with a weapon without discovery.

"I am quite proud of this one. Your wife wanted a local restaurant to cater one of their more unique dishes for the event, so as they were unloading their goods from their carriage, I hid the pistol onto their cart. After entering the palace, I retrieved the weapon and hid it in my jacket, until I could get a shot at you. It is a pity I failed, so much effort wasted..."

Berengar nodded his head in understanding. His security may have been lax because of the peaceful era they found themselves in, and did not properly search the caterer's cart for anything that could be hazardous. He would have to discipline them thoroughly for their neglect.

The young monarch could tell by the glint in the man's eyes that he was not leading him astray. This was indeed how he gained the weapon and snuck it past security. However, a wise man did not believe his

torture victim's words entirely. He had to verify the information. Thus, he would have to ask Linde later to investigate the matter.

With these two answers revealed, and already knowing who had hired the man to do the job, Berengar had gotten the information he needed to punish those responsible. Thus, he walked to the door and knocked on it, revealing two Royal Guards who entered the small chamber..

Berengar cleaned off the blood from his hands once more, then he gave the two men their orders.

"I want you to flay this man alive, then send his dismembered corpse to the Bastard of Luxembourg. However, before you do that, cut off his fingers, toes, nose, then blind him and castrate him. I want that little prick to know what happens to those who target me or my family."

When the assassin heard this, he panicked and immediately called out to his captor with a voice filled with dread.

"What? Why? You said you would show me mercy!"

Berengar smirked as he tossed the blood-stained rag he had used to clean his hands onto the floor. After doing so, he responded calmly before exiting the room.

"I said that I would show you mercy. I never said that my men would do such a thing."

After saying these words, he exited from the torture chamber and left the man to his fate. With this attempt on his life, by his rival to the North; Berengar realized he would need to update his plans for unifying the German Empire. He could no longer sit idly by and wait until after the upcoming Crusades against his people were resolved.

However, before he could march his armies on the German world, he had much work to do. A thorough and brutal purge of all corrupt officials was about to be undertaken that would see the public execution of anyone involved in the assassination attempt.

Outside of the corrupt aspects of his military and government, Berengar would spend significant effort hunting down the black market and killing anyone associated with it.. Effectively, as of now, the Kingdom of Austria was under martial law, and would remain that way until he had eliminated everyone even remotely responsible for Henrietta's fate.

Chapter 524 - Declaring Martial Law

Berengar stood at Henrietta's bedside. His white dressed shirt was stained in the blood of his most recent victim, his hands had practically been dyed red with the sanguine substance. Despite this gruesome appearance, he wore a stoic expression as he gazed lifelessly at his little sister.

After staring in silence at the girl, who was in a comatose state, he kneeled beside her, where he grabbed hold of her dainty hand and kissed it before turning away from her. He could no longer bear to see his little princess in such a state.

He knew that the Kingdom of Austria did not yet have the technology to keep someone on life support for an extended period of time, and though she had an ample supply of IVs to sustain her fluids, if she did not wake up soon then it would be a matter of weeks before she starved to death.

Ewald, the court physician of the von Kufstein Dynasty, had a solemn expression on his face as he gave his King a status update on his sister's condition.

"Your highness, we have done everything we could. The projectile was removed, and we have successfully stopped the bleeding. However, at this point, whether she lives is up for God to decide..."

Berengar scoffed when he heard the last words of the Physician's statement. God? What did God have to do with this? If such a being really existed, then how could he stand by and allow such a sweet and innocent princess to be murdered in his place? No, God didn't exist. If he did, then he was either dead or simply did not give a shit about his creation.

These were the thoughts that dwelled in Berengar's mind as he ignored his physician's words and merely nodded his head in silence before exiting the Princess's room. Whether Henrietta would live or die, there was nothing Berengar could do now.

Grief had become to overwhelm the young monarch's mind as he exited his sister's quarters and took a bath alone. Tears streamed down his eyes as he struggled to choke back his sorrow. Now that he had vented his wrath upon the assassin's body during his little torture session, despair had taken its hold over the King's heart.

While Berengar was washing the blood from his body, Linde had taken control over the Palace. Both the Royal Guard and Royal Intelligence were now under her command. The redheaded vixen entered the chamber where the assassin was being held. By now, he had most of his fingers removed, and the guards had worked on his toes.

When she saw the two guards engaging in such brutality, the Second Queen of Austria raised her hand and prevented any further harm to the assassin.

"Halt, this man is an important asset for Royal Intelligence! Though Berengar has gotten some vital information from this assassin, the King is an amateur at best in the art of interrogation. Have this man's wounds treated, and send him to a black site for further interrogation."

The guards immediately ceased their torture and swapped glances with one another before the senior of the two men began to speak his concerns.

"But the King himself has ordered for this man's execution-"

Before he could continue to interject, Linde glared at him with a murderous gaze, instantly causing his words to cut short. She crossed her arms beneath her hefty bosom before giving her orders once more, in a voice filled with absolute authority.

"The King has left me in charge of his affairs while he spends what little time he can with his sister before she departs from this world. Whatever orders he may have given you before were done in a compromised state. You will obey my commands, or I will find someone who will. Do I make myself clear!?!"

The two men instantly snapped into attention as they saluted the Second Queen before responding.

"Yes, your majesty!"

After saying this they immediately began to search for a medic to treat the man's grievous wounds. While the guards were gone, Linde smirked at the assassin with disdain. She grabbed ahold of his hair and pulled his drooping head up so he could look in her eyes.

"Whatever pain that Berengar has inflicted upon you, I assure you that my agents will increase by a thousandfold. I promise you I will learn all the secrets that you hoard in that smooth brain of yours, and only after I have gained the information I need to redeem myself in the eyes of my master will I permit you to die!"

After saying this, the guards returned with a medic who treated the horrific acts of violence that were inflicted upon the Assassin. As for Linde, she left the room and returned to the ballroom with a squad of Royal Guards towing behind her.

The guests had panicked since the assassination attempt had occurred. The only thing keeping them from outright rioting was the threat of the royal guards, who kept a close watch over them to ensure that nobody acted against the Crown during its investigation.

When the Second Queen entered the room, a sense of relief washed away the fear and anxiety that had begun to sway the minds of the King's guests. They all remained silent and obediently waited for her to update them on the situation. Linde cleared her throat before gracefully informing the guests as to everything that had occurred.

"I will update you all on the situation at hand. Note that this information is subject to change as we gain more intelligence about this devious plot against our King and his family. I assure you that Berengar is safe and sound. He regrets his inability to inform you in person, but he is currently with his sister.

Unfortunately, Princess Henrietta is in critical condition. At the moment, the Court Physicians are doing everything they can to save her life. The Palace is secure, and the Assassin is in the crown's captivity, where he will be interrogated for information involving his treasonous act.

An investigation is ongoing as I speak, into the background of this man, where he got the weapon he used in this attack. We are also looking into how he sneaked it past security to prevent further incidents like this in the future. I assure you we will find everyone related to this attack and punish them accordingly.

For now, you may all return to your homes, or wherever you may be staying within Kufstein at the moment. However, when you return, you will all be placed under house arrest. Where Austrian Intelligence will speak with every one of you regarding this incident.

As of this moment, the King has declared martial law, in doing so, he has dissolved Parliament for the foreseeable future. I want to make this clear; we have identified several high-ranking officials in the Government, and the Military as being partially responsible for this assassination attempt. Thus, the Crown will work tirelessly to arrest these traitors and castigate them for their crimes.

Only after Order has been restored to the Kingdom of Austria will the Crown Restore Parliament. Until then, it is your duty as citizens of Austria to report any information you may know regarding this attack and its perpetrators to your nearest Police Station. We will brand anyone caught withholding information about this Assassination Attempt as an enemy of the state, and punish them accordingly.

That is all I have to say on the matter!"

After saying this, Linde turned away and exited the ballroom. The people gathered began to chant in discontent. However, she did not listen to a word they had to say. She had far more important matters to attend to. If she did not find and eliminate the corruption in Austria's society that had allowed this attack to take place, then Berengar was bound to hold her accountable for Henrietta's condition.

For the first time in a long time, Linde genuinely prayed in her heart. She pleaded with God to allow Henrietta to live, as the redheaded beauty could not bear the thought of taking the blame for Henrietta's fate. After saying a silent prayer, Linde left the Palace and entered the headquarters of Royal Intelligence where she would work tirelessly for the next few days to identify her targets, and eliminate them.

As for Berengar, he spent a significant time in the bath by himself. Only after the guards had escorted all of his guests from the premises of the Palace did he emerge from his solitude. Where he quickly retrieved the rest of his family from the bunker beneath.

They were all shocked to find out what had happened, and Berengar spent the rest of the night in bed cuddling with his wives. Only the warmth of their bodies could heal his wounded heart in any significant capacity.

One thing was certain: Austria was about to enter a bloody period of its history.. The extent of Berengar's cruelty towards his people would be determined by whether the Princess of Austria survived this ordeal.

Chapter 525 - Identifying The Enemy Within

A report sat on Linde's desk as she rubbed her weary eyes and drank her sixth cup of coffee on this morning. Her usual lively and attractive appearance was marred from three days of hard work investigating the assassination attempt on her husband's life. She refused to face her husband until after she had identified all the conspirators, for the veteran spymaster knew the king would vent his wrath upon her, and not in the fun way she had come to love.

After taking a sip from her coffee mug, Linde gazed over at the detailed report, which, based upon the information received from interrogating the assassin, who was currently located at a hidden government black site. While the Austrian Government lauded itself for its forward thinking justice system, the reality was there were certain criminals deemed too dangerous for a trial, and thus they would eventually find themselves missing.

These dangerous criminals would wake up imprisoned at one of many secret internment camps, where government agents would interrogate them for information regarding their criminal activities. After their usefulness was exhausted, these agents would dispose of the criminals and bury them behind the institution. For those few who were aware of these facilities' existence, they commonly referred to them as black sites.

As Linde read through the report, which was conducted only after vetting the assassin's claims. She noticed several prominent figures in Austrian society who her agents had deemed as conspirators involved with the plot on Berengar's life.

Not only were there high-ranking army officials who unlawfully sanctioned the sale of decommissioned arms to the black market, but there were even a few members of Parliament who had invested in the black market that facilitated the sale of the pistol to the assassin. At the bottom of this report was a note by the agent in charge, who detailed his thoughts on how Royal Intelligence should respond to these discoveries.

Under Normal circumstances it would be difficult to arrest a member of Parliament without extensive evidence, and a warrant signed by a judge of a federal court. However, Linde had recently declared martial law, and temporarily dissolved parliament, in doing so forsaking any rights the politicians of the Austrian Federal Government may have.

Thus, with a smug smile on her face, Linde signed her approval for the Agent's recommendations of mass arrest, and public execution of the individuals on the list. There were one hundred and twenty-three names on the list of targets, which included three members of parliament, a General in the Austrian Royal Army, and a variety of corrupt law enforcement officials.

Although many of these people were only loosely associated with the unlawful trafficking of arms which resulted in this assassination attempt on the King's life, examples had to be made of all of them. Thus, Linde had immediately dispatched orders for their arrest.

After handing off the documents to her Deputy Director of Internal Security, who was Hemma's counterpart to intelligence affairs that took place inside the borders of the Kingdom of Austria and its domains, the woman named Maria Flecken looked at her boss with a hesitant expression before espousing her views on her orders.

"Your Majesty, if we do this, it will surely cause civil unrest. The Constitution clearly dictates that there are certain rights afforded to the people. If we go through with these arrests, it will display the crown's disregard for the rules it has set forth in our society."

In response to this assertion, Linde merely scoffed before reminding the Deputy Director of who was really in charge of society.

"The constitution exists solely because of the King's benevolence. In this time of crisis, he has declared martial law. In doing so, the Crown has temporarily dissolved parliament, and voided the rights of criminals. If we do not make an example out of these people, then I assure you, the discontent of our citizens will be the least of our worries..."

There was a hint of worry in Linde's voice as she spoke this last part. Evidently, Berengar's wrath was something she feared. After all, she had witnessed the brutality that her husband had inflicted on the would-be assassin, and did not desire to find herself in a similar situation. Upon hearing these orders, Deputy Director Maria sighed heavily before nodding her head in agreement.

"Very well. I will dispatch these orders to our agents and the local police immediately. I assure you that the men and women responsible for this attack will be arrested by the time the sun rises."

Linde nodded her head before dismissing her deputy director. Now that she had dispatched orders for the immediate arrest of the hundred and twenty-three individuals involved in this conspiracy, she could return to her husband and check on his condition. Surely by now he spent all of his tears.

Berengar knelt at Henrietta's side while resting his head on the girl's bed. The princess had been in a coma for the past three days and nights. Aside from the first night where the King sulked with his wives. He had not left his sister's side. The Kingdom was under martial law, and rather than take matters into his own hands, he merely grieved by his dying sister's bedside.

By now, the young king had spent all the tears that he could physically cry, and instead was resting his weary mind next to the poor girl who had taken a bullet for him. In his state of despair, Berengar spoke about matters that he had not revealed to anyone else in this world. Perhaps confessing his secrets was an act of solace for him.

"You know Henrietta, when I first regained my memories of my past life, you were the first thing I saw. Despite being in a state of confusion as I juggled the memories of two lives, I instinctively knew you were my precious little sister.

It's funny, because of Lambert's attempt to assassinate me, I was dying just like you are now, but you stayed by my side and nursed me back to health. It was because of your efforts that I am here today. I just wish I could do the same for you..."

After saying this, Berengar sighed heavily as he held onto the girl's hand with a tender grip. It was at this moment he heard a knock on his door, though his first instinct was to turn away whoever dared to

interrupt his precious moments with his dying sister, he knew it was likely something important thus he wiped his crusty eyes as he regained his composure before answering the intruder.

"Come in!"

The door opened to reveal Linde's disheveled appearance as she entered the room. The bag she had under her eyes caught Berengar by surprise. He did not even think about who was managing his Kingdom in his stead. Normally such a task would fall to his father-in-law, but apparently Linde had been hard at work for his sake.

The redheaded vixen had an exhausted look on her face as she handed over a copy of the list of names of the people her agents were apprehending at that very moment. When Berengar gazed at the document, a look of confusion spread itself across his haggard face.

"What is this?"

Linde sighed heavily before answering her husband.

"Those are the identities of everyone even remotely involved in the sale of the weapon that was used to harm the princess. It is a rather thorough list of a hundred and twenty-three high-profile individuals. From the leaders of the gangs that operate the black market to the corrupt law enforcement agents on their take.

There are even a few local and federal politicians who protected these gangs for one reason or another. However, the most dire of these criminals is the General in charge of storage, who not only was aware of his soldiers smuggling our obsolete weapons, but received a cut of the profits.

I must admit, I am surprised that we could not discover evidence of their activity until now. It would appear the criminal elements of Austria have done a good job of remaining hidden after you enacted laws permitting law enforcement agents to actively hunt and eliminate gangsters. It is my understanding that the reason they have been able to avoid attracting our attention is because of the support they have received from within the government.

Thus, it is the recommendation of the Agent in charge of this investigation that we use our current state of martial law to arrest and execute these offenders. I must say that I agree with this sentiment. Now is the time for the Crown to show the corrupt and criminal aspects of our society that we will not tolerate such behavior."

Berengar listened to this report with his full attention. After he had heard all the details, he nodded his head in agreement. A cruel gaze appeared in his one good eye as he gave his decree to his director of intelligence.

"I want you to arrest everyone responsible for this atrocity. After they are in our custody, I will have them publically executed in the town square! Let this forever be a reminder to those who would dare act against me. There is a price to pay for treason!"

Linde had a bitter smile as she bowed her head in respect to her husband. Truthfully, she just wanted this nightmare to be over. If over a hundred heads had to roll to appease the King's fury, then so be it. Thus, she responded in a tiresome tone.

"I have already done so. My agents have assured me that the offenders will be in our hands by the time the sun rises. As for how you wish to execute these traitors, I will defer to your judgement."

Berengar nodded his head as he heard this. He gazed over at his comatose sister one more time before grabbing hold of his wife's hand, where he led her out the door. There was much work to be done, and he could no longer afford to sit by Henrietta's side when those responsible for her condition ran free. Now was the time for action, and the King had a massive purge to undertake. It was only after the door shut behind him that the comatose princess opened her azure eyes in shock, a single phrase escaping her lips.

"Big brother?"

After noticing that Berengar was not present, Henrietta pouted before falling back to sleep.

Reyneke Trossingen was a General in the ranks of the Austrian Royal Army, and he was not the greatest example of a field commander. His skills were much better set to task on managing logistics than it was strategy and tactics. It was because of this that the Crown had entrusted him to look after the warehouses which housed the various weapons of the Austrian Army.

Of course, when being in such a comfy position for so long, corruption was unavoidable. When one officer approached him roughly a year ago with the proposition to sell decommissioned arms to the black market, he was initially hesitant.

After all, the Crown was very strict on organized crime. However, he also had thousands of old firearms lying around that were no longer in service and were kept as a strategic reserve. Surely if a few dozen of the guns went missing, nobody would notice, right?

Or so he thought. Never in his wildest dreams would he imagine one of the pocket pistols in his warehouse would find its way into the hands of an assassin who mistakenly wounded the Princess in an attempt to claim the King's life. It was because of this event that the General was sweating bullets as he wiped his forehead with his handkerchief.

Though he had gone to great lengths to conceal his involvement in the black market, he was well aware of Austrian Royal Intelligence's ability to bring secrets to the light when they were determined. With the declaration of Marshal Law by the Second Queen, who was the Director of Intelligence, he knew that his time in this world was limited.

Thus, at the moment he was preparing to flee Austria, perhaps he could bring some of his expertise to one of the neutral nations. The relatively obese, and bald man stuffed one of his coats into a suitcase as he barked orders at his house servants.

"Fetch my stash of guildens, quickly! I do not want to be here when the Agents of the Crown show up!"

It was at this moment a knock resounded at the door. The moment the General heard this, the life faded from his eyes, and he instinctively halted his actions. It was too late, and he knew it. The Crown's agents had acted quicker than he expected.

With a heavy sigh, the General approached the door to his mansion and opened it, revealing an entire company of the Royal Guard at his doorstep. These men were armed to the teeth and were prepared for conflict. The sight of which had practically caused the man to soil himself in fear.

Rather than resist his fate, the General threw up his hands and surrendered himself to the authority of the Royal Guard. A group of soldiers quickly approached him and bound him with chains as they began to read him his charges.

"General Reyneke Trossingen, you are under arrest for the charges of High Treason, Arms Trafficking, bribery, and extortion."

As the General was loaded off into the prisoner wagon, his neighbors gazed in horror. While this arrest was being made, many more like it were occurring across the city, some of which were far from as peaceful as the General's case.

On the other side of the city, a man wore a cloak concealing his identity as he sat in the back of a carriage with his family. The city had been completely sealed off since the assassination attempt on Berengar's life. Nobody was allowed in or out, as martial law prevailed.

This man was a member of Parliament, and was considered by the people to be a man of upstanding virtue, and a true champion of the common man. However, in reality, he was as corrupt as a politician could get.

Werner Gozhain was not born a nobleman, or even the son of a wealthy merchant. Instead, he had grown up as another peasant beneath the von Kufstein family. However, when Berengar came to power and began educating the public, the man's quick wit aided him in becoming among the first commoners capable of qualifying for office.

He ran a campaign for the House of Commons on the principle that he would make the lives of commoners better, something that naturally occurred because of Berengar's reforms. Despite the reality, he had largely taken credit for many of Berengar's policies that benefitted the average person, making him a popular candidate.

However, vanity was not the only sin of this man. How could it be, without wealth, what was the point of popularity? Thus, he quickly found himself accepting bribes by entrepreneurs wanting to open up businesses in his district without following the many regulations Berengar had put in place, which existed not only to protect the people, but the environment as well.

Bribery naturally turned into extortion as he forced new prospective businesses to pay a "fee" to his office in return for the right to operate in his district. When a few entrepreneurs found out this was illegal, they threatened to reveal his schemes, which resulted in him turning to murder to silence the voices of dissent.

All of this had flown under the radar of Austrian Intelligence. After all, they had been far more concerned with organized crime and external threats than the idea of corrupt politicians. Unfortunately for this man, one of his associates had ties to the black market, which was currently the target of the crown.

Because of his relationship to the black market, Werner's crimes had come to light, and he was now a wanted man. Luckily, his contacts in law enforcement informed him of this reality before it was too late. Thus, he had used his ties to the black market to get in contact with a smuggler who promised to safely escort him and his family out of the city.

From there, it was up to him to get them to a foreign nation. With all he knew about the Government of Austria, it would be easy to secure himself a place as a prominent nobleman abroad. Of course, that was the plan, however the moment his carriage pulled into the location where he was supposed to meet with the smuggler, he found himself surrounded by the Royal Guard who aimed their weapons at his carriage.

The driver immediately raised his hands to show that he was unarmed, which was met with a thorough rebuking by his master.

"Fool! Get me out of here! I will pay you a hundredfold if you get me and my family to safety!"

Despite these words, the driver did not budge. Instead allowed the Royal Guard to search the carriage. Werner was quickly dragged from out of the carriage, as were his family, who looked in horror at the situation, completely unaware of the crimes that the head of their house had committed.

Werner screamed at the Royal Guard, who had apprehended him.

"Get your filthy hands off of me! Do you have any idea who I am!?"

The Guard in charge of his arrest merely responded by shovel punching him in the gut before reading him his charges.

"Werner Gozhain, you are under arrest for the crimes of High Treason, bribery, extortion, and murder."

The man's wife began to shriek as she heard these charges. She knew very well the penalty for such heinous crimes was death, and could not believe that her seemingly good and noble husband had committed such acts.

"You've got the wrong man. Werner is a champion of the people!"

Despite her protests, her words fell on deaf ears, as the Royal Guard did not care about the woman's hysterical delusions. Instead, they began to wrap the bindings around the man's wrists. That is, until Werner broke away from their grasp, and drew one of the Guard's sidearms.

The moment he did so, the rest of the guards raised their rifles and pointed them at the man while shouting their orders.

"Drop the weapon! Right now!"

Werner did not do as he was instructed. In an act of desperation, he opened fire on the guards, narrowly missing the man he had stolen the sidearm from. The moment the gunshot resounded in the air, the other guardsman fired a volley into Werner's chest.

Multiple projectiles riddled the man's torso and blasted his innards apart as blood sprayed forth from his body and onto the carriage behind him. His wife and children screamed in horror as they witnessed the man gunned down by the Royal Guard in the streets of Kufstein.

The guard who had his sidearm stolen quickly motioned for the men to cease their fire as he walked forth and grabbed hold of his revolver from the corrupt politician's dying hand. After doing so, he pulled back the hammer and pointed it towards dying man's skull.

"Good riddance."

After saying this, the Royal Guard plugged a round through Werner's forehead, ending his life on the spot. With the execution committed ahead of schedule, the Royal Guard issued his orders to his soldiers.

"Apprehend the family and interrogate them. I want to know what information they may have about Werner's criminal activities."

With that said, the Royal Guard took away the sobbing family and brought them down to the police station for questioning. On this bloody night, Werner was the first of many to be gunned down by the Royal Guard as they resisted their arrests.. This night, which marked the first time the Austrian Crown used its authority to purge the criminal, and corrupt from its society would later be known as "Bloody Monday."

Chapter 527 - A Public Display Of Authority

General Reyneke Trossingen knelt in chains in the center of the Kufstein Town Square. By his side was a company of Royal Guards, ensuring his protection from the enraged mob that surrounded him. He knelt alongside several dozen other prisoners who were guilty of various crimes, including High Treason.

Without a trial, or even evidence presented before him, the Royal Guard had dragged the General out of his home the night before and ruthlessly interrogated him. Despite this unlawful abuse of authority, he knew his guilt well and thus hung his head low as he waited for his turn to be executed.

While gazing upon the scene with an expression filled with despair, Reyneke witnessed the King take the stand, and publically declare the guilt of the gathered prisoners so that all who bore witness knew the depths of their sins.

"I know many of you have been wondering why my Royal Guard had invaded the homes of your neighbors and dragged them into the streets last night. I assure you that each person gathered here today is guilty of the most heinous crimes.

Each citizen gathered here in chains today, are guilty of a variety of criminal acts associated with the assassination attempt on my life, which you all know has resulted in the grievous injury of my little sister, your Princess! For these most heinous of sins, I hereby sentence them to death!"

The enraged mob who had gathered to witness this event screamed at the prisoners as they heard this news while hurling objects at them.

"Death to the traitors! Burn in hell, you criminal scum!"

Although this sentencing was technically in violation of the Constitution, a large percentage of the city's population did not care in the slightest. From their perspective, this was quite a simple matter. The Royal Family was attacked at a peaceful event designed to honor the sacrifices of the Kingdom's valiant heroes, and these prisoners were in part responsible. Only blood would sate the appetite of the mob. After raising his hands to silence the enraged mob, Berengar called out the first name on his list.

"Harthman Schmalbaggs, former member of Parliament. I find you guilty of high treason. As a member of parliament, you have aided criminal elements that are in part responsible for the attack on my life. I, King Berengar von Kufstein, first of mine name, sentence you to death by firing squad!"

After giving the formal sentence to the man, he was quickly dragged from his spot by the Royal Guard and placed before a stone wall. The man's appearance was haggard and bruised, much like the rest of the prisoners.

Evidently, his interrogators had beaten him severely the night before. Despite this abuse of power, the mob did not care. Instead, they relished in it. After being placed against the wall, a squad of Royal Guards loaded their G-22 rifles with .45-70 Spitzer cartridges and slammed the bolts home. Having loaded their weapons, the sergeant in charge issued his orders to the firing squad.

"Present Arms!"

The moment he had issued this command, the Royal Guardsmen lowered their rifles and aimed them at the target, awaiting the next order that would seal the traitors' fate.

"Fire!"

Without hesitation, the squad of ten men pulled their triggers, in doing so unleashing their projectiles downrange and into the target's torso. Ten bullets riddled the chest of the former member of Parliament, ending his life at that very moment.

As if like clockwork, the Royal Guardsmen pulled back their bolts, in doing so ejecting their empty cartridge, before loading another into its place. Having done this, they shouldered their rifles in unison like a well-oiled machine.

After reloading their weapons and pointing them in a safe direction, several other Royal Guards dragged the corpse away. The former parliament member's corpse made a bloody trail as the guards threw it into an empty cart. After disposing of the carcass, they lined the next prisoner up against the wall, where the King declared his crimes for all to bear witness.

"Curt Harder, I find you guilty of High Treason. As a ringleader of the black market which provided the weapon to my would-be assassin, I sentence you to death by firing squad!"

The moment the gangster heard these words, he fell to his knees and sobbed as he pleaded for mercy. As a lowly criminal, he lacked the courage to face his death like a man.

"Mercy, milord, mercy! I beg of you!"

However, such actions only further increased Berengar's hatred towards the man, forcing him to spit upon the ground in disgust. With the sentence provided, the Sergeant began issuing a familiar order to the soldiers beneath his command.

"Present Arms!"

However, before the soldiers could pull the trigger, another command echoed in the air with far more authority.

"Halt!"

When the prisoner heard this decree, he felt a sense of relief overwhelm him. Believing the King had granted him a stay of execution, he fell to his knees once more and pressed his head against the floor.

"Thank you milord! I promise-"

Yet, before he could finish his groveling, Berengar sneered in disgust as he gave a far more cruel decree, one that replaced the prisoner's relief with overwhelming dread.

"This worm's behavior sickens me. Clearly, he is not worthy of a quick and painless death. Sergeant, remove his head with a dull blade!"

The King's orders were absolute. As a Sergeant of the Royal Guard, he had worked his way through the ranks of the Royal Army and proven his absolute loyalty to his monarch. Thus, the thought of rejecting this act of unnecessary cruelty did not even register in the man's head as he issued an order to his soldiers..

"Hold the man down and fetch me a dull blade!"

Two men grabbed hold of the prisoner, who had broken out into a fit of tears once more. The cruel fate that awaited his man filled him with so much despair that he could not even curse out his executioners for their ruthlessness.

Eventually, a member of the royal guard brought forth an old long-sword. The blade of this weapon had not seen maintenance in many years. Not only was it dulled to an exceptional degree, but it was pitted with rust from years of neglect. When the soldier handed the sword over to his Sergeant, the man did not hesitate to raise the blade in the air and swung it down with all his strength onto the neck of his target.

The dulled blade cut through the man's flesh from sheer force, and despite this, he was not dead, instead he yelped in pain as another swing brought the cold rusty steel down upon his bare neck once more. After half a dozen precise strikes, the man's head was severed and thrown into the cart with the rest of his body.

Despite this unnecessary cruelty, the enraged mob shouted with joy as they witnessed the traitor who had provided the weapon to the assassin lose his head in a ruthless display of brutality. This acted as a deterrence for all the other prisoners. Not a single soul would dare to beg for mercy from the King after what had happened to Curt.

One by one, the Royal Guard gathered the prisoners against the wall, where the King would declare the crimes they were guilty of. The sounds of gunfire repeatedly echoed in the air on this day as 102 men and women were lined against the wall and shot. As for the other twenty guilty individuals, they had perished the night before, as they foolishly resisted the might of the Austrian Crown.

Eventually only one man remained, and that was the Former General Reyneke Trossingen he had witnessed the deaths of everyone else before him, and by now stared lifelessly at the crowd which cheered for his death. The King gazed upon him with a sense of utter disdain as he declared his guilt to the mob.

"This man is a former General of the Austrian Army. Because of his talents, I had personally tasked him with overseeing the Storage Facilities which housed our obsolete weapons, specifically those which were kept as a reserve in the event that our enemies ever invade the Fatherland.

Not only did he personally sign off on the smuggling of these weapons into the hands of the black market, in doing so, being guilty of supplying the assassin with the weapon he used to horrifically injure my sister. He is also guilty of the most heinous of crimes against you the people of Austria.

By selling our strategic reserve to our enemies, this man has greatly undermined our Kingdom's national security, and all of your lives in danger! I have already stripped him of his Rank as General and seized his previous honors. Now, I sentence Reyneke Trossingen to death!"

Upon hearing his King speak to him in such a vicious regard, Reyneke lowered his head before saying a silent prayer. After finishing, he gazed straight into the eyes of the firing squad as they lowered his weapons towards him. The last thing the man saw before gunfire echoed in the air, and claimed his life was the sinister smile on Berengar's face as he mouthed the words.

"Burn in hell!"

Chapter 528 - The Princess Awakens From Her Slumber

Having completed the executions of the one hundred and three individuals who were guilty of criminal acts that led to the assassination attempt on his life, Berengar returned to the Royal Palace. This past week he had been hard at work ensuring that he had purged the corrupt and criminal elements of his society.

With a show of absolute authority, the Crown of Austria had made a thorough example of such behavior. What the people didn't know is that Royal Intelligence's department of Internal Security had now turned its attention towards infiltrating the gangs hiding in the shadows and gathering evidence on crooked politicians.

The era of Martial Law was far from over. Berengar was certain that there were more gangsters and corrupt officials hiding in the shadows of his society, and he would not relent on his stranglehold over the Kingdom until after he had eliminated every last one of them.

Despite this longing for justice, Berengar had far more pressing concerns at the moment. The Bastard of Luxembourg had attempted to claim his life, and in doing so, had grievously injured his sister. This action had to be met with an appropriate retaliation, and in Berengar's mind, there was no more valid response to an assassination attempt than outright warfare.

Thus, he was prepared to gather his generals and plot an invasion of Northern Germany, that is, until he stepped foot into his palace. The moment he entered his home, Adela approached him with an excited expression. Before Berengar could ask what had happened, she blurted out the good news.

"Henrietta is awake! It is a miracle!"

Upon hearing this piece of information, Berengar did not pay the slightest attention to his wife, and instead sprinted towards Henrietta's quarters. When he opened the door, he saw the girl sitting up in her bed, with the physician checking on her condition. The young Monarch struggled to choke back the tears in his eyes as he rushed over to his sister and hugged her tightly.

"My sweet little sister, I am so happy you are alive!"

The princess of Austria was far from in the best condition and winced in pain as her big brother embraced her with every fiber of his being.

"Big brother... you're hurting me!"

When Berengar heard this remark, he quickly released the girl, and instead smiled as he petted her hair.

"I'm so sorry Henrietta, this is all my fault. I should have been more focused on internal security!"

Henrietta smiled bitterly as she saw her brother's worried expression. She could only imagine the difficulties he had gone through since her injury. Before they could fully reunite Ewald dragged Berengar to the side and updated him on his sister's current condition.

"The princess is an incredibly lucky girl. The projectile missed all of her major arteries or organs and instead embedded itself in her muscle. It's almost as if God himself shielded this girl from death. Still, she will be weak for some time, and need careful care if she wishes to fully recover from this injury. Though, I am sure that is not a problem for a man such as yourself."

Berengar smiled as he heard this news. It was better than anything he could have hoped for. Thus, he placed a hand firmly on the physician's shoulder as he rewarded him for his efforts.

"Ewald, you have served my family well all these years, and you have saved my sister's life. Whatever you want in this world, so long as I can provide it, it is yours."

The Physician smiled softly as he removed the King's hand before responding to his generosity.

"I thank you for your generosity, your majesty, but I was just doing my job. However, if you are truly insistent on rewarding me for my efforts, perhaps you could expand the funding for my department.

As you know, this is the first surgery we have done within the Kingdom of Austria, and it turned out better than I expected. Imagine what we could achieve with hundreds of surgeons and thousands of researchers studying this field full time!"

Berengar nodded his head in agreement as he heard these words. Truly, Ewald was a man dedicated to his craft.

"Of course, I, too, look forward to the future of Austria's medicine. You have my full support. Whatever you and your team need, send an expense report to me, and I will approve it. Just don't take advantage of my kindness..."

Ewald responded with a slight chuckle as he heard this remark.

"I wouldn't dream of it, your majesty. Now if you will excuse me, I think you have some catching up to do with your sister..."

After saying this, the physician and his nurses left the room, leaving the two siblings alone. Berengar sat next to Henrietta's side on her mattress and held her hand. When Henrietta noticed this, she began to blush as she remembered the words she said when she was shot.

"Big brother... I want you to know what I said back then-"

Before she could finish her sentence, Berengar raised his finger and pressed it against her lips, silencing her in the process.

"Shh. Don't speak, I understand everything, and I want you to know, while you were on the verge of death, I had some time to think, and I have realized that I feel the same way... Besides, father has told me something that helped me overcome the taboo of such a relationship..."

The princess was shocked when she heard this news, and flushed red in embarrassment as she gripped the covers to her bed tightly in her dainty hands. Did her brother seriously just respond positively to her "dying" confession?

However, in the next moment, she recalled the last words he spoke and quickly shifted her gaze to his one good eye with a curious expression on her face.

"What did father tell you?"

A bitter smile formed on Berengar's lips as he kissed his sister's hand before revealing the big family secret to her.

"That you're actually my aunt... You're not father's child, but grandfather's. After my grandmother passed away, he had consoled himself in the arms of one of his servants. You were born from this union, unfortunately your mother passed away in childbirth, and your father passed away shortly after. Leaving my father to adopt you as his own daughter."

This revelation was deeply shocking to the young princess. It took her a few moments to process it. After a brief silence, she raised her head with a quivering expression before asking the most important question on her mind.

"So, does this mean that you are not my big brother?"

Berengar chuckled when he saw his sister in tears over this. He responded by grabbing hold of her head and stuffing it into his chest while kissing her forehead.

"Of course, I am your big brother. I always have been and always will be. However, it just so happens that I am also your nephew..."

Henrietta sulked as she felt her brother's loving embrace. She had a million questions on her mind, and not enough answers. Eventually, the princess responded with a single comment.

"That is so lewd..."

At this point, Berengar could no longer contain his laughter. He never expected his little sister to make such a response to his comments. Henrietta immediately pouted as she witnessed her big brother laughing at her remarks. She was about to chastise him when Berengar pressed his lips against her own, forcing his tongue into her mouth and entertaining it with hers.

At first Berengar's actions shocked Henrietta, but almost immediately after she lied back on to her bed and let her brother take control. It wasn't until the King began reaching through the covers, and grabbed ahold of his sister's substantial breasts that the girl felt a slight tinge of pain, and reacted with a cry.

Noticing that he had hurt the girl, Berengar released his grip and noticed the stitches on her belly. Evidently, he had applied pressure to the wrong area. Seeing that he hurt the girl, Berengar let go of Henrietta entirely and laid down by her side before commenting on the situation with a smug grin.

"It appears you're going to have to get better before I can formally make you my mistress."

Henrietta broke out into a fit of giggles when she did so, however she noticed this caused her severe pain, thus she calmed herself before latching ahold of her brother and dragging him under the covers. With a wide smirk on her face, she whispered something in his ears.

"Well, at the very least, you can stay by me as I rest, can't you?"

In response to this, Berengar smiled and nodded his head before disrobing himself while under the covers and tossing his clothes to the side. Though they couldn't make love, the least they could do was cuddle.

Thus, the King began spooning with his sister while stroking her silky golden hair. Shortly thereafter, the couple fell to sleep.. It would be a long road to recovery for the Princess of Austria, and Berengar intended to be there for her every step of the way.

Chapter 529 - An Unexpected Ultimatum

A week had passed since the fateful day where the Austrian Royal Guard executed over a hundred individuals who were associated with the assassination attempt on King Berengar von Kufstein's life. Though the Princess had awoken from her slumber and survived her wounds, she was far from the condition to walk around and enjoy life the way she used to.

Berengar had taken extra care to ensure Henrietta's safety as her muscles healed from the bullet wound. He commissioned an elegant wheelchair to cart the girl around in and personally took care of her needs.

By now the King's wives were becoming envious of the time he was spending with his sister, despite this, they endured their jealousy as they were aware of the emotional turmoil their husband had gone through when he thought Henrietta was on the brink of death.

However, a Monarch's duties were to his Realm and his people, and the attack on his life that had resulted in his sister's injury needed to be answered in kind. For without dignity, a Monarch was nothing.

Thus, he had spent some time preparing a major speech to be delivered to the Austrian people. After which, the Kingdom's agents would then spread the message to the people that dwelled within those North German States who swore their allegiance to the bastard of Luxembourg.

Finally, the day for this speech had arrived, and Berengar stood in the central plaza of the Kingdom of Kufstein, where just weeks before, a hundred and three criminals were executed under his orders. By his side was the Princess of Austria, who was in a wheelchair. Aside from this fact, she looked as beautiful and lively as ever.

The people gazed upon their King with curiosity. It was not every day that he would host such an event. They were curious about what he wanted to tell them. Clearly, it was an important matter. After enough citizens and foreign merchants had gathered in the town, Square Berengar spoke in an authoritative tone.

"I have gathered you all here today for an important matter. I speak not only to the people of Austria, but it is my intent for this message to be spread across Germany so that all of its people may understand what has transpired within my realm, and hopefully empathize with my plight.

Weeks ago, there was an attack on my life in the middle of a celebration. The intent of this event was to honor the men who have sacrificed so much in pursuit of Austrian victory against our enemies. Unfortunately, the assassin missed his target, and instead harmed an innocent, nearly claiming her life in the process.

It is a miracle of modern Austrian medicine that my sister sits here today before you all, both alive and well. Sadly, the attack has had serious consequences on her health, and for the time being, she requires assistance in the simplest matters of life.

Luckily, we managed to capture the would-be assassin alive, and thanks to the thorough interrogation conducted by my agents, we were able to ascertain the identity of the man responsible for this terrorist attack! It is none other than the Bastard of Luxembourg, Duke Hartman von Luxembourg!

This villain had conspired with hidden criminal elements of our society in an attempt to claim my life. In doing so, he nearly killed my precious little sister, who is completely innocent of the politics that have led to this unfortunate reality. Had my sister suffered such a tragic fate, I surely would have burned the Northern German States to the ground in my fury and grief.

Luckily for all of you, specifically the people of these lands, she has survived this ordeal thanks to the efforts of my physicians and their exemplary knowledge of medicine! Thus, I have decided to be merciful and give you all an option to redeem yourselves in the eyes of your creator.

Submit yourselves to my rule, and rise in rebellion against this scoundrel who harms innocent little girls! Drag him before my court, and I promise I will absolve you of the sins of your masters. If you do this, you will avoid a war with the South German Confederation, one which will surely claim the lives of millions of innocents.

For those of you who fear the might of your feudal overlords, fear not. I, as King of Austria, swear to arm those who submit to my Crown with the tools needed to overthrow your masters. This is my ultimatum to you, bring me this villainous coward who declares himself king of Germany, or suffer the wrath of my armies!

You have three months to decide on a course of action before I commit the forces of the South German Confederation to total invasion! Choose wisely, for the fate of you and your families hangs in the balance. Just know this, if I am forced to invade the North in pursuit of justice for the crimes committed against my family, I will be far from merciful!"

Having said this speech, Berengar grabbed ahold of Henrietta's wheelchair and escorted her back to the Palace, leaving the Austrian people in a state of shock. They did not expect their bloodthirsty King to give the German people of the North a choice in the matter. Such a thing was indeed considered merciful when one took into consideration the brutality that their King had inflicted on other realms for far lesser charges.

As for Berengar, he wheeled Henrietta into his office, as he was too afraid to let her out of his sight, in case some complications with her condition arrived. Though such a thing was unlikely at this point, he had become an exceptionally worrisome brother ever since the assassination attempt.

Henrietta pouted as Berengar sat at his desk and began to draft plans. It confused her as to why he had brought her here. Ever the inquisitive young woman, Henrietta quickly asked the question on her mind.

"What are you up to, big brother?"

Berengar smiled. He would not hide his plots from his darling little sister, instead he placed down his pen and looked up from his work as he boldly declared his intentions to the girl.

"It is rather simple. I plan to expand the Royal Guard into a self-sufficient army. Currently, there is a single battalion that acts as the personal protective force of the Crown. However, after recent events, I have come to realize the need for a large, and elite militant force that is unquestionably loyal to the Royal Family."

Henrietta nodded her head in understanding, though she wasn't one for military, or even political matters, she trusted her brother's judgement. If expanding the Royal Guard aided in preventing another tragedy like what had happened to her, then she was all for it.

As for Berengar's plans, he had devised the new and improved Royal Guard to be based upon Napoleon's Imperial Guard, with a bit of influence from the Waffen-SS. Technically, the Royal Guard would be separate from the Army, and would exist as Berengar's personal shock troops.

The King intended to split the Royal Guards into infantry, cavalry, artillery, sapper, and marine battalions. He also intended to follow Napoleon's model of splitting them into three sections based upon experience. The young guard, middle guard, and old guard.

As far as their uniforms were concerned, Berengar designed a distinctive uniform for his royal guard. Rather than going with the route of a uniform based on the style that the Prussians used in the 1870s from his past life, Berengar took inspiration from the Bavarian Cuirassiers of the same time period.? Naturally, he shifted the colors from blue and red to black and gold, which were the colors that his armies used.

Having finished drafting his plans for the restructure and expansion of the Royal Guards, Berengar walked over to his little sister and grabbed hold of her chin with his firm hand before kissing her on the forehead. After doing so, he made her a solemn vow.

"I promise I will not allow anything like this to happen to you ever again..."

Henrietta rested her chin in her brother's hands as she closed her eyes. Despite being wounded so severely, she had finally gotten what she wanted deep down inside, and that was for her brother to spoil her. So what if they weren't blood related siblings? In her eyes, Berengar would always be her precious big brother.

With the actions that Berengar had taken on this day, he had forced the Northern German States into a predicament. The people surely would not stand for an Austrian invasion, especially after all the success they had in wars these past few years. However, the proud Lords of the North would never willingly bow their heads to the Austrian King, thus Germany was on the verge of war once more, as two factions remained vying for the German Crown..? The Bastard of Luxembourg, and the Tyrant of Steel.

Chapter 530 - A Villanous Bastards Dillema

After Berengar's rousing speech to his citizens, his agents quickly began dispatching the news of the Austrian King's ultimatum to the people of the Northern German States. Unrest was inevitable when faced with the possibility of war against the mightiest Army in the World, which had grown even stronger with the addition of Southern German States.

Renault sat calmly as he sipped from his coffee while smoking a hemp cigarette. Even though the North German States were far more backwards than their Southern counterparts, the elites still had access to many qualities of Austrian goods. A stoic expression was on his face as he lectured the bastard Duke about his failures.

"So it appears that our attempt to assassinate the Austrian Monarch has failed miserably. Not only did our assassin miss his mark, but he somehow managed to wound Austria's most beloved Princess. If we stay here, I am afraid we are in for a rude awakening. After all, you know how Berengar is with his wrath..."

Hartmann had a horrified expression on his face as he sat across from his mentor. Ever since his assassin had failed to report to him on that fateful evening, he feared for the worst. It would appear that the situation was far more worrisome than he expected.

It was one thing to attempt to assassinate the Austrian King and fail, but to harm his little sister in the process. If the bastard of Luxembourg wasn't such a coward, he would have ended his life, then and there, just to prevent the torment that awaited him.

However, while the young Duke was contemplating the pros and cons of suicide, his adviser Renault silently took a sip from his coffee before proposing an interesting idea.

"Though I must say, I did not expect him to rally the peasants against us... This has created a relatively unique opportunity, one that might allow us to escape the man's blind rage, and live peacefully in exile..."

Hartmann scoffed when he heard these words, to abandon his people to the rule of his last remaining rival, when he was so close to victory. It was truly an unthinkable prospect, nevertheless he could tell by the expression on Renault's face that he was not joking. Thus the young Duke took a small sip from his coffee. After doing so he sighed heavily before responding.

"Enlighten me..."

Renault did not immediately respond. Instead, he took a large puff of his hemp cigarette to calm his nerves and clear his mind. Though he may appear calm, the elderly knight was far from it. He was all too aware of the cruelty that Berengar engaged in towards his enemies, especially if they stepped on his bottom line.

Harming the King of Austria's family was just about the worst thing one could do in this life. Berengar may act with a facade of righteousness, but when driven mad with rage, he was liable to raze entire cities to the ground. Thus, Renault truly believed the man when he said that he would light the North ablaze to abate his fury if the Princess had perished.

Luckily for everyone involved, Henrietta had survived, and because of this the Austrian King had been merciful, and by merciful. However, Berengar's mercy still involved the demand for the gruesome death and torture of the men responsible for his sister's condition. Being entirely aware of all these factors, Renault sighed heavily before revealing his plot to escape the madman's wrath.

"If you are thinking of staying here in Luxembourg, and defending your claim, I would advise against it. The Austrian Army is more powerful than you can possibly imagine. It so far advanced beyond our means that even if a simpleton were to lead it, they would still be victorious.

Berengar may not be the General that Eckhard was, but he is still exceptionally capable. If we stay here, I assure you we will die horribly. We have an option to live well abroad. I suggest you commit your forces to fighting the insurrection that is bound to take place. When the enemy is distracted by supplying the rebels, we charter a ship to England.

The English King is the last monarch in this world that is foolish enough to invoke the ire of his Austrian Counterpart. He will grant us a safe haven for a time. We will use this borrowed time to charter a voyage to the lands in the far east. Only by crossing the Indus will we be able to escape the eyes and ears of Austrian agents.

I won't lie to you. The journey will be difficult, and we will lose most of our wealth in the process; Austrian intelligence will also hunt us throughout every step of the way, but if we succeed, we can escape to a life of wealth and stability."

Hartmann did not take this suggestion lightly. In fact, the very notion offended him. However, rather than bursting out into a tantrum like a child; he merely drank the rest of his coffee in silence before choosing to respond to his mentor.

"Renault, I understand your fear. Truly I do. The very thought of being captured alive fills my very bones with dread. Yet, I will not abandon my lands to this tyrant from the South, nor will I give up on everything I have worked for throughout my entire life.

You know as well as I do that technology is advancing at a rapid rate, especially in terms of firearms, and though we can not compete with Austria on a level playing field, our weapons can allow our soldiers to fight back. We just need to get creative in how we do so.

As for the rabble who takes up arms against me, they will find that I am not so different from Berengar when it comes to my wrath. When thoroughly provoked, I can be just as vicious as that man, and rebelling against my rule is my bottom line. No, we will put down this rebellion, and then we will resist Austria's advances until the bitter end.

You are free to leave if you wish. I wouldn't expect less from a man of your heritage... However, I will not raise the white flag, and surrender everything that I have worked so hard to achieve. I will either be victorious, or I will die on my own terms. I refuse to give Berengar the satisfaction of torturing me to death!"

Renault was not happy with the implication that because he was a Frenchman that he was naturally a coward at heart. However, he let this snide remark slide. He knew the boy well. After all, he had been his mentor for many years.

Clearly, the young Duke was lashing out because he was afraid. He may put on an act of courage, but the old French Knight was unsure whether Hartmann would truly stay and fight until the bitter end. After all, though he had not personally witnessed the destructive power of the Austria's military, Renault was aware of how many cities they had laid to waste simply with the power of their artillery.

After living in exile within Luxembourg for so long, the veteran knight had grown attached to its people, and did not wish to see so many of them die simply because of Hartmann's stubbornness and his refusal to let go of his ambitions. At a certain point, one must admit defeat in life and move on. Clearly the boy had not lived long enough to live this lesson, and at this point it was unlikely that he would.

Renault was at a crossroads. Either he could flee now and live his twilight years in exile once more, most likely in regret about leaving the young master behind. Or he could fight and die in one last stand against his master's enemies. Ultimately, he had to decide on whether he wanted a peaceful, or glorious end to his long life that was filled with conflict.

Silence prevailed in the room as the old knight reflected on his choices. It was only after he had finished his coffee that he came to a thorough conclusion.

"Very well. If you wish to fight until the very end, then allow this old fool to pledge his sword in service to you once more. Though I know this will end poorly for all of us, I would rather die by the side of my protégé than live out my final years in remorse."

A haughty smirk appeared on Hartman's face as he clasped the elderly knight on the shoulder.

"I see you have chosen well! So be it.. if we are to make our last stand here in the home of my ancestors, then let it be such an end that our heroism resounds throughout history as an inspiration for future generations!"

Renault smiled bitterly as he heard these words. Would this bastard boy really be the last Luxembourg? He never thought he would see the day where two great dynasties perished in the same decade. If Berengar von Kufstein could truly annihilate the main Habsburg and Luxembourg lines, then he was truly a conqueror worth uniting the German people.

Of course, the old man would never say this aloud to his protégé. Such a thing would only act as discomfort in their last days.. Thus, while Berengar began reforming his Royal Guard into an Elite militant force loyal to the Crown of Austria, his rivals in the north began making preparations to squash the rebellion and resist Austria's invasion until the bitter end.