

Steel 601

Chapter 601 Underappreciated and Overworked

Hemma stood outside the headquarters of royal intelligence. In her hands was a cigarette, not of the hemp variety that had become widespread among the Kingdom of Germany's army, but instead it was a tobacco cigarette. Such things were a luxury as tobacco was currently only being grown in the colony of New Vienna, and shipments to the fatherland were in limited quantity.

The women pressed her luscious pink lips against the edge before taking a long draft, taking the smoke in through her lungs before exhaling heavily. The rush of nicotine was something that kept her mind stable. After all, as the Deputy Director of German Imperial Intelligence, she had a very stressful job.

With Linde gone, away in the new world on her honeymoon, more and more work had piled up on the Deputy Director's plate, so much so that she wondered how it was even possible for one woman to do all the work that her superior handled daily.

After finishing the cigarette, Hemma looked at her watch and scowled. It was time to get back to work. Thus, she flicked the cigarette to the floor and stamped out the embers before walking back into the headquarters. The moment she entered the doorway, the sentries who were dressed in military-style uniforms saluted her as she passed by.

After entering the third floor of the building through a spiral staircase, the woman charged directly to her destination, which was the conference room where the other heads of various departments were currently gathered, speaking about a certain counter-espionage operation that was ongoing.

The moment she pressed open the twin doors, the agents gathered quickly silenced themselves before jumping to an attention and saluting their superior. A woman with blonde hair tied back in a ponytail was quick to greet Hemma and pay her respects.

"Deputy Director, we were not expecting your visit, but it is a great honor!"

Hemma merely took a seat and tapped her armrest as she scolded the woman for her remarks.

"Cut the crap and get to the point. What is going on with the Arab agents that have infiltrated our borders?"

The woman was taken aback by the blunt nature of her superior, but quickly laid out the intelligence reports that they had gathered.

"A team of Agents from the Timurid Empire has entered our southern borders and are gathering information on Germany's military capabilities as we speak. We are discussing a plan of action to disrupt their operations..."

Hemma grabbed hold of the dossier and flipped through its contents. She sighed heavily after skimming through for a few moments.

"Why should we disrupt them? They are here to gather intelligence about the German Army's capabilities. Then perhaps we should show them the true might of the Reich! Put in a request to the

Department of Defense. Hopefully, those old misers will do a joint military exercise with the Kingdom of Lombardy. In doing so, display just how effective our newest weapons are.

The Sultan has displayed his timidity. He is wary of the threat we possess and appears to be unwilling to commit to an invasion of our allies if it means his army's complete destruction. So show him the fate of those who oppose the Kaiser!"

It shocked the subordinates who had gathered for this meeting to see how Hemma was prepared to respond to this threat from the near-east. One of the men instantly cleared his throat before inquiring further about the Deputy Director's intent.

"You mean to further deter them from invasion?"

Hemma nodded her head in momentary silence before speaking up with an authoritative tone.

"The Kaiser and the Director are currently on a vacation. That means it is our top priority to delay the inevitable invasion of Byzantium until they can return home. If we can successfully bring the Arab world to the negotiating table, I have no doubt that Berengar could broker an agreement between the two parties.

The real question that comes into play is what to do after peace in the east has been achieved. The Arabs will want another region to conquer, and I pity whoever is unfortunate enough to fulfill that role. However, none of that is important. For now, we must continue to deter the invasion until the Kaiser has returned from his honeymoon. Besides, don't we have other worries to deal with? Is there any news on Spain's attempt to seize the saltpeter mines in Collbato?"

A different intelligence officer quickly gathered the documents in his hands before handing them over to the Deputy Director.

"Yes, it would appear that the Spanish intend to attack the mines and take control of them within a fortnight. They are already gathering the necessary forces, fully aware that such an act would reignite the conflict in Iberia. Field Marshal Adelbrand has reported that his troops are ready and willing to provide assistance, but the miners are deep behind enemy lines, and it will take some effort to reach them in time."

Hemma did not hesitate to respond to this news with a firm solution. Aside from Linde and Yasmin, the deputy director was probably the individual most aware of Berengar's plans. After all, she was the second in command of Imperial Intelligence, and dealt with Linde on a daily basis, and that redheaded vixen had a propensity to talk about her husband and his plans in an adoring state.

However, to the people in the room, her response to these actions was shocking, to say the least. Not everyone was fully aware of Berengar's ongoing efforts to provoke a conflict with the Spanish Kingdom.

"Tell Adelbrand that his worries are unnecessary. In fact, have him evacuate the Miners in secrecy, and leave only the smallest force to occupy the area so it would appear to the enemy that our operations are on full scale. Inform him that any and all saltpeter that has been mined so far is to be removed and shipped back to the fatherland. It is time for phase two of our operations in Iberia..."

Not a single soul in the room knew just what Hemma was referring to. Thus, it was no surprise when the blonde-haired woman voiced her concerns.

"Phase two?"

A wicked smile appeared on Hemma's face, one that mirrored that which had been commonly expressed by the Director herself.

"The plan is simple. Now that the enemy has boughten the bait which the Kaiser has so kindly laid out for them, it is now time to draw the Spanish Army in, and take it out with one massive explosion!"

It took the people in the room some time to properly comprehend just what Hemma was saying, but eventually one person in particular gasped before asking in disbelief.

"You don't mean?"

Hemma nodded her head before clarifying her previous response.

"Exactly. Berengar intends to destroy the saltpeter deposit and the Spanish army with it!"

It was at this moment that everybody else in the room expressed their shock. The Collbato saltpeter mines were one of the few natural resource deposits of such a valuable commodity in Europe. Though Berengar's miners had been working overtime to secure its resources, the reality is they had only mined a small percentage.

However, Berengar's army was not reliant on natural deposits of saltpeter to create gunpowder, instead they used complex nitreries and farmed the substance on a national level. In his eyes, it was better to use the deposit to annihilate the Spanish Army in what would be the biggest man-made explosion history, rather than continue wasting years fighting for control of it.

This was Berengar's plan ever since his ability to manufacture gunpowder exceeded his demands of it. It was why he had made the security of the location so lax, allowing a Spanish agent to eventually infiltrate it and report its contents to the Spanish crown. With this information out in the air, Hemma made one further order before departing from the meeting.

"Inform the Field Marshal of the Kaiser's orders and have him fulfil them. If he needs any support from intelligence, you are to provide him with it. This operation is of critical importance to the war in Iberia, and if done correctly, will allow our allies to swallow the peninsula in its entirety. Remember, failure is not an option!"

The Agents immediately sprung up from their seats and saluted the Deputy Director.

"Yes, ma'am!"

With that said, Hemma nodded and smiled before leaving the conference room. The moment she entered her office and closed the door behind her, there was an only one thing that caught her sight. A renewed pile of paperwork. The woman could not help but curse her own existence.

"Are you fucking kidding me? I just finished my paperwork not thirty minutes ago! How the hell can one woman do such much work? God dammit Linde, I hope you are having the time of your life right now because I am drowning in everything you have left for me to do! Where the hell is my hot young emperor? It isn't fair!"

After saying this, the woman quickly stormed over to her seat and sat down with a huff. She did not hesitate to pull out a stamp and began reading the first document on the mountain of paperwork. With a firm punch, she stamped her approval on the report before moving onto the next. Until Linde returned, this was how the deputy director would live out her days. Underappreciated and overworked...

Chapter 602 One Hell of a Last Night

Berengar sat on the beach and gazed off into the distance with a bitter smile on his face. It had been weeks since he and his girls had first arrived on this private island, and one might say it was the greatest vacation he had ever experienced. Not that he had experienced many, as most of his so-called vacations in his past life were simply staying home and entertaining himself with some form of media.

Still, he knew the days he could spend alone and isolated with only his lovers for company were coming to an end. Tomorrow, he would have to return to the Empire and live a life filled with warfare and ruthless court politics. A heavy sigh escaped from his lips as he drank from his coconut daiquiri and gazed upon the setting sun.

In the back of his mind, he made a solemn vow to himself. One day in the distant future, when he had achieved all of his goals in life, he would retire to the countryside like his parents and live a peaceful life in his twilight years.

To hell with politics. That is something the younger generation should be worried about. Besides, who the hell would want a senile old man as their nation's leader? He was all too aware of the consequences such a thing would have and had no desire to tarnish his legacy in his feeble old age.

As he was dwelling upon this, a hidden figure lurked in the shadows. A pair of dark eyes cautiously watched the man lying on the beach. After observing Berengar for some time, the mysterious being gripped ahold of the shaft of his spear, and stalked ever closer to the seemingly unaware monarch. Only after he had reached striking range did the golden-haired man make a move.

Berengar smoothly reached over and grabbed hold of the revolver sitting at the nearby table. He quickly pulled back the hammer and pointed the weapon at the ambusher's skull. The last thing this native warrior saw was a wicked grin on the one eyed emperor's face before an audible bang occurred, and his soul was reaped. After splattering himself with blood and grey matter, Berengar cursed as he struggled to contain the ringing in his ears.

"Great... Now I'm soaked in blood. I swear to god, whoever is in charge of security is going to get their ass reamed the next time I see them."

As if right on queue the head of security on the Island Estate, and the various members of the Imperial Guard quickly rushed to the scene, witnessing the spectacular sight of their Emperor dressed in spandex briefs while coated in the blood of the man he just slew. As Berengar gazed upon the dumbfounded soldiers, he scowled before giving them their orders.

"Well, don't just stand there! Secure the fucking island, and make sure my wives are safe!"

The soldiers quickly saluted their emperor before running off to do as they were told. The head of security stayed behind and knelt beside Berengar, apologizing profusely for failing to prevent such an attack.

"My Kaiser, I am sorry. I don't know how the natives slipped through our security!"

Berengar wiped the blood from his face with the back of his hand as he reprimanded the man for his failure.

"It is quite obvious to me these filthy savages have been watching your patrols for weeks, waiting for the opportune moment to attack. My guess is they are from the nearby island, and are pissed about us claiming this land for ourselves. You have my permission to show our guests the true spirit of German Hospitality..."

The man in charge of security quickly nodded his head before responding to his emperor's statement.

"It will be done my Kaiser"

Just when he was about to turn away and enact his orders, Berengar made one last statement that sent a chill down the man's spine.

"Fail to fulfill your duties as a member of the Imperial Guard again, and I will have your head removed!"

The man did not respond to his Kaiser's threat, and instantly rushed off to secure the Imperial Family and eliminate the threat that presented itself. While alone, Berengar noticed that his drink was unfinished and responded by drinking its contents, where he then examined the revolver in his hands. With a heavy sigh, he gazed off towards the distance where his wives were located and commented on the whole situation with a single phrase.

"Fucking savages. They just had to ruin everything on my last night..."

While Berengar was enjoying his drink on the sandy shores of the beach, his wives were busy preparing a meal in the outdoor dining area of the Private Estate. They had decided to leave their husband be for the time being as they worked together to make sure they prepared a proper feast for their last night on their honeymoon.

Unknowingly to them, a variety of native warriors from the nearby island that was known as Carriacou in Berengar's past life had infiltrated their estate and were beginning their attack. As Linde was carving the roast beef, an echo resounded in the distance, signifying that a gunshot had occurred.

The moment this happened, the girls quickly huddled together and called out for help. Unfortunately, their wails only attracted the predators to their location. Within moments, a group of native warriors quickly surrounded them. These men were dressed in grass skirts, with their bodies painted, and the bones of the slain decorating their hair; creating a terrifying presence as they inched closer to the foreign women.

Honorica quickly grabbed hold of a steak knife and gripped it in her hands. With a calm expression on her face, she prepared herself to battle it out with these native warriors. The other women in Berengar's harem were not as confident as the purple-haired pirate queen and shivered with fear.

The roars of conflict echoed in the air, as gunfire resounded, and the screams of the defeated filled the island. Upon seeing one woman take up a knife, a large warrior sneered in disdain before charging at the woman with his stone maul. As he swung the weapon down towards Honoria, the girl quickly evaded and, as she passed him by, cut his throat with the knife in her hands.

The man fell to his knees as he covered the severed artery with his hands, desperate to stop the bleeding, however in the end he collapsed to the ground, dead. He could not fathom such a sharp substance existing. With a confident expression on her face, and a body covered in blood, Honoria cried out to the native warriors in fierce call.

"Come and get me, you filthy savages!"

Immediately, the native warriors rushed towards the girls with fierce intent. One of them quickly grabbed hold of Adela and brought her into his arms. He had a lust filled expression on his face as he licked his lips.

Just when Adela was about to scream, thunder crackled and her captor's skull was blown apart. Adela quickly shoved the corpse aside as she gazed into the distance to see her knight in shining armor. Berengar stood with a revolver raised in one hand and a sword in the other.

After finishing his drink, he had rushed into the house to get his dress sword, which was lying with his other belongings. He then charged out to the outside dining area where he knew his wives were only to see them surrounded by the enemy.

With a concerned look in his eye, he gazed over at his wife and consoled her.

"Are you alright?"

Adela nodded her head in silence, with tears streaming from her eyes. She wanted to hug Berengar and never let go, but unfortunately, they were still surrounded by the enemy. Thus, she steeled her resolve and responded in a hateful tone.

"Kill them all!"

Berengar nodded his head and raised his pistol in the air once more, raised his pistol once more and fired several more shots into the torsos of the native warriors, gunning them down left and right. It was only after he was out of ammo that he charged at them with his sword. In hand. A hateful glint was in his eye as he cried out in mad laughter.

"You motherfuckers have done it now! When I'm through with you, I will kill your whole fucking tribe!"

Honoria took advantage of the chaos and ruthlessly attacked the stunned native warriors with her knife, creating a concert of carnage between herself and her husband. A wicked smile was on her face as she jumped on top of one of the warriors and stabbed into his chest repeatedly, as if she was a howling banshee. She cried into the air in fury.

"Kill! Maim! Burn!"

When Berengar noticed this, he smiled before deflecting an oncoming spear. With a lunge and a thrust, his narrow blade protruded through the heart of the enemy, killing him on the spot. With a quick withdraw Berengar rushed towards the next enemy standing side by side with Honoria as they drove back the invaders. Honoria had a smile on her bloodstained face as she commented to Berengar about the whole situation.

"This is one hell of a last night on our honeymoon, isn't it??"

Berengar chuckled when he heard this before making his retort.

"I quite honestly never expected to fight side by side with you. Your sword skills have definitely improved since I first taught you all those years to go."

Honoria merely smirked in response. She did not need to hear that from a man who spent most of his battles on horseback. The tides of battle had now turned and the savage warriors had become deathly afraid of the dynamic duo in front of them and retreated. Honoria was quick to follow while Berengar called out to her.

"No, wait!"

However, she was already gone, forcing him to rush after her. Apparently, he made it just in time. For the moment, he grabbed ahold of her shoulder and dragged the byzantine princess back into his embrace.

The savages rounded the corner and were gunned down by a firing line. Honoria gazed at the bloody scene with shock, realizing that if Berengar had not stopped her, she too would be mincemeat right now. Berengar sighed in relief. He had made it just in time. It was only then that an officer revealed himself and gave his emperor a status report.

"My Kaiser, the island is secure, and we eliminate the savages. What are your orders?"

Berengar gazed off into the distance to the larger island nearby with a devilish smirk on his face.

"I say retaliation is in order for such a grand insult. Inform the Colonial Expeditionary Forces that I permit them to invade this island chain and kill every living native they come across. These filthy savages picked the wrong man to fuck with!"

Chapter 603 Narrowly Avoiding a World War

Weeks had passed since the night Berengar and his troops had repelled a native attack on their private island, and during this time he had returned to Kufstein, where he quickly got back to work. After all, many exciting things had occurred during his absence and his immediate input was required.

Initially, the girls were shaken up by the bloody events, but they eventually calmed down when they returned to the sanctuary of the Imperial Palace. Still, for some of them, it was their first time seeing such bloodshed and it would haunt their memories for many years to come.

Upon returning to the Fatherland, Linde immediately took back her position as director of intelligence. There was no doubt that she was now pregnant, but it would still be a few weeks before it affected her daily life, and thus she dedicated that time to fulfill her role as Berengar's spymaster.

At the moment, Berengar was gazing over three reports from Imperial Intelligence with a frown on his face. Two out of three of his ongoing theatres of intelligence operations had some relatively unfavorable news.

While the Spanish were marching into a trap designed to annihilate their professional army, and allow for a rapid German-Granadan conquest of Iberia, the Timurid Empire had failed to do the same. The cautious attitude of the Timurid Sultan had caused Berengar to order an immediate investigation of the man, and his background. It had been a while since he had such a rational opponent.

While he waited on results from such espionage, there was a more important matter to attend to. France was in a state of temporary unity, as the rebelling Dukes and the English alike ceased hostilities for the time being.

By Berengar's count, Sibilla must have returned home by now, and she was likely going to instigate conflict with Germany as a result of her harsh treatment. Though Berengar was fully unaware of just how brutal her sentence had been. After all, the operation of the Labor Camps was something he did not personally look after, and the corruption that plagued the system had gone unnoticed.

As the German Emperor read the report about the ceasefire, he frowned. A unified France would always be a threat to Germany, though they would never be as powerful as their German neighbors, nor had they really ever been in his past life aside from possibly Napoleon's reign. France still posed a threat to the Empire when allied with other nations, a lesson Berengar had learned from both world wars of his past life. Thus he sighed heavily as he revealed his thoughts on the matter.

"This is unfortunate. The Papacy has insisted on a ceasefire between the Kingdoms under their thumb. This presents some difficulties in our plans to destroy the national identity of France, and balkanize it into smaller territories."

Linde, Hemma, and a few Generals were present in the room to discuss the ongoing efforts of Germany's espionage in the foreign Kingdom. Hemma was the first to speak as she handed a proposal to Berengar, listing Imperial Intelligence's suggested courses of action to resolve this issue.

Berengar quickly looked over the proposal, while Hemma spoke about their options.

"It is the opinion of our Covert Operations Department that the most effective solution to restart the conflict in France is to conduct a false flag attack on the English crown. If we can assassinate a member of the English Royal Family and successfully pin it on the Kingdom of France, we can easily reignite the war."

This prospect immediately drew Berengar's interest as he glanced over at Linde, seeking her approval on the matter. The angelic beauty smiled as she addressed her husband. She knew the next question the Emperor was about to ask and did not hesitate to reveal her thoughts on the matter.

"My Kaiser, I believe that we have a 82% chance of successfully pulling this off, however if we fail and our plot is revealed then it will give the Kingdom of England a Casus Belli against us, such a thing would warrant an invasion by the entire Catholic World.

It is in my honest opinion that despite our military advantages; we are not appropriately prepared for such an event at this time, especially with the Jihad lingering on the corner, any Catholic Invasion of the Fatherland would immediately result in our allies being swarmed by their Muslim neighbors.

Let me remind you with the leak of agricultural technology to the rest of the western world, it has freed up a lot of hands who are now being trained in the art of war for the sole purpose of the upcoming crusade. The number of forces that our enemies could theoretically mobilize within a month across our borders is well over a million men.

As for our own estimates, we have roughly three hundred thousand men in active service who are a part of Land Capable Forces, ten thousand of which are spread throughout the colonies. Alongside this are roughly 50,000 Reservists who can be called up at a moment's notice.

That is hardly enough soldiers to protect the Empire's borders in their entirety. Need I remind you that we have only recently accumulated large amounts of territory, and the less than loyal states may be subject to rebel to spare their own power? After all, not everyone shares your vision of a unified German Empire beneath Austria's rule.

The upside to this conflict would be a complete and total domination in the sea. However, that is the only aspect that we will win with ease. There is another major downside, and that is the fact that the Catholics consider all Germans to be heretics.

Because of this; they are liable to slaughter our civilians. If we fail in our aim to assassinate a member of the English Royal Family and frame the Kingdom of France, it will undoubtedly result in the bloodshed of millions of your people."

Berengar weighed the pros and cons of such a potential outcome with great thought. He did not want to make a decision that might result in defeat and the end of his dynasty. Though he was confident he would win the war, the losses he would suffer could set back his plans by decades. He was not some immortal cultivator, and he knew his time as a ruler was at most another forty years.

The German emperor dwelled on whether such a risk was really worth dividing France over. After all, if he waited a few years for the Crusade to naturally take place, he would be in a better position and could use the war as an excuse to divide France. While Berengar sat in silent contemplation, Linde could tell that her husband was struggling to come to a decision, and smiled warmly as she offered her personal opinion.

"If you think such a risk is not worth taking, then don't do it. There are always alternatives that we could come up with to ensure our plans to destroy France become realized."

In response to this, Berengar sighed heavily before voicing his decision.

"The destruction of France will occur as the years pass, regardless of whether we choose to act now. I do not wish to take such a massive risk to the Empire and its people, especially over a matter as simple as this. Perhaps there is something in the future that could warrant such action, but France is simply not worth the risk."

Linde smiled as she heard Berengar's response, though it was the opinion of several of the more Hawkish members of Imperial Intelligence that this was the best course of action, she knew once she fully laid out the risks, Berengar would make the right choice.

Perhaps in an alternate timeline, Berengar did indeed have a member of the English Royal Family assassinated, and his plot was in fact revealed, resulting in a conflict that would resemble a world war. Yet, in this world, where Linde existed to give him a proper risk assessment, Berengar would never make such a costly mistake.

Hemma, on the other hand, was displeased with the result. She had spent quite a significant effort compiling that suggested the course of action and was upset to see it go to waste. However, if this was the will of the German Emperor, then she would not complain. After all, such a thing would easily be hazardous to her career. Instead, she merely bowed her head and took the folder back before speaking graciously to her monarch.

"Very well, if that is your will, my Kaiser, then I must find an alternative solution which fits your requirements. If you will excuse me, I must get back to work."

With that said, Berengar waved his hand, signalling that the Deputy Director was dismissed. All that remained in the room was himself, Linde, and a few Generals. It was with this in mind that he quickly inquired about the ongoing military efforts in Spain.

"How is the second phase of our operation within the Iberian Peninsula going?"

One of the Generals quickly approached his Emperor where he did not hesitate to inform the man of the recent news from the field.

"My Kaiser, we have received word from Adelbrand that the operations are currently underway. The miners have been evacuated, and just enough presence to commit to a feigned retreat is present at the location. As for the remaining saltpeter, what we have already mined has been covertly withdrawn from the region and is heading back to the fatherland as we speak."

Berengar smiled and nodded his head as he flexed his fingers before speaking his exact thoughts.

"Excellent, then proceed as planned. The moment the Spanish Army invades, you know what to do!"

The General quickly saluted their monarch before responding.

"Yes my Kaiser"

After saying this, Berengar signalled for the men to be dismissed, leaving him alone with his wife. The two then spent the rest of the afternoon preparing for the inevitable conflict in Iberia. Luckily, because of her input, Berengar had narrowly avoided a world war. The consequences that could have resulted from the aforementioned conspiracy would have been disastrous for Germany and Europe as a whole.

Chapter 604 A Feigned Retreat

Far away from the fatherland, in the middle of the Iberian Peninsula, deep behind enemy lines, a young soldier stood on lookout within the watchtower of his encampment. His orders were to keep an eye out and immediately report any sighting of Spanish troops.

This young man was merely 18 years old, and had only recently begun military service in the German Army as part of his military conscription. The reality was with that Germany did not have the means to facilitate the massive influx of troops resulting from their recent unification, and thus a lottery system was used to dictate which young men they drafted into service.

Unfortunately for Private Adrian Winterlinger, he was one of the unlucky few to be selected into armed service. After graduating from infantry school, he was immediately deployed to the Iberian theatre where he just so happened to be stationed in a mine behind enemy lines. His job was dreadfully boring mostly, and the majority of the men within this encampment spent the days playing cards and drinking.

However, recently the alert status was raised, and rumors of a Spanish attack were widespread. Though being honest, Adrian did not know what High Command was thinking. During such an intense period, they had not only evacuated the miners, but left a small portion of troops behind to fight against any possible attack. What madness had overcome the Field Marshal to think such an idea was favorable?

Thus, he sighed in defeat as he pulled out the canteen attached to his combat belt and took a long swig. After returning it to its proper place, he picked up his binoculars and gazed into the distance for the eleventh time in the past hour.

However, this time, something was different. In the distance was a shimmer that he could not immediately identify. However, as he focused his vision through the binoculars, the shimmer began growing in size until it reached clarity. A shock appeared on the young man's face as he froze on the spot.

A massive Army was marching towards the German encampment. He did not know just how many men were within the sea of shimmering iron, but he knew it was not something they could easily combat. Thus, he quickly gained control of his panicked state and rang the bell within the watchtower, signalling an enemy army was approaching.

The soldiers in the camp below all panicked as they rushed towards the earthen fortifications of the encampment and gazed over the neatly placed sandbags. When they saw what had awaited them on the horizon, they quickly donned their helmets and loaded their rifles.

Those few men who were lucky enough to man the Mk2s quickly began inserting the rounds into their weapons to prepare for the oncoming attack. Soon, the officer in charge of the camp came out from his command post and began addressing the troops.

"Hold the line until I give the order to retreat. Any man who falls back before the order is given, I swear I will shoot you myself!"

Such a threat immediately sent a tingle down the spines of the men present. Were they seriously going to stand and fight? Just when they were thinking this, the roar of cannon fire filled the air, and several dozen cannonballs fell down from the sky into the entrenched position. The soldiers of Germany quickly scrambled into their fortification and responded to the Spanish armies' attack with one of their own.

With the commands being issued by the local artillery officer, the battery of six guns loaded their 7.5cm shells and fired off a barrage towards the advancing army. Adrian gazed through his binoculars into the distance to see the shells explode upon the enemy forces, engulfing the Spanish Army in flames, and shrapnel alike.

One could hear the bloodcurdling screams resound in the distance, and despite this, the enemy was undeterred. As the Spanish cavalry charged, they were met with the fire of the mk 2 Schmidt guns, which fired hundreds of bullets from their muzzles as the minutes passed by.

The Spanish Cavalry were being cut to pieces and despite this, the army still rushed forward in a suicidal charge, knowing full well the camp and its defenders did not have the ammunition to completely defeat them. A single battle cry filled the air as the Spanish soldiers rushed into the gunfire.

"God, wills it!!"

At this point Adrian had shouldered his rifle and fired upon the advancing forces, however in the next moment he saw a cannonball rapidly approaching his watchtower where he quickly jumped out of the windowed area and landed into a cart filled with wheat below.

Just as he escaped the impact, the wooden watchtower splintered into fragments. Had he not escaped the moment he did, he would be dead. Adrian quickly recovered from his shock as an allied soldier pulled him from the cart and dragged him into the trenches.

"Keep firing private! If you want to live, you must keep firing!"

Adrian did not hesitate and quickly racked back the bolt on his g22 rifle, ejecting the spent cartridge, where he pulled a spare from his web gear and inserted it into the chamber before closing the bolt home and aiming his rifle at the oncoming enemies. He did not hesitate to pull the trigger, claiming the life of the oncoming Spaniard. Just when the enemy reached the borders of the encampment, the whistled resounded and the following orders were given.

"Retreat, abandon the camp!"

The German soldiers were completely shocked to hear this order, but did not hesitate to follow it. After all, tens of thousands of men were rushing towards their position and they had no hope of victory, thus they quickly fled the scene.

Not long after this, King Felipe rode on horseback into the encampment as his men lifted their weapons in the air and screamed in joy at the victory. The Spanish Monarch had a wide smile on his face as he addressed his troops.

"Men of Spain! Today, we have gained a magnificent victory. The enemy has stolen from us a valuable stockpile of saltpeter and we have just reclaimed it! This resource can cripple the German stranglehold over gunpowder, and allow our forces, and those of our allies, to properly fight back against the heretics who inhabit our lands! Today, the soldiers of Christ claim victory over the German Empire! Death to Berengar the Accursed!"

In the distance, the German Commander gazed upon the scene through his binoculars and had a wicked grin on his face as he saw King Felipe instigating the hostile chant. With a single phrase, he condemned the Spanish Army to their fate.

"Do it!"

With those words spoken, the nearby sapper pressed the plunger on his detonator, which had an underground cable leading into the mines below the encampment. The detonation travelled throughout the wire until it reached the hidden explosives buried deep within the mines next to all the saltpeter.

As Felipe was enjoying his victory with a wide smile on his face, several dozen tons of TNT were detonated, and when combined with the pressure of the mines, and the concealed saltpeter ignited an explosion so large it created a mushroom cloud. In an instant, the Spanish King, and most of his army were engulfed by flames, and incinerated from this world, leaving nothing behind, not even their bones.

The German soldiers ducked behind the trench line as the shock wave of dirt and debris flew over their heads, thoroughly destroying the backup camp several kilometers away from the mines. After it was all over, the Commander raised his head and gazed at the massive crater that existed where the mine used to be. A fiery cavern was all that remained of the one proud saltpeter deposit.

The German soldiers raised their heads in shock and dusted themselves off. They could not believe such a massive explosion had occurred. Had they not ducked under their fortifications and wore their steel helmets, they very well may have passed away from the shock wave. Silence filled the air as the German Army gazed upon the destruction wrought by their hand. In the end it was only broken by the mad cackling of the Commander.

'My God! Such devastating power, truly, only the Kaiser could envision such a thing! Send a messenger to the Field Marshal at once, inform him that the King is dead, and most of his army is with him. The time to reclaim Al-Andalus is now!'

Agent Jurgen was quickly handed a message and given a horse to ride back to the Capital of Granada. The entire time he rode, he gazed off towards the direction of the crater in shock until it was no longer visible. He could not believe mankind could make such a destructive weapon, let alone that he was able to bear witness to it. In the following days, a new war would begin, and Iberia would once more be completely embroiled in conflict.

Chapter 605 A Military Exercise in the Kingdom of Lombardy

King Bruno of Italy stood by one of the German Empire's newest Generals. Willehelm Ritter von Krieger was a man who had been fighting in the German Army since the early days of Berengar's conquests.

Since his days fighting Brigands following Berengar's ascension as the Duke of Austria, the man had been in nearly every conflict Austria had taken part in, proving himself to be a valuable commander and a gallant soldier.

In fact, Berengar had even awarded him with the Imperial Order of the House von Kufstein, which was the highest honor in the Kingdom of Austria. It also made him a de facto noble, with the title of Knight, hence the Ritter von Krieger surname.

In the fields below these two men was a German Artillery Brigade, armed with the newest toys the Empire could provide them. By their side was an Artillery Brigade belonging to the Kingdom of Lombardy and was using the old 1417 12 lb Field Guns that had long since been phased out of the German Army's predecessor.

King Bruno gazed upon the weapons used by his Suzerain's forces with envy in his eyes. He could not believe such masterful machines existed. For every round his soldiers fired from their cannons, the Germans could fire ten, and at a greater distance, with far greater lethality.

Unbeknownst to this man, there was a group of Arab spies from the Timurid Empire, observing this exercise with shock. Not only was this German Empire capable of fielding such massive numbers of artillery on their borders, but they could even deploy a similar amount of cannons to a military exercise with a neighbor. Just what kind of unholy military capability was this?

However, the moment they witnessed the explosive impact of the 75mm shell on the straw dummies who were clad in steel armor, their jaws dropped. Yet that was not the end of their astonishment.

Shortly thereafter, another 70 rounds fell on the target location, and then another, and another, until they had conducted 10 separate barrages in the span of a minute. By the time the firing had ceased, nothing but a crater remained at the location of the targets.

The sheer range, volume, and destructive power of these tiny field guns greatly outmatched the Timurid Empire's bombards. If they were to go to war with this German Empire, only death was certain. With this in mind, one spy immediately said his prayers, frightened by the mere thought of such a potential reality.

While the Arabs were praying, Willehelm lifted his hand in the air, signalling the German artillerymen to cease their fire. After the shelling had stopped, he gave out another order which practically made both the King of Lombardy and the Arab spies eyes jump out of their sockets.

"Prepare the revolving cannons!"

The artillery crews immediately switched to a single battery of Revolving Cannons. These weapons were based upon the Hotchkiss revolving cannon of Berengar's past life, but were scaled up to a 40mm High Explosive shell. If one wanted to understand the devastation a single one of these could cause, all they needed to do was imagine sixty eight 40mm grenades falling on their location within a single minute.

Thus, when the six weapons were loaded and fired off their 40mm explosive shells at such a rate of fire, everyone who was not already aware of their destructive power practically fainted from shock. Just how powerful was the German Army with such devastating weapons at their beck and call!

It was this thought that immediately caused the Arab spies to conclude that a war with Byzantium would mean coming to arms with Germany and that would be nothing more than suicide. The two Arab spies immediately ran off, no longer having the courage to witness what further destruction the German Army was capable of.

Not long after, the military exercise ceased, and the two armies returned home. As for the Arab spies, they chartered the fastest clipper they could get back to the Timurid Empire's borders as quickly as possible.

After several weeks, they were kneeling before their Sultan Salan Mirza with fearful expressions on their faces. They had just reported the news of the espionage to the Sultan who was staring at them in disbelief.

"Are you certain of this?"

The two spies quickly responded without hesitation as they nodded their heads before declaring their utmost loyalty.

"We wouldn't dare lie to your majesty. I swear on Allah that everything I have reported is accurate and true. If I am lying, then may he strike me down where I stand!"

This answer forced the Sultan to sit down in his seat out of shock, contemplating just what this meant. Seventy of these weapons were on his borders, and another seventy were behind the scenes protecting the German Empire's borders.

If the German Army had such steel manufacturing technology that allowed them mass produce these weapons, then it stood to reason that there were far more than a hundred and forty of them spread across the world. If such a thing were the case, then military action against the Byzantine Empire would be foolish. Their allies were simply too powerful.

It became increasingly clear to Salan that if he wished to accomplish his goals, diplomacy was the only viable alternative. Thus, he dwelled deeply on the subject before issuing an order to his subordinates.

"Inform the heads of the other sultanates. Military victory is a fool's goal. Only through diplomacy can we gain what we want. If they doubt my claim, let them know of what you had seen. If they still refuse, then remind them who is really in power among the Muslim world.

Other than gathering those fools' attention, dispatch a letter to the Byzantine Emperor discussing our willingness to negotiate over our claims, and the current disputes between our two realms. However, make him aware that Kaiser Berengar von Kufstein must be present at these discussions or else they will leave us with only war as an option to settle our differences."

The two spies quickly nodded their heads and agreed to these terms.

"Very well. We will dispatch your orders at once. Is there anything else you need of us, your majesty?"

Salan merely shook his head before responding to this question.

"No, you have done well and will be handsomely rewarded. As for the other agents in the field, tell them to stay clear of the German Empire. I have a feeling sticking our nose in the Kaiser's business may be seen as an act of aggression, and I want him to be in an amicable mood when we finally meet."

The two spies silently nodded their heads before thanking their sovereign for his benevolence.

"Thank you, your majesty!"

After saying this, they disappeared from his palace, leaving the man alone with his many wives. One of which was a woman of striking similarity to the Princess Yasmin. The woman wrapped her arms around her husband's neck and gracefully leaned on him for support as she whispered in his ears.

"Will you be inviting my cousin to these negotiations? I hear that foolish boy is in an alliance with the Germans. It should be interesting to see his take on the dispute over the holy land."

Salan immediately turned around and gazed at the woman with a stern gaze. He then grabbed hold of her throat and squeezed it tightly.

"You dare hide such information from me? Why am I only hearing about this now?"

The woman struggled to voice her defense as the air escaped from her lungs.

"I... only... found... out.... recently..."

Upon hearing this, the Sultan released his grip, causing the woman to heave as she struggled to regain her breath. Only a look of disdain was on the man's lips as he spoke a single phrase with fierce authority.

"Speak, what do you know of this Berengar von Kufstein?"

After regaining her composure, the woman lowered her head before responding to her husband's question.

"Only that he is neither Catholic nor Orthodox. Apparently, he has been excommunicated by the Pope and started his own sect of Christianity, which is the dominant religion in his Empire. He also appears willing to act peacefully with Muslims, even going so far as to marry my cousin Yasmin in order to secure his alliance with Granada. I swear I know nothing else..."

Upon hearing this, Salan sneered in disgust before barking orders at the young woman.

"I need you to send a message to your cousin, tell that foolish boy that if Granada does not support their Muslim brothers in the fight for the holy land, then I will turn the entire Muslim world against his petty kingdom. I may not be able to strike him directly now that he has allied with Germany, but I can still cause conflict in his lands by a simple decree from an imam."

The young woman nodded her head before bowing to the Sultan.

"It will be done, husband."

After saying this, the Sultan dismissed the woman so she could get on with her task. A simple phrase escaped his lips as he gazed out the window towards the west.

"Berengar von Kufstein, I wonder what kind of man you are..."

Chapter 606 Defining a Legacy

Adelbrand stood within the confines of the Granadan Royal Palace. In his hands was a letter delivered from the front lines. By his side were the various Generals and Officers tasked with leading the war efforts of the German-Granadan Alliance within the Iberian Theatre. A devilish smirk was on his face as he pronounced every word with perfect prose, as if he were reciting a poem.

"The King is dead, and his armies with him. The trap that the Kaiser has laid for our enemies went perfectly. Spain is ripe for conquest!"

Hasan heard these words and immediately felt a wrenching feeling in his gut. He had not suffered from such anxiety since his capital was under siege years ago. After taking a moment to calm his senses, he wore a stern expression as he issued the command that would alter the course of history forever.

"Prepare my Army and inform the men that we march on Spain on the morrow. Al-Andalus will be restored!"

Cheers erupted in the war room as the young sultan announced the declaration. War had come to Iberia once more, and Hasan did not seek to be merciful during this round. The Granadan Royal Army had spent years preparing for this very moment, and in this time, his armies were second only to Germany's.

Because of the smaller scale of Granada compared to the Byzantine Empire, and the fact that Hasan had purged his ranks of those who were disloyal before he had even begun reforming his army, the Sultan could become a power that was greater than even the mighty Romans in the east.

The excessive bureaucracy of the Byzantine Empire, combined with its armies being held by various generals with their own political interests, had forced the Byzantine Empire to modernize rather slowly compared to their allies. The fact of the matter was that individual Strategos held too much power and authority for the Emperor to assume full control.

Unlike Granada, which had the most modern equipment, Berengar was willing to sell them. Many Byzantine Units were still in the era of pike and shot. However, this was of no concern to Hasan as he knew his Byzantine Allies would not be aiding him in this conquest.

Adelbrand quickly took the stand as he addressed the gathered military officials with pride on his face.

"The German Army has begun its march as we speak. We shall take the forefront of the conflict. With the Spanish army defeated in Collbato, we can not allow the Catholic world time to respond. As for our Granadan allies, you can secure the cities we have conquered, and ensure the loyalty of the locals. For the Empire!"

The German officers immediately broke out into cheers as they saluted the Field Marshal

"For the Empire!"

With that said, the war for the restoration of Al-Andalus had begun, and the Reconquista that had been going on for centuries would soon come to an end.

Berengar sat back in his office with a smile on his face. He was reading a telegraph report directly from the German Army Headquarters in Iberia. This report stated the success of his trap, and the fact that the German Army had begun its march. Before the Catholic World could react to this news, Germany could easily occupy three-fourths of Spain, and entrench their position waiting for how the Papacy would respond.

Technically, he had done nothing wrong, as the Spanish attack on the mines had violated the treaty of Aquitaine, and thus, military action was considered a lawful and appropriate response. However, the Catholic World would not easily abandon all of Iberia to the Muslim Faith, especially knowing that the Muslims in charge of the new Al-Andalus were in an alliance with the German Reformation.

He was happy that his armies that were on standby had already deployed across the Spanish border. It was just a shame that he had to lose an artillery battery and a few mk2 machine guns in the trap that he had laid for his enemies. A sultry voice interrupted Berengar's thoughts as a pair of tanned and dainty hands wrapped around his neck.

"Just what has got you so happy?"

Berengar kissed the Granadan princess's hand lovingly as he looked into her deep amber eyes and responded with a coy tone.

"I have fulfilled my promise to you..."

A look of confusion appeared on the Moorish beauty's face as she gazed upon the words transcribed on the paper. As she read the content of the paper, her confusion turned to shock, before ending in delight. Yasmin quickly kissed Berengar on the cheek and hugged him tightly before voicing her disbelief.

"I can't believe it! Is it true? Are the King of Spain and his armies really dead?"

Berengar nodded his head in response before placing the paper down on the desk with a wide smile on his face.

"Indeed, soon enough, Al-Andalus will be restored, and the glory of your people with it. "

The heart of the maiden beat rapidly as she grappled with the words she had just heard. She could not believe it. After centuries of defeat and humiliation, Al-Andalus would be reborn. It was all thanks to one man in particular, thus she rewarded this man with a passionate kiss on the lips.

Berengar enjoyed the moment to his fullest ability before breaking apart from the woman. He had many things to take care of now that the war had begun. After all, this was a monumental occasion in history. How could he not lead the charge to restore Al-Andalus?

When Yasmin took notice of this, she sighed heavily before releasing her grip over her husband. In doing so, all the excitement she had felt moments ago was replaced with dejection.

"You're leaving again, aren't you?"

In response to this, Berengar nodded his head. Upon noticing her bewildered expression, he grabbed ahold of the woman's chin and gazed into her amber eyes with a solemn expression.

"You don't need to worry so much. I'll be fine. I always am!"

Yasmin scoffed when she heard this before grabbing Berengar's eyepatch and stretching it out. After it was pulled a few inches away from his face, she released it, causing it to snap against his eye socket.

Berengar immediately flinched in response and cursed in displeasure.

"Fuck! What the hell did you do that for?"

Yasmin merely sneered at her husband with a shit-eating grin before crossing her arms in a lecturing manner.

"To teach you a lesson about your own mortality! I know you better than anyone. The last thing we need is you doing something stupid, like leading a cavalry charge into artillery fire and getting yourself killed!"

Berengar chuckled when he saw how worried the woman was about his safety. However, all that managed to do was make her pout. He could tell she was furious with his behavior during the war of unification. He did not know how his reckless actions were leaked to the woman, but it was obvious that they had been. Thus, he made a solemn vow to her.

"I promise, I won't do anything stupid that will get me killed..."

Upon hearing this, Yasmin hardly believed Berengar's words, but she knew she would get nothing better out of him. Thus, with a heavy sigh, she ultimately agreed to his decision.

"Fine... Just know that if you die trying to restore my homeland, I will never forgive you!"

A slight chuckle resounded in the room as Berengar grabbed his pregnant wife and forced her into his embrace. The couple remained like this for some time before a knock on the door interrupted them. Linde quickly entered the room and saw the wholesome sight. She bit her lip in envy as she interrupted the scene.

"We have a status update on the Jihad. Apparently, our military exercise in Lombardy has caught the Sultan's spies' attention, and he is now openly requesting for a negotiation on the hostilities between the Muslim and Orthodox world.

He has specifically requested that you attend these meetings. Apparently, he knows you are the de facto leader of our alliance and wants to deal with you specifically. I am afraid that you are going to have to choose between leading your forces in Iberia, or overseeing diplomacy in the East."

When Berengar heard this, it displeased him. He desperately wanted to play a leading role in the restoration of Al-Andalus, but he also knew that if he snubbed the Sultan of the Timurid Empire's request, they could see it as an act of hostility provoking future conflict in the East.

Initially, Berengar had sought to destroy the Muslim forces in a single engagement, much like he had done with Spain, but Salan had proven to be a more capable leader than he had suspected. Though it was a bit optimistic, too much so for Berengar's comfort, perhaps with such a man at the head of Islam's armies, together they could achieve peace between Christians and Muslims in this world.

Berengar had to reflect on what he wanted his legacy to be, the warlord who restored Al-Andalus, or the man who brokered peace between the Christian and Muslim worlds. This was a question that plagued his mind for several moments of silence before he sighed heavily with his response.

"Very well... I know what I must do."

Chapter 607 Less than Peaceful Negotiations Part I

Berengar sat within the confines of a room, gathered around him were men of prestigious standing. Sitting before him was an Arab man, though it was not the German Emperor's friend and ally Hasan, rather the mighty Sultan of the Timurid Empire.

As Berengar's war for the restoration of Al-Andalus was ongoing, he had made the tough decision to attend to the Timurid-Byzantine Peace Accords rather than lead his men to victory in Iberia. The reason for this was complicated, and ultimately would diverge into two paths he could have followed.

By leading his soldiers in Iberia Berengar would be remembered as a conquering warlord who used the sword to bring Iberia under the heel of his Granadan allies, he would be revered as the savior of a dying people within the future Nation of Al-Andalus, allowing his plan to place his son with Yasmin on the throne, and slowly converting the Muslim people of the region into a reformed version of their religion.

Such a plan would have long-term effects on the Muslim world, and perhaps even prevent the rise of fundamentalist extremism that was so present across the earth in his past life. However, despite this potential reality, Berengar elected to personally visit the city of Constantinople to attend to the negotiations between Byzantium and the Muslim world.

Why would he give up such an opportunity for personal glory in Iberia? Because a better option existed with the Timurid Empire, that if done right would lead to the same result of a peaceful existence between Christendom and the Islamic world.

Berengar had already proven himself to be an exceptional conqueror with his various wars across Central Europe, which ultimately resulted in uniting his Empire by the tip of the spear. If he were to personally lead the charge in Iberia, it would no doubt further cement that legacy.

However, rather than be known solely as a man who solved his disputes via bloodshed, Berengar had taken the opportunity to prove to history that he was equally capable in the art of diplomacy as he was in the art of war. Thus, he sat alongside orthodox leaders such as Emperor Vetrans of the Byzantine Empire and King Besarion of the Kingdom of Georgia as he quietly watched and waited for the appropriate time to speak.

Salan gazed at Berengar curiously. The German Emperor was much more regal and refined than he had envisioned. However, this princely appearance was contrasted with an obvious battle wound across the man's right eye, proving that Berengar was a man who led from the front lines. Such a thing was reckless, but admirable in the eyes of the Sultan, as most Generals would not have the resolve to fight alongside their troops.

As Salan observed Berengar, the German Emperor too examined the Sultan from the east. He was quite obviously a man of turko-Persian descent. The man had tanned skin, emerald green eyes, and dark hair, as well as a thick beard. He also had swarthy features which complimented him well. However, the most noticeable thing that Berengar took note of was the thick callouses on the man's hands.

Evidently, Salan was a man who got his hands dirty. Even if he didn't lead from the front lines of war, there were other physical matters that he personally attended to. As the two men were sizing each other up, Vetrans and the Sultan in charge of the Mamluk sultanate were in a heated discussion. With the Sultan practically on the edge of violence.

"How dare you call me a heretic? You filthy kafir! By Allah I will have your head, and the holy land will be returned to its proper masters!"

Vetrans sprang up into a shouting match with the Mamluk sultan as he raised his voice and curled his fists, practically ready to pounce on his rival from the east.

"Over my dead body! I would rather burn the Holy Land to the ground in its entirety, your holy places and ours, before I surrender it to your possession."

The Sultan sneered in disdain as he spat out his venomous words.

"That can be arranged!"

It was at this moment that both Berengar and Salan sighed heavily and rested their weary heads into the palm of their free hands. At the same time, they both yelled at their allies to cease hostilities.

"Silence!"

When the two men voiced their commands, the entire room became tranquil as the various parties gazed at the leaders of the two alliances with shocked expressions. Berengar looked upon his Muslim counterpart with surprise as he gave the man the floor.

"Would you like to state your conditions first? After all, you are the one who requested my presence at these peace accords."

A stern expression filled the Sultan's face as he listed the first of his demands.

"My first condition is simple. Vetrans must allow the Muslims who still live in the Byzantine Empire's borders to practice their religion freely, and without the heavy taxation that they suffer just to worship Allah and his holiest of prophets."

Berengar shook his head and made a counterargument to the Timurid Emperor, meeting his stern gaze with an expression that exuded authority.

"Would you do the same? I understand that the Christians who live in your lands suffer the same penalty, even though the Holy Land is not under my control. I believe I speak for my ally when I say that we will not accept such a double standard. Get rid of the jizya, and we will do the same..."

Both Vetrans and the Mamluk Sultan both raised from their seated position and were about to curse once more, that is, until Berengar and Salan raised their hands signalling for them to remain silent. The two religious monarchs both bit their tongues and begrudgingly sat back down.

Salan stared deeply into Berengar's deep blue eye as he tried to get an understanding of the man in front of him. The only thing he could see was utter confidence. In the end, he resorted to a religious argument, unaware that Berengar was a completely secular man.

"The Quran explicitly states for us to fight against kafir until they give the jizya willingly while they are humbled. As far as I am aware, there is no religious demand of your faith for nonbelievers to pay taxes."

Berengar's response to this argument was shocking to the religious leaders. He broke out into a brief fit of laughter before completely spitting on their beliefs.

"You have me mistaken Sultan, I do not give a damn what your religious beliefs are, or theirs for that matter. As far as I am concerned, there can be no peace in this world, so long as men are willing to behave in irrational behavior like killing in the name of God.

I do not ask what your deity would permit, but what you, as a man, are willing to concede in order to achieve this peace. I promise you this, As long as I am in charge of negotiations at this table, I will not accept any terms that will put my allies in an unfavorable position. Make no mistake, I can afford a war with the Muslim world. Can you say the same, sultan?"

Salan was slightly taken aback, though he did not let it show. He thought for sure that Berengar would be a religious man. After all, he had started the German Reformation supposedly in response to the Catholic Church's corruption. The sultan did not know that religion was a means to control the populace as far as Berengar was concerned. Nothing more, nothing less.

To make a religious argument on why you should not be held to the same standard in a negotiation was invalid by the German Emperor's standards, and he would not concede on this point. If Salan wanted to adhere to his faith's beliefs, he would need a rational argument, and not one based on faith. Something he quickly thought of and responded with.

"Even if I was willing to abolish the Jizya in exchange for your demands, my people would never accept it, nor would my allies. In the end, it would only invite chaos and disorder within my borders. Surely you can understand this?"

Once more, Berengar shocked the man with his response. With a simple raise of his brow, the German Emperor blew the Timurid Sultan's mind.

"And how is that my problem? We are here to discuss a peace agreement, not an alliance. What happens within your borders is none of my concern."

Salan finally understood why Berengar was unwilling to concede to this point as he gazed upon the confident expression on the man's face. The German Emperor was in a position where he did not care whether war broke out, because they both knew that there was only one possible result: total German victory.

Berengar was negotiating from a position of power, as he often did, and because he knew the Timurids were afraid of his power, he could use that as leverage to get what he wanted. He did not even need to make an overt threat. He could simply reject any terms he found unfavorable and respond with a witty retort about how it was the Timurids who opened negotiations and demanded his presence.

The German Emperor refused to accept any peace that was not long term. To do this, he realized he would need to make both parties come to an equal understanding, and not favor one over the other in the treaty. Thus, negotiations for peace between Christendom and the Muslim world were off to a slow start.

Chapter 608 Laying Siege to the City of Madrid

The echo of guns filled the air above the Capital of the Kingdom of Spain, not even a week had passed since the German-Granadan alliance had begun its invasion over the Iberian Kingdom, and yet the allies were already at the capital of their enemy.

If not for the foolish actions of the Spanish Monarch, such a rapid advance would not be possible. After all, King Felipe had foolishly rushed into the saltpeter mines with a majority of his army. In doing so, he walked straight into a trap that had successfully killed himself and his forces.

Because of this masterful play by the German Emperor, the Kingdom of Spain was practically defenseless, with only a few thousand defenders spread across its many cities. Most of which threw up their arms in defeat the moment they witnessed the German-Granadan alliance cross into their borders. Despite this mass surrender, the city of Madrid was more than willing to lie down their lives in its defense, and thus, they had established a prolonged siege outside the city's borders.

Hasan's orders were explicit. The German Army was not to destroy the city in its attempt for a rapid victory, and because of this they had focused their artillery fire on the walls. The plan was to bring them down, and allow the German Soldiers to advance into the city en masse.

At the moment, Adelbrand was sitting back in the siege camp, watching the fiery explosions as they detonated against the walls. He had a cup of coffee in his hands, which was recently brewed. He drank several small sips from the mug as his officers addressed their concerns.

"Soon word will reach the French about our invasion, and the Spanish Kingdom's defeat. If we wish to hold on to the ground we have gained, we will need to set up defenses in the Pyrenees, where we can ambush any crossing the French or other Catholic Kingdoms might make into Iberia.

I know the Papacy will not abandon these lands without a fight, so we should at minimum expect an expeditionary force to combat our gains. At the very least, the Pope will be able to claim that he tried to combat our conquest."

Adelbrand nodded his head as he heard these terms before placing down his coffee mug onto the table and glancing over at General Ziyad, of the Granadan Royal Army. With a stern expression on his face, the German Field Marshal asked for the man's advice.

"Do you think your men are up to the task of holding the borders? I can assure you that our Navy will deter any seaborne operations the Catholics may attempt. It is a simply a matter of protecting the Pyrenees and preventing the Catholic Army from invading."

Ziyad took a few moments to contemplate before nodding his head in response.

"Indeed, we now have a chance to restore the glory of Al-Andalus. My soldiers would rather die than let our victory go to waste. I assure you the French will not be able to pass through the mountains. I will make sure of it."

It was at this moment that the walls came crashing down around the city. Cheers echoed in the air as the Generals looked over into the distance and noticed only a few sections of the once mighty city barrier stood standing.

Upon noticing this, Arnulf took a few gulps of his coffee, finishing it before donning his helmet over his head and wearing a smirk on his face while posing a question to the other leaders of the Alliance's army.

"Shall we get to it, then?"

The German Field Marshal did not wait for an answer. Instead, he pulled out a nearby g22 rifle and ensured it was loaded before marching alongside his guard to the city which had been infiltrated by the German and Granadan Armies. Because of their strict orders not to shell the city into oblivion, the few defenders the city could manage to muster were lying in wait with their matchlock muskets and arkebuses ready.

The instant the German and Granadan Soldiers rushed passed the ruined walls, the defenders opened fire on them. A spray of smoke and lead pelted the German and Granadan soldiers. Despite this, fewer than one would suspect were killed or maimed.

The armor that the Germans and Granadans were equipped with protected their vitals from any form of fire the enemy could produce. Only at extremely short distances could a Spanish musket ball penetrate the quenched and hardened steel armor that their enemies wore.

Most of the rounds were simply deflected off of the armor of the advancing soldiers, with only the most unlucky dying from the impact. If one were misfortunate enough, a musket ball could penetrate through their unarmored face, or femoral arteries. Aside from that, most of the men simply walked through the line of fire and exchanged a volley of their own.

The city's defenders desperately struggled to load their weapons and fire another round, but the ability to reload your weapon in a matter of seconds was simply too much for them to handle. Eventually, the sheer volume of fire overwhelmed the Spanish Defenders who were either slaughtered behind their defences or outright surrendered.

Eventually, the siege came to an end, and the gunfire halted. Those fortunate enough to survive could sense only the smell of smoke and blood within the city. As for the leaders of the German Granadan alliance.

Hasan led his Generals and that of his German Allies into the Royal Palace as if he were a conquering hero. The young Sultan stepped foot into the center of the Great Hall and wore a stern expression as he noticed the Spanish Queen huddled up alongside her children, shivering in fear. When he noticed this, his expression softened, and he opened up his arms in a peaceful gesture, begging for the woman to surrender.

"It is over. Surrender your forces now and accept the restoration of Al Andalus. If you peacefully end this conflict, I promise that you and your children will live a life of peace and prosperity. Under my authority as Sultan I swear no harm shall come to you, all you need to do is bend the knee to my rule."

The woman snubbed his graceful gesture. She glared at the young Sultan with a killing gaze. Unbeknownst to Hasan, the woman had a dagger concealed behind her back, and thus the moment the Grenadan Sultan neared her presence, she lashed out at the man, attempting to skewer his heart, and take his life.

Hasan gazed upon the knife, which was a mere foot away from his torso with trepidation. As his life flashed before his eyes, the echo of a gunshot resounded in the room, and the woman who was so close to killing Hasan fell to the ground lifeless. A bloody red circle appeared between her eyes.

Noticing that he was still alive, the young sultan immediately searched for the man who had killed his attacker. What he saw was Adelbrand holding his revolver, the German Field Marshal quickly blew out the smoke protruding from his barrel before re-holstering the weapon, as if killing the Queen of Spain was not the slightest concern to him. When Adelbrand saw the look Hasan was giving him, he was confused and thus voiced his complaint.

"What? The bitch was going to kill you, you should be thanking me! I just saved your life."

The Grenadan Royal Guard instantly moved to secure their Sultan, as Hasan's soldiers restrained the Queen's crying children. The Sultan could not believe what had just taken place. He had offered the woman peace and luxury, and instead she tried to kill him. If not for Adelbrand's sharp eye and quick draw, he would be dead right now. After several moments of shock, Hasan sighed before thanking the German Field Marshal for his help.

"Much like your Kaiser, I owe you my life... When this war is over, I promise to reward you handsomely for your heroic actions."

Adelbrand merely smiled and nodded his head before dispatching orders to the surrounding soldiers.

"The Capital is ours, but we still have much territory to conquer. If the Catholic Expeditionary Forces cross the Pyrenees, we will be in for a long and bitter campaign. We will leave behind a task force to secure the region, and then advance north. The Queen's death will surely embolden the Spanish people to resist our rule. If we do not act swiftly, this will become another Portugal."

With this said, the German and Granadan soldiers quickly saluted their leaders before embarking on their quest. Within a matter of hours, a small Granadan garrison would secure the city of Madrid, and the remaining forces would rapidly advance north.

While Berengar's negotiations with the Muslim world reached a standstill, his allies in Iberia made swift progress in the restoration of Al Andalus. As for his remaining enemies, they would struggle to act on the German-Granadan invasion of Spain. After all, provoking conflict with the German Empire was a hard choice to make, especially when they knew they were not yet ready to face their might.

Chapter 609 Less than Peaceful Negotiations Part II

Salan scratched his bearded chin intently as he tried to think of a resolution to the current disputes between his people and the Christian world. He had to admit he completely underestimated Berengar and his aggressive nature during negotiations. The German Emperor held a position of complete control. After all, it was exactly as the man had said. He and his allies combined could take on the entire Muslim world without much difficulty.

It was this confidence that had led the negotiations to be so troublesome until this point. Berengar was unwilling to concede on the Jizya, and Salan was in a precarious position. Personally, he did not care about Muslims being taxed in Byzantium. If he were alone, he would surely not even have mentioned such a thing.

However, his allies in the Mamluk and Jalayirid Sultanate were not so easygoing, and demanded that such taxes be lifted. The problem lied with Berengar, who was absolutely unwilling to concede on the issue. The only way he would convince Vetrans to drop the taxes was if the Muslims reciprocated.

Considering the fact that the Jizya was a legal tenant of the Muslim faith, it was impossible for Salan to get rid of it without some form of rebellion within the Arab world. So there were only two paths forward: concede to Berengar's demands, and risk revolution, or drop the issue and focus on more important matters. Thus, with a heavy sigh, the Timurid Sultan made his decision.

"Very well, since we can't come to terms with this aspect of the treaty, we will leave it as it currently stands."

The moment he said this, the Mamluk Sultan jumped out of his chair in protest.

"Absolutely not. I will not accept any form of peace unless the Byzantine Empire and their allies cease the religious taxes on the Muslim faith. There is no valid reasoning for such a tax by these kafirs!"

Berengar sneered in disdain before speaking to Salan about his ally.

"Do you mind keeping your dog on a leash? It is hard to have a civil discussion when he barks in protest at any form of progress being made."

The Mamluk sultan's face turned red in fury. He was just about to lash out at Berengar verbally for his remarks when Salan raised his hand, signalling for the man to be silent. Afterward, the Timurid Sultan spoke in a stern tone as he glared at his Mamluk counterpart.

"If you can not act with civility, then leave us. There is no point in you being present if you are going to continue such unruly behavior..."

The Mamluk Sultan was practically at the point of explosion, but rather than upset his ally, he tucked his tail and ran out of the room, cursing only when he was certain that Salan was out of earshot. Upon seeing that the most troublesome of the Muslim leaders had been dealt with, Berengar raised his voice as he questioned the motives of the Muslim States.

"You seek peace, and I understand why you would, however so many centuries of hostilities can not easily be buried overnight. Let's cut to the chase and address the actual issue at hand. The fact of the matter is you want the holy land, and that is not something the Christians would ever be willing to concede to you.

Obviously, we could continue to fight over the Holy Land for the next few centuries, and pointlessly shed the blood of millions in the process. However, I think such a thing would be an utter waste of everyone's time. So how about I offer a different solution to this little problem of ours?"

Everyone's eyes shifted to Berengar as he said this. As far as they were aware, there was no viable solution to the question of the Holy Land. Thus, Salan was quick to ask just what the German Emperor had in mind.

"What do you propose?"

Berengar smirked before taking a sip from his wine. After doing so, he spoke about his vision that might solve many of the problems these two religions faced.

"My idea is quite simple. You want the Holy Land, We want the Holy Land. So how about we simply grant the province of Palestine its independence and form a Republic where religious freedom is a core tenant in its constitution? Christians and Muslims alike would be allowed to freely practice the religion of their choice without persecution.

An educated electorate of both faiths will govern the Republic, and the State would act as a protectorate of both the Byzantine and Timurid Empires. Ensuring that mighty Empires protect the interests of Christians and Muslims alike."

The group of leaders gazed at each other with strange expressions. The idea of creating a single state where Christians and Muslims could peacefully co-exist was something none of them had ever thought of.

However, it would be an interesting experiment, and would show that both sides were at least willing to put an end to centuries of hostilities. The question on everyone's mind was whether Vetrans would accept such a suggestion, thus everyone's gaze shifted to the Byzantine Emperor, who was deep in thought.

After several moments of intense contemplation, Vetranis sighed before nodding his head. If it meant bringing a long term, or even permanent peace between his neighbors and himself, it was something he was willing to do.

"Very well. If this is what it takes to achieve peace between our two realms, then I will consider it. I will only agree to Palestines independence once we have drafted a proper constitution that we can all agree upon."

With this said, everyone present sighed heavily in relief. They could not believe that such a crazy idea was agreed to. However, this meant that perhaps the middle east had a chance for peace in this timeline. Berengar was satisfied as well. Truthfully, he did not expect Vetranis to so easily agree to such a condition.

Over the next few hours, the Christian and Muslim delegates would heavily debate other issues, but they were all minor when compared to the establishment of the Free State of Jerusalem. After a while, they concluded their arguments for the time being and dined together.

At the dinner table, Berengar could not help but notice the beautiful woman by Salan's side was heavily reminiscent of his wife Yasmin. Perhaps her bust was a bit smaller, and her features were less desirable, but there was no mistaking the two were similar. Because of this, he voiced his interest in the topic.

"I'm sorry, but you look very similar to my wife, Yasmin Al-Fadl. Are the two of you perhaps related?"

The woman gazed over at the German Emperor and smiled before responding to his question.

"Naturally, she is my cousin from my father's side. I was surprised when I heard she got married to some Christian King in the center of Europe. Though I must say, I now understand why."

Berengar smiled when he heard this, however Salan scowled at his wife. Was she seriously flirting with the German Emperor in front of him? He would need to severely punish her for such a statement later that night. As for the Timurid Emperor, he spoke with Berengar as he cut into his lamb.

"So tell me, Berengar, I hear you have had many wars. It is surprising to hear that you have fought so many wars in so little time. How do you achieve victory so quickly? By my understanding, most of your wars have lasted several months at the most."

Berengar chuckled when he heard this, before responding with a smug tone.

"I simply have superior artillery. In a world where man can not own the skies, artillery is the most important weapon on the battlefield."

The Timurid Emperor reflected on this statement with great curiosity. The reality was that field artillery had not been fully developed yet outside of the regions under Berengar's influence. Most cannons in this era were large, heavy, immobile, and used almost exclusively in sieges. However, Berengar's knowledge of the future had helped him prove the efficiency of artillery on the battlefield.

Despite his superior firepower, news of Berengar's conquests and how he had achieved such rapid results were more of rumor than fact in lands as far east as the Timurid Empire. Few German traders made it that far, and even fewer had actually witnessed the might of Berengar's armies.

Thus, when Salan heard it was through artillery that Berengar had achieved such significant results, he immediately made a mental note of this and decided to invest in the research, development, and manufacture of cannons as a primary focus of his military. As for the rest of the dinner, it went on rather peacefully.

In the coming days, Berengar, Vetrans, Besarion, and the Muslim leaders would go to the great lengths to establish a new Republic in the Holy Land. Whether they would succeed in their endeavors, or devolve to infighting had yet to be seen.

Chapter 610 Establishing the Free State of Jerusalem

Having concluded the night's dinner, the guests of the Byzantine Palace were led to their allotted quarters for the evening, where they rested peacefully under the security of the mighty Byzantine Empire. Though the negotiations up until this point had been quite fierce, in the end, both sides had come to a tacit understanding about the most outstanding issues between them.

Berengar, ever the hard worker, did not immediately go to sleep upon returning to his quarters. Instead, he spent the night putting pen to ink as he drafted a critical document for the meeting that would undoubtedly take place the next day. It was not until well past midnight that the young emperor got any wink of sleep.

When the light of the dawn shone through Berengar's window, he rose from his slumber and prepared himself for the day's negotiations. As with every day, he started out his morning with a strict exercise regimen before bathing.

After doing a set of pushups, situps, and squats, Berengar ran laps around the palace gardens. A liberty that Vetrans granted him during his first visit. Unbeknownst to him, while he was doing his morning run, Salan was nearby and shocked to see that the German Emperor maintained such a high level of discipline regarding his fitness. The Sultan of the Timurid Empire could not help but approach his German counterpart and express his natural curiosity.

"Tell me, it is the crack of dawn, and here you are in the gardens, running laps around them. I would not question such actions on a normal day, but you are an ambassador for your people here in Constantinople. Surely you should take a more leisurely approach to these peace accords."

Berengar stopped in his tracks when the man approached him and wiped the sweat from his chiseled body with a hand towel that he kept stashed in his shorts. It was only after he had finished this action did he answer the sultan's questions.

"A healthy body creates a healthy mind. Believe me when I say that exercise is extremely important to maintaining one's wellbeing. Since today is not a rest day, I work out, it is as simple as that. Why am I up so early? It is because I like to get my daily fitness regimen out of the way as soon as possible, so that I may use the rest of my day entertaining more important matters."

The diligent answer that Berengar had responded with stunned the Timurid Emperor, he could not fathom a monarch following such a rigid lifestyle. After all, most men of power lived in excess. To see the German Emperor have such discipline was something unexpected.

It appeared to the Timurid Emperor that his German counterpart was an exceptional man. This was not the first statement Berengar had made that caused the Sultan reflect deeply on the meaning behind the words. As with the German Emperor's military advice on artillery being the single most critical aspect of warfare, so too did the man's philosophy of strict physical and mental discipline have its appeal.

Perhaps he would begin changing his lifestyle to account for rigid physical training? However, none of this was a concern to Berengar, who gazed upon his watch, and noticed the time. Soon, the negotiations would take place at the breakfast table, and the various delegates would come to terms with the establishment of a new republic within the Holy Land.

"It's almost time for breakfast. I suppose I will cut my morning run short for the day. I will see you at the table..."

After saying this, Berengar sprinted off to take a bath so that he was presentable for the meal. As per usual, Berengar used his bath time to its utmost efficiency before reappearing in the dining hall where the others had already gathered.

He was dressed in his imperial regalia, which resembled that of the German Emperor from his past life, the primary difference being it was in the colors of this world's Kingdom of Austria. A variety of medals and orders adorned Berengar's attire, symbolizing his heroic feats in battle.

Similarly to Berengar, Vetrans was also dressed in this modern style, as Austrian fashion had spread across Germany and into Byzantium to a certain extent, especially among the nobility. While Berengar's attire was based upon that of the German Emperor, Vetrans's tailors had designed a similar style which resembled the military uniform worn by the last king of Greece in Berengar's past life. The primary difference was that the uniform was in the color of Tyrian purple, a symbol of Byzantine wealth.

As for Besarion, he was not dressed in as luxurious attire instead; he wore clothing that would have been found among the medieval nobility. Thus, when compared to his allies, he was definitely lacking in terms of fashion.

Such prestigious uniforms were something that the Muslims were not accustomed to, and thus, when they gazed upon Berengar and Vetrans, they could not help but stare with envy. Eventually, Berengar broke the silence as he dug into his meal. He was more interested in ending these peace accords as quickly as possible.

"So, we have agreed to the creation of an independent republic within the Holy Land. Because of this, I propose we establish a formal name for this country. I've given it a lot of thought, and I nominate the Free State of Jerusalem. A place where Christians, Jews, and Muslims can coexist in peace."

When Berengar said this, the Muslim leaders' heads turned towards him with scowls on their faces. They quickly protested a certain aspect of the German Emperor's statement.

"Jews? Who said anything about Jews? I thought we were discussing the peaceful co-existence between Muslims and Christians?"

Berengar sighed when he heard this. He had done an awful lot of research on the province of the Palestine to prepare for this meeting, and had shockingly learned that in this world, the Jews never spread beyond the holy land.

Because of this, there were very few Jews in all of Europe, mostly as traveling merchants. However, this meant that a very large percentage of Palestine was Jewish, and they could not be ignored in the establishment of this new state. Thus, he put on a stern expression as he explained the reality to the people gathered.

"You know as well as I do that the Jewish people make up a significant minority in the province of Palestine. What do you suggest we do? Remove them from their homes? Where would we resettle them? No, the Jews will remain in their homeland, and since they are a sizeable minority, we must give them appropriate representation in the government of this new republic.

Need I remind you that our goal is to create a peaceful, holy land that represents the interests of all who have a claim and, therefore, is not a cause for anyone to fight over? This point is non-negotiable!"

The various Muslim leaders looked at each other with discomfort, as did Vetrans and Besarion. They had not even thought about what they would do with the Jewish minority. However, the Christian Kings were much more in line with Berengar's thinking, they had a claim to the land as well, and if they were going to make Palestine into an independent republic, they should be given appropriate representation for the size of their population.

As for Salan, he discussed in private with the other Muslim leaders about the possibility of accepting such a state. The other two fanatics beside him were vehemently against the idea of peaceful coexistence with the Jewish people, however after some skillful maneuvering on Salan's part, they ultimately agreed to it, even if they did so begrudgingly.

After seeing that the people gathered were becoming more agreeable to the idea, Berengar pulled out a few pieces of papers he had drafted the night before, which was essentially a carbon copy of the United States constitution as it was in its original form with a few minor alterations that applied to specifics about the nation they were creating.

"This is the constitution I drafted last night. Look it over and see if there are any major points of contention that we may address before we come to an agreement."

One by one, the men present read over the constitution, and voiced any minor changes they wanted. In the end, the government of the Free State of Jerusalem looked similar to the US Government in its early days but with a multi-party system in place.

When the men had voiced their last concerns, they then drafted a comprehensive peace treaty between the various Muslim Sultanates, the German Empire, the Byzantine Empire, and the Kingdom of Georgia. There was even a stipulation that ensured the Orthodox and Reformist Nations would remain neutral in the event of a Catholic war with the Islamic world.

Thus, after several days of heated negotiations, Berengar had successfully led a peaceful agreement between the Christian and Muslim worlds. How long this peace would last was uncertain, after all empires rose and fell, and it was uncertain if the Timurid's successors would honor these agreements. However, for the time being, the current Muslim states of the world had ceased their desire for jihad, and the Christian states outside of Catholicism had ceased their hostilities to Islam.

History would remember the part Berengar had played to bring the Abrahamic religions to a more peaceful state, and would consider the Treaty of Constantinople to be a critical aspect in maintaining peace within the near-east.