

# Steel 621

## Chapter 621 An Interesting Conversation with a Long Forgotten Diety Part I

Night had fallen and the German Emperor stood within the confines of an enormous pyramid which once acted as a temple to the mysterious goddess he had encountered in the ancient city of Teotihuacán. The interior was lit with an ethereal light, which he believed to be the work of the deity in question.

The most notable feature of the interior of this pyramid was not the ornate nature of its pristine fittings, but the countless spiders who crawled among the walls. When Berengar saw this, he felt as if he knew the identity of the woman who sat upon the altar with such grace. Ultimately, he could not contain his shock and voiced his thoughts aloud.

“You are the Great goddess of Teotihuacán, are you not?”

Though Berengar could not tell, the mysterious goddess smiled beneath her headdress before nodding her head in response.

“They said you were knowledgeable about this world’s history, and though it is not the same as the one you come from, it’s good to see that I am not entirely forgotten.”

Berengar was stunned. After all, historians knew very little about this goddess. Not even her name was recorded in history, and her existence was entirely a matter of speculation. Because of this, there were some crazy theories about what role she played in the ancient civilization, the most common one being she was a goddess of the underworld.

Among these strange theories was the idea that she may have been mixed gender. How historians came up with this theory, Berengar truthfully did not know, as pre-Columbian American history was not his forte. However, this became the most pertinent question in his mind, and he struggled to ask for clarification on the matter.

“Are you... you know.... a woman... down there?”

The goddess immediately broke out into a fit of laughter as she saw the awkward expression on the German Emperor’s face. After several moments, she calmed herself, before answering Berengar’s question with one of her own.

“Would you like to see?”

Berengar gulped his saliva as he heard such a response. He had to admit he was not expecting such a thing. Normally, a man would turn back at this point and rather live in the unknown than know the truth of such a matter. Perhaps it was because Baduhenna had gifted Berengar with the boon of courage, but he slowly nodded his head in silence.

When the goddess saw this, she smiled before parting her skirt, revealing a large, tanned manhood. Berengar almost did not believe his sight, for in the very next moment, the goddess hid her lower half with her skirt before teasing Berengar for his strange thought process.

“I have to admit you are a peculiar man. Most in your position would be curious about how they ended up in this world, who was pulling their strings, and what plans the gods might have for them. However, you are more interested in proving whether an obscure historical theory is correct... Well, are you satisfied with the answer?”

Berengar was struggling to come to terms with what he had just witnessed, and merely gazed at the goddess in shock. He simply nodded his head in silence, with a dumbfounded expression on his face. At the very least, a historical curiosity of his had been answered. Whether it was the answer, Berengar was hoping for only he would know.

Upon seeing Berengar’s response, the goddess climbed off her altar and approached Berengar with a seductive sway. She placed her palm on his shoulder as she whispered something into his ear. Do you want to read more chapters? Come to [www.fantasybooks.com](http://www.fantasybooks.com)

“Now that I’ve answered your question, how about you answer one of mine?”

Berengar did not know how to react to the goddess’ movements, but he chose not to provoke her and instead answered her in the affirmative.

“What would you like to know?”

The Great goddess of Teotihuacan removed her bird headdress to reveal an extremely feminine and beautiful face. She had long dark hair which fell to her hips, and dark chocolate eyes. Her skin was tanned like the native population, and if Berengar had not just witnessed her manhood, he would be certain she was the most beautiful woman he had ever encountered.

Aside from her face, she had a curvy body with a perfect hourglass figure which supported a substantial bosom that rivaled that of many of Berengar’s wives. In fact, he was actually curious what she would look like naked, considering she had the upper half of a woman, but the lower half of a man. When the goddess saw his inquisitive gaze, she merely smirked before teasing him.

“If you look at me with such longing, I might just have to play with you... However, that will have to wait until after we have had our little conversation. So tell me, what are your plans for the Aztec Empire?”

Berengar immediately snapped back to reality when he heard these words and reflected on the woman’s question with fierce intent. There were still a bunch of questions on his mind, but the key among them was the existence of the Aztec Empire in this world.

“So the Aztec Empire already exists in this timeline?”

The goddess nodded her head before responding to Berengar’s question.

“Indeed, in fact, that little girl you carried to these ruins is the third princess of their Empire. So allow me to reiterate, what are your plans for the Aztec Empire?”

Berengar thought long and hard about this question. He feared if he gave the wrong answer, the goddess would claim his life. Thus, in order to test the waters, he posed a purely hypothetical question.

“Would you be enraged if I my answer was conquest?”

The goddess did not behave as Berengar had expected and immediately giggled before retorting to his question.

“You think I care about the Aztecs? They aren’t even aware I exist, let alone worship me. No, the civilization that once saw me as their goddess is long extinct, do with the Aztecs as you please. I’m just curious whether you plan to follow the same path as your last life.”

Berengar was relieved when he realized she would not kill him for answering incorrectly, thus he did not hesitate to voice his honest thoughts on the matter.

“Initially, I had planned to conquer Mesoamerica. After all, there is a vast stockpile of resources here that I need for my Empire to truly prosper. However, as I dwell on this idea, such a thing seems not only unlikely but also the longest route to success. If I were truly to pursue the route of conquest, there is only one feasible way I could gain the resources in the region. That is through slave labor, and I am abhor such a thing.

The fact of the matter is I simply do not have the population to colonize Mesoamerica in this lifetime. Which is why I have considered an alternative, and that is to force the Aztec Empire beneath the heel of the Reich and make them acknowledge us as their suzerains.

In doing so, the Aztecs can continue to rule these lands, and use their massive hordes of slaves to mine the resource deposits I tell them to, where they will then pay tribute to the fatherland. This allows me to slowly and steadily introduce the gold and silver to my economy, in a way that won’t destroy it.”

The goddess merely smiled at Berengar and nodded her head in approval. After doing so, she grabbed hold of his head and kissed him on the lips. The moment she did so, Berengar felt a searing pain inside his body, and in the next moment, he fell to his knees, grasping his chest in indignation. He gazed up at the woman in fury as he interrogated her for her actions.

“What the hell did you just do to me?”

The goddess frowned and flicked the German Emperor’s forehead before scolding him for his tone.

“You should be thankful that I have taken an interest in you. If you must know, I removed the mark the Abrahamic god has branded upon your soul, and replaced it with my own. When your body finally passes away from this world, your soul will reside here with me for eternity. This is the greatest gift I can give you as a goddess of the underworld. Trust me, it is a better alternative than where you were headed...”

Berengar gazed at the woman in shock. He could not believe what he had just heard. Thus, he could not help but ask the question on his mind.

“The Abrahamic god is real?”

The goddess frowned when she heard this. Evidently, she was not on good terms with the Abrahamic god. However, ultimately, she sighed as she nodded her head before responding.

“Indeed, though, he is not nearly as powerful as his worshippers tend to believe. If anything, he is among the weakest of the gods, hence why he has no actual effect on the world outside of what his followers do in his name.

However, because your parents had you baptized at birth, he had a claim over your soul, and believe me when I say that old bastard had you destined for the pit. It's a shame, but the only way to remove a god's brand is for another more powerful deity of the underworld to replace it with their own."

Berengar gazed around at his surroundings and nodded his head in approval before making a joke about his situation.

"I suppose an eternity here is better than the pit, especially when I have such a beautiful goddess to look after me..."

The great goddess of Teotihuacán was awestruck when she heard this response. Even after revealing her lower half, this crazy bastard still had the gall to say such a thing. She could not help but blush before muttering something under her breath.

"Just don't go getting any other deity to replace my brand, or else I will never forgive you!"

Berengar gazed at the goddess with a questioning gaze. He had not quite heard what she said and asked for clarification.

"I'm sorry. What was that?"

In the very next instant, the goddess acted as if she had never said a thing.

"I didn't say anything..."

Berengar scoffed when he heard such shamelessness before switching the conversation to something more important. After all, this was the longest and most productive conversation he had with a deity, and he wanted to learn everything he could about the supernatural aspect of this world.

"So if the Abrahamic god exists, then why was I reincarnated into this world?"

Chapter 622: An Interesting Conversation with a Long Forgotten Deity Part II

The Great goddess of Teotihuacan gazed upon Berengar with a playful smirk before she responded to his question in a deliberately deflective manner.

"I'm sorry, but that is not something I can reveal. Do not fret, I am sure that in time you will find those who brought you here, and on that day you can ask them all the questions you want about your role in this world. For now, just know that your soul belongs to me, so do nothing that will bring me dishonor!"

In response to this, Berengar merely chuckled before responding to the deity's quip.

"Fine, I promise I won't do anything to dishonor your name..."

After this was said, the two of them shared a laugh, knowing full well that Berengar would not live up to that promise. When they had finally calmed down, the German Emperor asked the next most important question on his mind.

"So that girl I brought with me is a princess of the Aztec Empire? It's a damned good thing I didn't kill her..."

The goddess nodded her head before agreeing with what Berengar had said.

“Yeah, I believe that would have severely harmed your prospects of turning the Aztec Empire into a protectorate...”

Upon hearing this, Berengar sighed before gazing around the interior of the temple. He did not even know where to begin on his campaign to subjugate the Aztec empire. Eventually, he was forced to ask the goddess for her opinion.

“So what now?”

The goddess walked away from Berengar and sat back down on her altar in a suggestive state. She did not hesitate to respond to Berengar’s question with her opinion on how to proceed.

“For now, you two can stay here as long as you need. The girl is injured, is she not? She will need time to heal. Luckily for you, the flow of time moves slower in my domain than it does out there in the real world. What will appear to be a lifetime in this realm will be a matter of minutes outside. That’s why this abandoned city does not look the slightest bit decayed.”

It shocked Berengar when he heard this, and he immediately followed up with another question.

“Will I age while I am in this divine realm of yours?”

The goddess shook her head before she placed her chin on the palm of her hand. She took a few moments to look pretty before responding to Berengar’s question.

“Not at all. I have total control over everything within my domain, including whether you two grow older with time. If you work hard to please me, I assure you I will make it so you are every bit as young as the moment you stepped foot within my divine realm.”

Berengar chuckled when he heard this before raising a brow. Do you want to read more chapters? Come to [panda-novel.com](http://panda-novel.com)

“Please you how, exactly?”

The goddess looked at him with a seductive expression as she was deliberately vague about her answer.

“You will know soon enough. For now, you should use what spare time I have given you to mend that girl’s wound, and teach her your language. I am certain that will be useful for you in the future...”

This response intrigued Berengar, and he was quick to follow up her statement with a question.

“But we can communicate with each other now. Will that ability disappear when we leave your domain?”

In response to this, the goddess nodded her head before further explaining the matter.

“In my divine realm, the barrier of language does not exist, but the moment you two leave, you will be once more bound by that restriction. I am a goddess of the underworld. I do not have the means to grant you the boon of universal communication. If you want such a thing, you would have to seek out a god of knowledge.”

Berengar sighed in defeat as he heard this. If such a thing was true, then he had no choice but to follow the goddess's suggestion. After all, he needed a translator to effectively communicate with the Aztec Empire.

Of course, he still planned to wage war, as he knew the native empire would not submit without a proper show of force. Still, holding the princess captive, and using her to translate his demands, would be a powerful bargaining chip. With that in mind, Berengar nodded his head in silence as he came up with a plan. After doing so, he looked up at the goddess, who was smiling at him, and responded with his thoughts.

"Very well. Should we go retrieve the girl? I have much I wish to discuss with her."

However, the goddess response surprised Berengar as she was quick to decline the offer.

"You can go to her if you so wish, but I will not speak with her. By the time you two decide to leave this place, I will alter her memories so that she remembers nothing about this journey other than the time you two spent together. If I were to appear before her again, it would only complicate matters."

This answer perplexed Berengar, and he could not help but ask the question on his mind.

"What will you do when I am with the princess? Isn't it lonely to be here by yourself?"

In response to this question, the goddess merely scoffed before flicking Berengar on the nose yet again.

"I have been living here alone in this divine realm for an eternity by your mortal standards. I think I will be fine without you, besides it won't be long before you come scurrying for my favor. After all, I know how precious your lifespan is to you."

Berengar chuckled when he heard this before responding with another question.

"What about when I leave this place? You will be alone again for some time..."

In response to this, the goddess laughed before making a joke about Berengar's mortality.

"A few decades at most. I am a patient woman, and your soul now belongs to me. It won't be too long before you have returned to my domain, where we will spend eternity together."

Berengar did not know how to respond to this. He simply could not comprehend the humor of a divine being such as this goddess. Instead, he merely sighed before switching the subject once more.

"Alright, I will go find the princess, until we meet again, goddess..."

After Berengar was long out of sight, the goddess sighed heavily before collapsing onto her altar. She had a defeated expression on her face as she questioned her actions.

"What is wrong with me? Why did I save his soul from damnation?"

After saying this, she gazed down at her lower body and noticed that she was pitching a tent. It was at that moment she laughed to herself and commented on the whole situation with a heavy sigh.

"Of course that's why..."

Berengar did not know, but the mixed-gender goddess fantasized about him in his absence. As for the man in question, he rushed down from the temple and found the Aztec Princess still asleep against the side of a building.

It was not until he touched her forehead did she fully awake. Her first reaction was to gaze around her and witness the splendor of the ancient city of Teotihuacan, which was still in its prime. A single gasp escaped her breath, followed by the thoughts contained within her mind.

“So this is the city of the gods, huh?”

After saying this, she remembered the strange woman in the bird headdress who had appeared out of thin air and immediately looked towards Berengar before asking the question on her mind.

“Where is she?”

Berengar chuckled in response before giving a bullshit explanation to appease the Aztec Princess.

“She’s gone. There is nothing you need to worry about. You won’t be seeing her again anytime soon.”

The warrior princess gazed at Berengar with confusion before trying to stand up. However, in the next moment, she immediately realized that she was still injured and fell to her knees while grimacing in pain. Berengar gazed upon the girl with some sympathy and offered once more to carry her on his back. Which she begrudgingly accepted.

“Thank you...”

Berengar smiled as he lifted the woman onto her back before introducing himself.

“I am Berengar von Kufstein, what is your name?”

The Aztec princess gazed upon the German Emperor from behind with a complicated expression. Ultimately, she revealed the truth of her identity.

“Tlexictli...”

Berengar nodded his head when he heard this before responding to the girl with a friendly smile.

“Well, Tlexictli, let’s go find a place to stay. It appears like this fog will not disappear anytime soon, so we should pick a lodging where you can properly rest.”

The Aztec princess remained silent as Berengar chose the building closest to the temple of the great goddess of Teotihuacan. After everything the deity he had said, he knew he would have to curry for her favor in order to save his lifespan from the unique flow of time within this divine realm.

In the coming days, Berengar would provide basic medical aid to the Aztec Princess’ sprained ankle and instruct her on how to speak German. He would also spend whatever time he could spare visiting the great goddess of Teotihuacan in his attempts to appease her. After all, his very existence depended on it.

Chapter 623 A Solemn Farewell

Hours had passed since Honoria and her search party first descended into the river valley in search of the missing German Emperor, and yet they still had not found any additional clues. While this was a short period of time in the real world, it was several months within the Divine Realm of the Great Goddess of Teotihuacan.

The Byzantine Princess was just about to give up her search when she found something of interest near the waterfall. There were signs of a struggle, and a primitive obsidian ax lying on the ground. Clearly, Berengar and whoever he was chasing after had fought in this location. Honoria instantly called out to her comrades, signalling her findings.

“Over here! I think I found something!”

The soldiers under Honoria’s command quickly followed her orders and investigated the scene of the conflict. It did not take much effort for them to see the footprints leading to the nearby cliff. What was curious was that there was only a single pair of tracks, which filled Honoria’s mind with a sense of confusion. There was no sign of remains, and thus she could not fathom what had occurred with the person Berengar had fought with.

However, now was not the time to worry about such concerns. Since Honoria had followed Berengar this far, she would not falter now that she had come across a cliff. With fierce determination in her mint green eyes, the byzantine princess grasped hold of the ledge and began her ascent.

The rest of the search party followed their commander’s actions and slowly but surely scaled the edge of the cliff beside Honoria. It took some serious effort, but eventually the unit rose to the plateau above, only to be met by a large and untamed woodland.

Honoria sighed in disbelief as she witnessed this. She had no idea what path Berengar had taken as his tracks seemingly vanished the moment she climbed to the top of the cliff. She could not help but vent her frustrations as she gazed into the myriad of directions that displayed themselves to her.

“God dammit! Where the fuck did he go?”

A nearby soldier broke the awkward silence that filled the air after her rant with a suggestion on how to continue.

“We should split off into smaller groups and search the immediate vicinity. He could not have gotten far...”

The byzantine princess took a deep breath to calm her nerves before nodding her head in agreement.

“Very well. We will follow your suggestion. You three are with me, the rest of you fan out, we must find the Emperor before it is too late!”

After saying this, Honoria headed straight into the woodlands, unaware of the nearby presence of the great goddess of Teotihuacan. A smirk etched itself on her beautiful face as she once more vanished into thin air, returning to her heavenly domain.

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In the Divine Realm of the great goddess of Teotihuacan, Berengar lie on a hammock he had built under the light of the sun. It had been six months within this realm, and he had spent nearly every day doing



four things. Helping the Aztec princess heal from her injury, teaching her German, learning her language, and currying the goddesses' favor, which usually came in the form of an oil massage.

Aside from this, he merely slept, as all of his needs were cared for by the goddess. Food, water, waste removal, the goddess could simply conjure and disperse such things within her realm at will. His life had been relatively peaceful in this domain, and he had to admit that he enjoyed the brief vacation from warfare.

However, just when he was about to fall asleep, the goddess appeared before him and ended his serene lifestyle with a shocking revelation.

"Your wife has entered the boundaries of the ancient city. Your time here in my heavenly domain has come to an end. I guess this is good-bye, I must admit it was fun while it lasted..."

Berengar merely grinned as he rose from his hammock and hugged the goddess with a gentle embrace. He had grown rather close to this deity during his stay and thus he assured her that everything would be fine as he said his goodbyes.

"I'll be back, eventually. After all, you have a claim on my soul. Sooner or later, I will perish from this world, and my soul will return to your realm." Want to see more chapters? Please visit [panda-novel.com](http://panda-novel.com)

A bitter smile formed on the goddess's face as she shook her head in silence. Before Berengar could react, she kissed him on his lips, where he felt a searing pain in his heart. With a look of shock on his face, he gazed upon the woman one last time as he suddenly entered the real world. The last words spoken with the mysterious woman left him hollow.

"Your soul is your own. I hereby relinquish my claim over it. You are now free to follow whatever deity you choose... This will likely be our last encounter. I wish you the best of luck in all of your endeavors. You are going to need it..."

With that said, Berengar entered the real world and gazed upon the ruins of the ancient city with a forlorn expression. He was not expecting such an outcome to occur. He could only sigh in defeat as he gazed off into the cloudy sky above, thinking about the time he had spent within the divine realm and the goddess who ruled over it.

After several moments of silence, Berengar gazed over to his right and saw the Aztec Princess asleep. As the goddess had proclaimed, the girl had lost her memories of the heavenly domain, and could only remember the time she had spent with Berengar, and the things he had taught her.

He quickly walked over to the woman and knelt down next to her. Just when he was about to wake her up, he heard a familiar voice call out to him from the distance.

"Berengar! Thank God you are alive!"

Honorina rushed towards her husband as fast as she could before jumping into his arms, nearly knocking the man over as she did so. She assaulted him with a passionate kiss as she grabbed the back of his golden hair and smothered him with affection.

The search party who accompanied her averted their gazes and instead looked upon the ruins of the ancient city with awestruck eyes. They could not believe such a massive metropolis existed in such a primitive part of the world.

Eventually Berengar managed to pry himself away from Honoria and ask her what had happened.

“What’s going on? Why are you here?”

The Byzantine Princess did not hesitate to reveal the effort she had gone through to track him down.

“I was worried sick about you. After coming across so many dead bodies, I thought for sure I had lost you, but you’re okay! You bastard, I can’t believe you would do this to me!”

Berengar chuckled when he heard this before wrapping his arms around his wife and calming her heart.

“I’m fine, I just got a little lost is all…”

It was at this moment that the Aztec Princess awoke. The first thing she witnessed was the sight of a bunch of German soldiers, armed to the teeth, and pointing their weapons at her. She immediately flinched out of instinct and hid behind Berengar like a frightened child while questioning what was transpiring.

“Berengar? What’s going on?”

Though her German was shaky, she had clearly spoken in the language of the invaders, which was something that shocked the soldiers and Honoria alike. The Byzantine princess became furious as she saw how close this savage woman was with her husband and began to interrogate the man for answers.

“Who is she? How does she speak German? What the hell have you been up to in your absence?”

Berengar merely sighed as he gazed off into the distance towards the temple of the great goddess of Teotihuacan. His response had a hint of melancholy in its tone.

“It is a long story. Just know that she is a princess of a mighty Empire, and she is now our captive.”

When Honoria heard this, she instantly issued a command to the nearby German soldiers.

“Restrain her!”

Though Tlaxictli attempted to resist, she was quickly overpowered by the troops, and wrestled to the ground where she gazed at Berengar with confusion in her eyes.

“What’s going on? Why are you doing this?”

Berengar merely sighed as he gazed at the Aztec Princess with a hint of pity in his eyes before expressing his plans.

“I am sorry, but as of right now, you are my prisoner, to be used in negotiations with your father. I know he will not relent without a show of force, and I intend to display the full might of my army. You will be well looked after in my care, so do not resist.”

After saying this, Berengar did not wait for a response and merely issued his orders to the soldiers who had accompanied him.

“Now that we have captured the Aztec Princess, we will return to our camp and fortify our position. The enemy can not be made aware of our existence until we have secured the beachhead.”

With that said, Berengar led his soldiers out of the ruins of the ancient city of Teotihuacan. He looked upon the city one last time as he wore a bitter smile, before pressing on back to the beach. He would forever remember the days he had spent inside the heavenly realm, and was grateful for the gift the goddess had given him.

#### Chapter 624 The Crusaders Arrive in the Holy Land

The calm breeze of the salty air kissed the rosy cheeks of the French King. At the moment Aubry stood onboard the bow of his flagship vessel with a dignified pose as the sturdy carrack approached the shores of the Holy Land.

A Crusade had been declared, and France was not the only Catholic Kingdom to take up arms to reclaim the holy Land from the unholy alliance of the Eastern Church and its newfound Muslim allies. Aubry was merely the first among many who would soon arrive in the Holy Land in an attempt to enforce the Papacy's claim over the region.

The French King wore a pretty smile on his effeminate face as sniffed the salty air of the Mediterranean sea with his dainty nose. If one were ignorant of his gender, they might accidentally assume that he was, in fact, a woman. However, despite his feminine appearance, he was one hundred percent a man, or at the very least a male, so to speak. After all, there wasn't an ounce of manliness in the boy King's body.

It was a striking contrast to see such a feminine male dressed in the armor worn by the French Knights. Steel clad his petite shoulders and dainty arms as if it were a second skin. Over his delicate chest was a hardened steel breastplate that had ironically been forged in the lands of the German Empire. There was simply no substitute for German steel, and the French King knew it.

Over the steel breastplate was a tabard bearing the colors of the House de Valois. These were the symbols of Aubry's ancestors who would surely be rolling in their graves should they be aware that such a girlish member of their dynasty now ruled over their lands.

Speaking of the boy's ancestors, it had been since been a tradition for the Kings of France to embark a crusade, and Aubry had decided with this campaign he would fulfill his part. Thus, he had an excited smile on his feminine face as his vessels approached the shores of the Holy Land.

Because Berengar had established the Holy Land as a Free State protected by both the Byzantine and Timurid Empires, the Papacy had declared a crusade, and currently there was a sizeable gathering of Catholic Warriors on the coastline just outside the borders of Egypt.

Many of these Catholic Warriors were armed with the newest weapons produced by their kingdoms. Most of which were firearms designed based on the German arkebuse, which had been sold throughout Europe for the past few years. The French Armies were no exception to this rule.

After all, even though Aubry's enemies had agreed to a ceasefire until the German Empire was dismantled. He knew they were manufacturing and buying their own firearms. With Berengar's intervention in the timeline, firearms had become a major focus of development among the European Countries a century earlier than they normally would have been.

It was because of this that the Kingdom of France found itself in a precarious position. Though France was openly hostile towards their German neighbors, they simply lacked the intelligent minds to replicate the weapons they had purchased. After all, many of its greatest scientists had fled to the rebelling regions of Aquitaine and Burgundy.

Ultimately, this had left Aubry with no choice but to break the international sanctions placed against Germany and procure his weapons from his greatest enemy. Despite suffering humiliation at the hands of the German Emperor, and enduring the imprisonment of his sister, Aubry had to kneel before the Reich if he wished to compete with the enemies within his own domain.

However, it was because of this mass procurement of firearms and artillery from Germany that the boy King was confident he and his armies would prevail against those of the Byzantine and Timurid Empire. Thus, the moment the ship landed, the French King disembarked from his vessel as if he were a conquering hero. With an authoritative stride, he led his proud knights into the staging grounds, where the Grandmaster of the Hospitaller Order greeted him with a forced smile.

“King Aubry, it is good to see you. I am glad that we have the fabled strength of the French Knights at our side as we reclaim the Holy Land for God and his people.”

This was obviously a false greeting, however no matter how much the Grandmaster of the Hospitaller Order despised the French King and his sinful lifestyle, he was forced to suppress his spite and greet him as the King he was.

Aubry was either unaware of the disdain this man had for him or just simply didn't care. Instead, he merely nodded and smiled as he proclaimed his reason for personally leading his soldiers into the fray.

“It is good to see you to Grandmaster. Like my ancestors before me, I have taken up the cross for the Crusade. I look forward to proving myself to my ancestors, and to the Lord god almighty himself as we lay waste to the enemies of Christ.”

The Grandmaster of the Hospitaller Order had to choke back the urge to scold the boy for such hypocritical statements and instead shifted the subject to something completely unrelated.

“If you don't mind me asking, with your presence here in the Holy Land, who leads the great Kingdom of France in your absence?”

A smug smirk curved itself upon the French King's lips as he bought into the obvious deflection and proudly announced his choice.

“My sister Sibilla has been named Regent in absence, she has suffered greatly at the hands of the German Empire, and though she refuses to tell me what she has endured, a fire has been lit in her soul, and with it a determination to witness the collapse of the Reich.”

With the mentioning of the German Empire, the Grandmaster could no longer contain his fury, and thus vented his frustrations on the Germans, who were conveniently absent and incapable of hearing his slander.

“Bah! Do not speak of those Heretics. In a few years, they will get what they deserve. For now, we must undo their evil acts within Jerusalem. The Holy Land can not be allowed to be tarnished by those sinful Germans!”

Aubry smiled and nodded his head in agreement as he heard this sentiment before voicing his opinion on the matter.

“Indeed, I look forward to the day that I can bring justice to my sister for the crimes that she has endured!”

As the French King and the Hospitaller Grandmaster conversed about their battle strategies, a scout in the distance gazed through a pair of binoculars. This man was a soldier of the Byzantine Army, and if not for the military aid provided by their German allies, he would not have such advanced technology.

He witnessed the arrival of the French King, and his retinue of knights with a frown on his face. The enemy’s numbers were growing, and despite this, the Byzantine and Timurid Emperors had chosen to sit back and wait for them to strike. The scout was furious with such a decision, but he could only bite his tongue. A second scout who stood nearby immediately asked the question on his mind as he, too, gazed upon the scene with his own pair of binoculars.

“How many of them do you think there are?”

The First scout continued to observe the scene, and the arrival of more ships in the bay before expressing his thoughts.

“Currently, there are about twenty-five thousand, but with all the ships on the horizon, I can guess we will easily be facing a force of twice that amount, perhaps even more.”

The Second scout merely chuckled when he heard this before responding with a sadistic grin on his face.

“Boy, are they going to be in for a rude awakening? It is time for the Catholic and Muslim worlds to both bear witness to the military might we have built up these past few years.”

When the first scout heard this, he immediately slapped the man over the side of his head before scolding him.

“Idiot! They have muskets too, and though ours have superior range, their numbers will provide a significant problem. This will not be a once sided slaughter like you believe it will!”

The other Scout merely scoffed before responding with a lax attitude.

“That’s none of my concern. I’ll leave the fighting to our infantry...”

It was after this statement was made that the first scout packed his binoculars away and walk towards his horse which was hidden nearby.

“Let’s go, we have to report this news to the strategos.”

After saying this, the two scouts rode off into the distance, heading towards the location of the Strategos who had been tasked with leading the Byzantine Armies against the Catholic forces. As for the French, they were merely the first of the Catholic Kingdoms to arrive. In the coming weeks, more and more kingdoms and their armies would arrive in the Holy Land seeking to challenge the Byzantine and Timurid alliance for control of the Holy Land.

Chapter 625 A Wife’s Grief

In the city of Kufstein, a dense torrent of rain bombarded the denizens of the Austrian Capital. It was an utterly depressing atmosphere as the wind and rain swept away any stains that may have existed in the city's streets.

Linde gazed out the windows of the Royal Palace with a virgin strawberry daiquiri in her hand and a sullen expression on her pretty face. There was nothing she wanted more than to drink an actual alcoholic beverage at this moment, however she was pregnant with what could very well be her beloved's last child, and she would never threaten the safety of such a precious gift.

It had been nearly twelve hours since she had received word that Berengar had gone missing shortly after arriving in the New World, and she was in a state of complete and total despair. As she lounged away in the bar of the Royal Palace, she sighed to herself. Without her noticing, Hans had approached and gazed upon his mother's look of grief with a painful heart.

He did not know what had caused her to end up in such a depressing state, but he knew it probably had something to do with his father. Thus, the boy casually approached his mother, and grabbed hold of her dainty hand, instantly gaining her attention. With a forced smile, he tried to comfort the woman for whatever may plague her mind.

"It'll be okay mommy, whatever happens you still have me!"

Such kind words from her young child brought a bitter smile to Linde's face as she stroked the boy's strawberry blonde hair. While Hans had been gifted with her brilliant hair color, he had received the eyes of his father, and she gazed deeply into those sapphire gems as tears formed within her own eyes. The Second Empress of Austria struggled to fight back her tears, but in the end, the waterworks presented themselves.

"Oh Berengar... please be alright!"

It was at this point Hans knew something had happened to his father, and could not help but ask about it.

"Did something happen to father?"

Linde had not revealed to anyone the news of Berengar's disappearance. She had pledged to inform no one until they had found the Emperor or his remains. However, when she heard Hans's question, she felt guilt over not telling the boy of what had happened to his father. Thus, she wiped the tears from her eyes as she mustered the courage to speak the truth.

"Your father has gone missing..."

Upon hearing this, Hans was flabbergasted. Berengar couldn't be missing. As long as the boy could understand the German language, he had heard stories of his father's bravery on the field of battle, and his courage in the face of the unknown. As far as the boy was concerned, his father was unkillable, a living legend. He had never once considered the possibility that his father would disappear or lose his life on one of his campaigns.

However, to hear such words filled Hans with an overwhelming sense of dread. As intelligent as the young Prince was, he lacked the emotional maturity to handle such grim matters and immediately lashed out at his mother for telling him such lies.

“That’s impossible! Father can’t be dead! He’s invincible!”

When Linde heard this rant, she became visibly enraged and in the heat of the moment backhanded her son across his face before screaming at him.

“Don’t you dare say that! Your father isn’t dead, he’s just missing! He will return to us safe and sound, as he always does!”

Hans was once more filled with disbelief as he felt the sting on his tiny cheek. For as long as he had lived, his mother had never struck him. She had only shown him the loving and kindness that he had taken advantage of. However, he could see the fury in the woman’s eyes at the mere suggestion that her husband may have lost his life. Such a ferocious gaze filled the boy’s heart with fear, resulting in him breaking out into tears.

When Linde realized what she had done, she climbed out of her lounge chair and knelt down beside her baby boy, stuffing his head into her substantial bosom as she stroked his silky hair, apologizing for her actions.

“I’m sorry, Hans. I don’t know what came over me. I didn’t mean to hurt you. Here, let mommy take a look!”

The boy instantly revealed his reddened cheek and gazed upon his mother with a sense of intimidation he had never felt before. In that moment, he winced in pain, afraid that she might bare her fangs at him again. However, instead she merely kissed his wound, and in doing so made him feel a bit better.

Ultimately, the loving scene was interrupted by the Deputy Director of German Imperial Intelligence, who held a report in her hands. When she saw how her superior was acting, she merely coughed, alerting the woman to her presence. When Linde witnessed Hemma standing in the doorway of the bar area, her expression turned grim. She immediately gave an order to her young son, who was still latching onto her like a lamprey.

“Hans, go to your room. I promise I will meet you there in a bit, and will make you some grilled cheese sandwiches...”

Hans knew that this interruption was most likely an update on his father’s disappearance and though he wanted to stay behind and listen to the news, he feared his mother might strike him again if he protested, and thus, he simply bowed his head before scurrying off.

“Okay mommy...”

It was only after Linde was sure that Hans was not within earshot that she steeled her resolve and asked for the update.

“What’s the news? Did you find him?”

When Hemma saw the worried expression on Linde’s face, she merely sighed before giving her all the information she had received.

“They found him alive, and unharmed quite a bit away from the coastline. He appears to have found the ruins of an ancient civilization. If the reports are accurate, it is a city larger than ancient Rome. I swear only Berengar could go missing and stumble upon such a lost civilization...”

Linde nearly passed out from the relief in her heart, however despite maintaining her consciousness, she lost control of her legs and instantly fell to the ground where Hemma helped her up to her feet. The redheaded beauty felt as if this news had lifted a giant weight from her heart. She could only smile with pride and relief as she thought about what adventures her man had been up to.

“Oh Berengar... Thank God you are alive...”

The moment she said these words, the crackle of thunder resounded in the air, as if such words had angered the deity she mentioned. However, such a thought would not appear in Linde’s pretty head, as she did not know the reasoning as to why the Abrahamic God might be enraged by the mere suggestion that he helped save such an apostate. After saying this, Linde gained control of her legs and was able to stand on her own. She bowed her head respectfully to her deputy director and thanked her for the good news.

“Thank you Hemma, if you had not delivered me such information I fear what I may have done in my grief...”

Hemma was shocked. She had never seen Linde in such a disturbed state before, thus she could not help but question the condition of her boss.

“Your Majesty, are you going to be alright?”

Linde wiped a tear from her eye as she nodded her head thrice in response to this question.

“Of course! Now that I know Berengar is safe and sound, I will be fine. If you will excuse me, I need to inform my son. In my despair, I may have told him his father is missing and I do not wish for him to worry any longer...”

After saying this, Linde scurried off towards Hans’ room, where she found the boy curled up in the corner holding onto a painted wooden figure of his father. It was a common toy among young boys within the German Empire, and the Prince of Germany was bawling as he stared at it with grief in his heart. The moment the door opened, the boy looked to his mother for visual cues, and when he saw her brimming with a beautiful smile on her face, he sighed in relief.

“Thank God... He is okay...”

The moment the boy said this, thunder crackled in the air once more, but he did not pay the slightest attention to it. He was merely happy that his father was alive and well. Although he also felt a sense of fury at his mother for worrying him over, nothing. Linde, of course, took this opportunity to hug her son and confirm his suspicions.

“Your father is alright, he has been found, and he is unharmed. In fact, if the reports are true, he has even found the ruins of a lost and ancient civilization during his absence. Isn’t he such an amazing explorer?”

Hans could only laugh as he heard how his mother rationalized the man’s disappearance. In the end, he smiled and nodded his head in agreement before repeating his mother’s words.

“Yes, father is an amazing explorer indeed...”



After hearing this, Linde wiped the tears from her son's eyes before placing his toy on his nightstand. She had a pep in her step, the likes the boy had not seen in some time, as she latched onto his hand and dragged him towards the dining area.

"I believe mommy promised you some grilled cheese sandwiches, shall we?"

Hans simply looked back towards the wooden figure, which represented his father, and nodded his head with a smile on his face before responding to his mother.

"Let's!"

## Chapter 626: An Empire's Progress

While Berengar was off in the New World on another one of his escapades, he had left his chancellor, uncle, and father-in-law Otto von Graz in charge of his Empire. If there was one thing Berengar admired about the man is he had a work ethic on par with himself. Thus, it was no surprise that the man spent a significant amount of effort maintaining control over the Empire's various realms, and signing bills into law.

At the moment, he was looking at an expense report regarding the expansion of the train network. It had been over a year since Berengar united the Empire, and among his largest and most expensive projects was the existence of the National Railway. It had made significant progress over the past year and now connected much of the Southern German cities together. Currently, the department of transportation was requesting a certain amount of funds to expand the railway into Prussia's borders.

Otto carefully looked over the expenses before signing his name on the paper. After doing this, he stacked it into his pile of outbound paperwork, which would be later collected by a clerk and administered to the appropriate departments. After doing this, he grabbed hold of another piece of legislation and noticed it was an expense report regarding the Kingdom of Prussia.

King Eckhard von Marienburg was requesting an increase in funding for the construction of his shipyards. The plan was to establish a Baltic Fleet to maintain control over the Northern seas. After carefully examining the requested amount, he signed away his signature once more before looking at the next piece of legislation.

This next piece of legislation was a request by the Reichstag to approve the funding for a series of canals that would connect the Danube to the Rhine, and the North Sea to the Baltic Sea. Such a thing would increase trade via rivers throughout the borders of the empire and free up a large section of railway traffic. Thus, Otto did not hesitate to sign his approval for such a thing.

After signing this document, he realized it was his last piece of paperwork for the day and quickly pulled out a flask from his drawer, taking a hearty gulp of the fiery alcoholic liquid before stashing it away once more. A heavy sigh escaped the chancellor's lips as he complained about his lot in life.

"Berengar, how the hell do you get so much paperwork done each day? I swear to God, every time you leave on one of your adventures, I'm left drowning in a mountain of this shit!"

After saying this, the sound of his grandfather clock struck the newest hour, and the man gazed over towards its display in shock.

“Dear God, is it such a time already? I’m going to be late!”

After saying this, Otto quickly grabbed hold of his coat and donned it over his torso before running off from his office and towards a nearby restaurant where he had planned to meet two of his daughters for a meal.

By the time he arrived, the two women were sitting next to each other, and much to Otto’s bewilderment, were being quite cordial with one another. Was he dreaming or were Adela and Ava actually on good terms? He quickly sat down at the table and apologized to his two daughters for his tardiness.

“I’m sorry for being late. There is just so much work I have to do these days. You can thank your husband for that, Adela...”

The German Empress merely wore a pretty smile as she assured her father his punctuality was not of significant importance to her.

“It’s alright father, I know you are very busy overseeing Berengar’s work. Ava and I were just reminiscing about when we were younger.”

Otto stared strangely at his two daughters. They had never been so agreeable to each other since as long as he had known them. Ava was roughly the same age as Berengar, and despite this acted like a petulant child most of the time, whereas Adela had always been suffering from her torment. Thus, the old man could not help but question what had mended their differences.

“So, I have to ask, how exactly are the two of you sitting here right now, without making a scene?”

Ava blushed in embarrassment when she heard her father’s words and looked away. Meanwhile, Adela merely chuckled as she drank from her glass.

“Ava proved me wrong. I thought she couldn’t handle looking after the kids, but she did a splendid job while I was away on my honeymoon. I figured if I could trust her with looking after my children, then perhaps we could bury the hatchet.”

Ava looked out the window and gazed into the bustling streets of Kufstein with an expression of awe on her face. She could not help but voice her thoughts on the changes to the city over the years.

“I can’t believe that this is the same small agricultural town whose fields I used to frolic in when I was young. I will never know how Berengar managed to turn this entire valley into a thriving metropolis.”

When Otto heard this, he reflected on how rapidly the city had been developed and nodded his head in agreement.

“It is truly mystifying. The man has proven me wrong on so many occasions, to think he used to be such a foolish and sickly child. Sometimes I wonder what could have possibly possessed him to become the man he is today... It is a damn shame...”

When Ava and Adela heard this last part, they looked up at their father and voiced their confusion simultaneously.

“What is?”

It was at this moment Otto sighed and glared at his eldest daughter before lecturing on her past actions.

“It’s a damn shame that you had to ruin your relationship with Berengar. If I had known that Berengar would one day be the Emperor and legalize Polygamy, I would have gladly given both my daughters to him!”

Adela was shocked to hear her father say this, and Ava was overcome with embarrassment. It was her greatest regret in life, breaking her childhood engagement to Berengar and going after a dimwitted count’s son. Now her husband was a disgrace, and her ex-fiance was the wealthiest and most powerful man in the world. Adela gazed over at Ava and saw the complicated expression on her face. She could not help but voice the confusion in her head.

“You don’t still have feelings for him, do you?”

The busty, blonde-haired mother quickly went on the defensive as she denied the allegations, but it was not a convincing facade in the slightest.

“What? Of course not! He’s your husband. I could never have feelings for him... Why has he asked about me?”

Adela and Otto gazed at Ava with utter shock. The two of them voiced their thoughts on the matter at the exact same time.

“How shameless...”

Otto immediately began to castigate his daughter as he heard such shameless words.

“Ava, you are already married. Don’t get any idea of complicating matters for your sister...”

Ava immediately began to pout as she defended her words.

“I know that, but Wolfgang is such a dullard, and I think he’s now impotent as he hasn’t been able to get it up in some time... Oh Adela, won’t you please share your husband with me, just once! I promise I will never approach him again after that!”

Adela felt like she needed a stiff drink after hearing this, but she would not do so. After all, much like Linde, she was currently pregnant with Berengar’s child. Instead, the young Empress of Germany reprimanded her elder sister like their father had done previously.

“It sure sucks to be you, Ava, but you made your choice, and now you have to deal with the consequences. I will not share my man with you, just because your pathetic excuse of a husband can no longer satisfy you.”

Ava sulked in indignation, uttering a single word as she dwelled on her life’s mistakes.

“Hmph, it’s just not fair!”

After she said that, Adela and Otto merely rolled their eyes. It would appear that Ava would never mature. Adela was not entirely angry with Ava. After hearing her complaints, she could only imagine how frustrated the woman was.

However, although Adela had become accepting of sharing her husband with his other wives and his mistress. She would never accept the idea of sharing Berengar with Ava. If she allowed such a thing to happen, the spoiled bitch would never learn her lesson.

As for Otto, he felt like he was about to have a stroke. Was he now so old that he was out of date with society? Were such conversations normal among siblings these days? Or is what his eldest daughter had just said equally scandalous as it would have been in his youth? He did not know the answer to any of these questions, but what he did know was that he needed a drink to cope with it.

Thus, the Chancellor of Germany immediately ordered a stiff drink to calm his nerves as he continued to have a meal with his two daughters. As painful as listening to these two girls bicker was, it was still better than the mountain of paperwork that awaited him on the morrow.

#### Chapter 627 Incorporating Recently Conquered Ground

Within the southern lands of Iberia, the sun gleamed down upon the city of Granada. After centuries of warfare in Iberia under the goal of reconquering the region under Catholic Control, the Moors had proven victorious.

Such a feat was impossible without the massive military aid provided by the German Empire and the Schemes of its Kaiser. This was a fact recognized not only by the young Sultan of the newly reformed Al-Andalus, but also the people who dwelled within the lands. Moors cheered Berengar's name as if he was a hero, while the Catholic Iberians cursed him to damnation with their malicious prayers to an absent God.

While the people of Iberia came to terms with the outcome of the centuries long Reconquista, Hasan sat back in the seat of the power of his newly established Empire. The Sultanate of Al-Andalus now held every bit of territory within the Iberian Peninsula, and though some regions were in open arms, most notably in small sections of Portugal and most of Spain. The restoration of Al-Andalus had been completed.

Of course, rather than mend the wounds that divided the population of this newfound Empire, Hasan was enjoying the lavish lifestyle that came with being an emperor alongside one of the men who had made it entirely possible. With a wine filled chalice in one hand, and a cigar in another, Hasan celebrated his victory alongside the German Field Marshal who had aided him in his efforts.

"General Adelbrand, I can't say how much you have helped me in this war. Reports from the front lines say that the last resistance in Andorra has fallen, and the nobles in charge have surrendered their territory to Al-Andalus. Though we may deal with some minor rebellions in the near future, we can successfully say that our goals have been accomplished. How can I ever repay you, and your Kaiser, for that matter?"

Adelbrand took a sip of the fortified wine as he dwelled on the subject at hand. His mind had previously been more occupied with the stabilization of the region, knowing full well that his Kaiser would command him to stay until the last vestige of rebellion had been snuffed out. He did not expect to be rewarded when his job was yet to be completed. Nevertheless, something immediately caught his interest and thus he voiced his desires.

"I understand that you have given a particularly large Villa on the beaches of Gibraltar to my Kaiser. I myself would not mind a coastal estate, perhaps in Portugal? As for the Kaiser's demands, all he asks is open access through the strait of Gibraltar and that you allow us to build a naval port in the area. We will be happy to lease the land from you, if that is what you desire."

Hasan was in a rather generous mood and thought little of this demand. Thus, he simply nodded his head with a wide grin on his face before nonchalantly agreeing to the request.

"Consider your personal request approved. Find the land you want and I will give it to your house. As for Gibraltar, I would have to speak with your Kaiser personally about this issue, but I see no reason to refuse his request. We just need to discuss some minor details of the matter. When you next speak to your master, you can inform him of my decision."

Such an agreeable response was out of Adelbrand's expectations, thus he wore an emphatic smile as she shook Hasan's hands and thanked him for his generosity.

"Truly, your generosity astounds, your majesty."

Hasan merely smiled and nodded his head in acceptance of the compliments. Adelbrand was a man he greatly respected, and desired to keep within his lands for many years to come. Thus, the next topic he shifted to was more personal in nature.

"Have you ever thought of marrying an Iberian woman? A lot of men have done in this conflict, leaving me with more men than women. I would be honored to give you the woman of your dreams from within my realm. After all, you are allowed to have up to five wives in the German Empire. Isn't that correct?"

Adelbrand could immediately see what Hasan was planning and politely declined in a deliberately vague manner while shaking his head.

"While it is true that we are permitted up to five wives, I honestly have never thought of the idea if you had not suggested it. However, I am getting old, and soon it will be time to start a family, so perhaps I will take your words into consideration."

Upon hearing this, Hasan simply nodded his head in silence while taking a sip from his drink. After several moments, Adelbrand shifted the conversation to something more meaningful.

"So now that you control all of Al-Andalus, what are your plans for the future?"

Hasan had a giddy expression on his face when he heard this question. As if he could not wait for someone to bring it up. With a smug smile on his face, he announced his intentions to the German General.

"Of course I wish to expand. Perhaps North Africa could be a fitting addition to my new empire. If there is one thing Berengar has taught me over the years, it is that conquest is addictive. You can never have enough land and resources under your control!"

Adelbrand merely rolled his eyes when he heard this statement. Did this man really think he was anything like Berengar? The two rulers were completely different. Hasan was a lazy man who basked in luxury while his competent subordinates ran the show.

Whereas Berengar was a hardworking man who micromanaged every facet of his Empire that he could. Not to mention the fact that Berengar led his men from the front lines in war, while Hasan delegated the responsibility to his Generals. The two rulers were about as different in their approach as they could be. Thus, Adelbrand simply kept his opinion to himself and instead advised the sultan about his foolish ambitions.

“If I were you, I would definitely wait until you have settled your territory. You have a lot of internal problems that you will have to face that Berengar does not. For starters, you will be ruling over a diverse empire filled with different ethnicities, cultures, and religions. Getting them all to universally accept your reign as legitimate will be difficult, to say the least.

A display of force may be necessary in the early days as you stamp out rebellion, but if you use too much of it, you will surely foster resentment among your conquered peoples. Creating generations of bad blood that could lead to revolution further down the line, and ultimately destabilize your Empire.

If you wish to maintain the integrity of your dynasty, you will need to heal the wounds that you have created with your conquests. The best way to do that would be to allow religious freedom for your people and improve the daily lives of everyone within your realm via implementation of the agricultural and industrial technology that Berengar has given you.

As far as border security goes, you are fairly secure with the only genuine external threat to you being the Kingdom of France, so you might want to invest in fortifications and scouts within the Pyrenees. You don't need to overspend. Just build some simple forts that will deter a French invasion of your lands.”

Hasan nodded his head as he eagerly listened to Adelbrand's advice. Truth be told, aside from Berengar, he had few advisors who knew how to run an Empire. He was astonished to hear some of the things the German General spoke of. After all, he did not expect the multicultural and multi-ethnic society to be as big as a deal as Adelbrand had made it out to be.

However, when he thought about it, the Empire would be ruled over by an ethnic, cultural, and religious minority, which could easily foster dissent among the other people. He would need to ensure the loyalty of his newly conquered subjects if he wished to maintain his newfound Empire. After coming to this conclusion, Hasan nodded his head in agreement before responding to Adelbrand's claims.

“Very well, I will take note of your suggestions, and seek to resolve the disputes between my people, and those who I have conquered. As you say, maintaining the integrity of my new empire is a priority, and I should seek to unite the people before conquering more territory. You have given me much to think about, General. Now if you will excuse me, I have an appointment with my wives, feel free to enjoy the rest of your wine in my absence...”

After saying this, Hasan left the room to do as he had always done. Engorge himself in a life of hedonism. It was only after the man had left the room that Adelbrand voiced his complaints about the young Sultan's behavior.

“This idiot is going to get himself killed...”

With that said, the German General quickly finished the contents of his glass before leaving the Palace. He needed to report this information to the Kaiser as quickly as possible. Thus, he would spend the next

few hours dispatching a telegram across the atlantic to the SMS Berengar which acted as the flagship of the German Fleet in Mesoamerica.

#### Chapter 628: Mysterious Disappearances

Months had passed since Berengar's arrival in Mesoamerica, and now a star fort had built on the coastline of the Region. This was no simple stronghold, but a well-fortified miniature colony which housed a thousand soldiers of the German Armed Forces. It was defended with rifled breechloading artillery, revolving cannons, and hand-cranked machine guns, along with the individual rifles of the soldiers who acted as its garrison.

A large dock extended into the sea and provided a staging point for the small fleet that had ferried these soldiers and their supplies into the New World. Despite what one might think, the Kaiser and his soldiers were not cut off from the fatherland, the long range wireless telegraph built on board his flagship vessel acted as a means of instant communication with his Empire across the atlantic.

Because of this, Berengar was aware of every movement his rivals made overseas, and could instantly communicate to his forces on how to counter it, should such a thing be necessary. While this fortress existed on the coastline of Mesoamerica, the natives were completely unaware that foreigners had long since invaded their lands and built a stronghold.

It was because of this that the Aztec Emperor of this world, a man by the name of Itzcoatl, was completely dumbfounded on why his scouts kept going missing whenever they investigated the region in which his daughter was last seen. Several native men were gathered in the Aztec Emperor's palace as he discussed the strange things that were occurring within his lands.

"My daughter has been missing for months, without the slightest hint of her whereabouts. I would believe she was dead, if not for the fact that every man I have dispatched to find her has similarly gone missing. Just what is happening on the coastline?"

One of the Emperor's advisors had a worried tone in his voice as he discussed some of the rumors that he had heard that originated from the villages near the coast.

"The villagers near the region speak of thunderous roars and strange sounds coming from the coast. Similarly to our scouts, everyone they have sent to investigate these noises has gone missing. However, recently a corpse was found in the woodlands and was back in one of these villages."

After saying this, the advisor pulled out a small copper jacketed lead bullet and placed it on the table. When the Emperor gazed upon it, he was furious. He did not know what he was looking at and merely responded to the fool for wasting his time.

"Just what in the name of the gods is this supposed to be?"

The Advisor merely shook his head before responding with a grim tone.

"We don't know, but it was dug out of the boy's chest, or what remained of it. Whatever this thing is, it left a grievous wound the likes that our most esteemed healers can not identify. However, if you ask me, I think that our shores have been invaded, and this is some kind of strange new weapon who its wielders have used to eliminate anyone who comes close to the territory they have conquered."

It was at this moment that another voice interrupted the advisor and complained about his reasoning.

“That’s preposterous. If our shores were invaded, then we would know of it. None of our rivals have made any attempt to encroach on our border. To eliminate all of our scouts to such a degree that they can’t even report back to us would require such a large volume of troops, that there is simply no feasible way to move them into the area without us noticing!”

The first man to speak merely gazed upon the man who complained about his reasoning with a chilling gaze before speaking further about his thoughts.

“Unless this hostile force came from across the great sea... Perhaps the feathered serpent has finally returned to our lands and is angry with us...”

The moment Itzcoatl heard these words, he shivered before asking the immediate question on his mind.

“It is a one reed year, this year, isn’t that correct?”

The first advisor nodded his head in silence, while the other scoffed at the very mention of it. Ultimately, it was up to Itzcoatl to decide on how to proceed with this new information.

“If the feather serpent has returned, then should it not be something to celebrate? Why is he angry with us?”

When the second advisor heard this line of reasoning, he immediately protested.

“Your majesty, do you honestly believe such nonsense? We should not jump to conclusions, instead we should send a larger force to investigate the region, and figure out just why our people keep going missing.”

Upon listening to such solid reasoning, rather than the superstitions that his other advisor voiced. Itzcoatl realized he should not immediately assume that a vengeful god had returned, and instead find out the cause of these disappearances before jumping to conclusions. With a stern expression on his face, the Aztec Emperor issued forth a decree.

“You are right. We must investigate this thoroughly. If such small numbers of scouts keep disappearing, then we will send an army to figure out why these disappearances keep happening. Prepare to send a full force of our greatest warriors to the region. I dare to see if so many men vanish into thin air!”

With that said, the two advisors bowed respectfully to their emperor before enacting his orders.

“As you command!”

After saying this, they departed from the Palace leaving Itzcoatl by his lonesome. The man gazed off through a clearing into the distance where the shores lie, uttering single phrase in his grief.

“My sweet Tlexictli, please be alright...”

—

Within the confines of the German Stronghold on the coasts of Mesoamerica, Tlexictli sat within a large stone suite. Despite the overall size and luxury of her quarters, the Aztec Princess was little more than a prisoner. Which the bars on her window and the thick steel door made completely obvious.



Since the moment Honoria and the German soldiers found the missing Emperor, they had taken Tlexictli prisoner. During the months, her quarters had shifted from time to time, until the Germans finished constructing their fortress. She had witnessed little during her time as a prisoner, as Berengar ensured she could observe nothing of strategic value. Thus, the only windows in her room had a view of the vast Atlantic ocean and nothing else.

Despite being a prisoner, she lived fairly well, perhaps even better than if she was still at the Aztec Palace in Tenochtitlan. At any time of the day, if she felt hungry, she could order room service from a large menu of German delicacies. The blonde-haired men showed no sign of hostility when they served her, and her captors never appeared to run out of supplies. She was completely unaware that routine supply drops between the fatherland and the coastal fortress were the norm.

Aside from the delicious food that she could dine on as much as she desired. Tlexictli had fully functional plumbing and a library of German books to keep her entertained. Which she took an interest in reading. Though she could not remember exactly how she had come to learn the German language, she increased her knowledge of Berengar's world as much as she could.

When she wasn't reading, she was exercising, maintaining her muscular figure with a set of weights that Berengar had provided, and keeping up with her cardio via a large punching bag and a grappling dummy. In fact, she had grown so accustomed to these luxuries that she had nearly forgotten she was a prisoner.

That is, until, of course, Berengar came to visit her for the first time since she was imprisoned. A knock resounded on the door as Tlexictli was doing situps, something she initially moaned about, but ultimately halted her exercise long enough to check who intruded upon her activities. When she opened the door, she was shocked to see none other than Berengar standing in front of her with a wide smile on his face.

The two of them could not be more differently dressed. Berengar wore his Imperial regalia, while Tlexictli was dressed in a black sheer thong and nothing else. Evidently, she had assumed that German undergarments were the most efficient form of clothing for exercise because she did not understand in the slightest their intention.

When Berengar gazed upon the half naked woman, his jaw completely dropped. Perhaps it was because all of his wives and mistresses were dainty flowers, but his eyes were drawn to every perfectly sculpted muscle on the woman's body, which was now glistening with her sweat. She did not take notice of his lustful gaze and instead frowned when she saw him; rebuking the German Emperor for not visiting her sooner.

"You're late..."

Berengar merely chuckled as he asked permission for entry.

"I'm sorry about that. I have been dreadfully busy since I reunited with my comrades. May I come in?"

In response to this, Tlexictli merely snorted, but she opened the door large enough for Berengar to enter, where he quickly took a seat at her table. He had a confident expression on his face as he gazed upon the woman, who did not even bother to get dressed. Instead, she grabbed a flagon of beer and downed its contents to quench her thirst. After doing so, she inquired about Berengar's reasoning for visiting.

“So, why are you here now, after all this time?”

Berengar merely smiled before uttering a simple phrase, leaving the girl with many questions.

“The time has come...”

Chapter 629 Am I not Merciful?

“I’m sorry, the time for what?”

Tlexictli gazed upon Berengar with confusion in her deep brown eyes, she had no idea what he was talking about when he uttered the phrase

“The time has come...”

Berengar took some time to collect his thoughts before speaking of the news he had received. There was a smug expression on his face as he went into great details about his plans.

“My scouts report your father is mobilizing a great army with a single purpose. To investigate your disappearance and that of the others who have discovered our little settlement here on the coastline. It is my intention to lay waste to this army as a display of German Superiority. Only after I have gunned down your soldiers, will I use you as leverage in the following negotiations.”

Tlexictli was shocked to hear Berengar’s plots for control over her people, she had suspected he had come to these lands with ill intentions, but she never knew he wanted to enslave her people, thus she rose in from her seat in indignation and pressed Berengar against the cold stone wall. Despite the threatening gesture, Berengar only had a smug smirk on his face as he questioned her actions.

“You think it is a good idea to harm me? Did you forget you are my prisoner? With a single command, I could have your head removed...”

When Tlexictli heard this threat, she gazed at Berengar in shock before letting go of him. She swiftly sat back in her seat as Berengar adjusted his medals. After he had sat down across from the Aztec Princess, she began to question his motives.

“Why are you doing this?”

When Berengar heard this, he scoffed at the girl’s naivety before lecturing her on the reality of the world.

“Why am I doing this? Why does anyone? My reasoning is simple. It is all about resources, and your people are sitting on a massive reserve of silver and gold that I desperately need. This is nothing personal, Tlexictli, and for what it’s worth, I rather like you. You are far more civilized than I initially thought you would be. Besides, I think you are mistaken about what it is that I wish to accomplish here in your lands...”

The Aztec Princess scoffed as she crossed her arms and leaned back in her seat, placing her bare feet on the table as she did so.

“Oh really? You don’t wish to conquer our empire, enslave my people, and sacrifice us to your gods?”

Berengar broke out into a fit of laughter as he heard this, so much so that tears began to form in his eyes. The idea that the German people were so savage that they would commit human sacrifice was truly laughable to the man.

It had been nearly a millennium since the Germans last engaged in such a barbaric practice, and even then historians disputed whether such rituals were nothing more than anti-pagan propaganda preached by the Church to condemn their rivals. Ultimately, Berengar wiped a tear from his eye before responding to this absurd statement.

“No, to all of those things. I do not plan to conquer your people and annex your territory into my Empire. Nor do I intend to enslave a single person within your realm. As for human sacrifice, that is the last thing I would ever do in this world. My people are more civilized than yours. We do not engage in such brutal rituals.”

This answer perplexed the Aztec Princess, as she did not know what else it would be that Berengar would demand of her father, until a certain idea rattled around in her mind, causing her to blush, and back away from Berengar, which caused the man to look at her strangely. Ultimately, she revealed what idea had caused her to react in such a way.

“I’ll admit that I find you attractive, but I have no intentions of marrying you, Berengar von Kufstein.”

In response to this, Berengar merely scoffed before shattering the girl’s tsundere act.

“Oh please, German Law states I’m allowed one more marriage, and no offense, but I can do better than you. But... If you would like to be my mistress, I wouldn’t mind it. After all, you have a sort of appeal that none of my other wives have...”

This response had caused Tlexictli to slam her head on the table in embarrassment. She could not believe she had thought this man wanted to marry her. She simply ignored everything else he had said, so devastated by the phrase “I can do better than you” that she had completely blocked out Berengar’s suggestion.

Eventually, she recovered and was confused. If he did not want to conquer her people, and did not want her hand in marriage, then why the hell was he behaving so hostile towards her people? She could only ask, rather than jump to another assumption.

“Okay... fine... I’ll bite. What is it that you do want?”

In response to this, a smug grin appeared on Berengar’s face as he once more lectured the girl on his plans.

“Oh, it’s very simple. I want to force your father to recognize the German Empire as his superior, so that he may offer tribute to us in exchange for our protection...”

A scowl formed on the Aztec princess’s face as she heard this before stubbornly responding to Berengar’s claim.

“Protection? We don’t need your protection!”

In response to this, Berengar chuckled once more before revealing the truth of the matter.

“What, do you seriously think we Germans are the only ones across the Atlantic Ocean? We may be the mightiest Empire in this world, but there are plenty of other powerful states where I come from, any number of which could steamroll your pathetic and primitive empire. Yes, you do need our protection.

Unfortunately, I am well aware that you come from a proud warrior culture, and there is no way your father would agree to my demands without a brutal display of our overwhelming superiority. So yes, I will shed the blood of your armies, and then I will march into your capital as Conqueror, demanding that your father pay tribute in the form of gold, silver, oil, and whatever other resources I damn well please.

In exchange for this tribute, you, or what is left of your civilization when I am through with it, can continue to exist in the lands I designate as a tributary state under the protection of the mighty German Empire. Albeit in a far more civilized state. Now that you understand my plans, I have but one question to ask: Am I not merciful?”

Tlexictli did not respond to Berengar, rather she looked to the side with tears in her eyes. Realizing that the man who had saved her life would be the death of her people’s sovereignty in this world. Had she fought to the death with Berengar in that river valley, then perhaps her people might be spared. Berengar, of course, did not take well to this defiance and raised from his seat, grabbing hold of the woman’s face, forcing her to look into his eye as he screamed at her with his loudest voice.

“Am I not merciful!?!”

Such a vicious response provoked a sense of fear in the woman, causing her to instinctively flinch. She then bowed her head in submission with a silent nod. After seeing this, Berengar smirked and released the Aztec Princess’s pretty face, before sitting back in his chair and commenting on her previous actions.

“There, that wasn’t so hard, was it?”

After saying this, Berengar rose from his seat once more, before knocking on the steel door with three loud pounds of the fist. Immediately, the guards on the other side opened it, where Berengar stepped into the doorway, leaving one last remark to the Aztec Princess before departing.

“You should prepare yourself, as you have a role to play in all of this. Until then, sit back, and listening to the roaring thunder of my guns as they slaughter your father’s army.”

With that said, Berengar turned away, and the guards sealed the door behind him, leaving Tlexictli alone to sulk about everything she had heard. As for Berengar, he marched out into the courtyard and climbed the steps into the fortifications. Gazing off into the clearing that his soldiers had made. Soon the Aztec Army would arrive, and the German soldiers would defend their position.

It was this in mind that Berengar smirked as he gazed upon the Empire’s flag, flapping in the wind. A symbol of the Reich’s glory forever to stand on these shores until the end of time. Here he would make his stand, and in doing so, bring true civilization to this land of savages.

Perhaps in a few centuries, the Aztecs and the other Mexica people, who were under the yoke of their tyranny, would thank him for ending the barbaric rituals of slavery and human sacrifice. However, he severely doubted this, for in his past life, the people that the European Empires so graciously brought modern civilization to ended up despising them. These were the thoughts that flowed through Berengar’s mind as he gazed into the distance and waited for the arrival of the Aztec Army.

## Chapter 630: A Ruthless Display of Force

Weeks had passed since the day that Berengar visited his favorite prisoner, and the time had finally arrived. In the clearing outside the German Fortress that acted as its primary settlement in Mesoamerica, an army of roughly twenty-five thousand Aztecs stood, gazing in shock at the fortifications that had seemingly sprung up overnight.

They did not know how such a thing could come to exist without them knowing, but it would explain the many disappearances that had occurred over the past few months. Still, with the overall size of the settlement, it did not appear that many people were inside of the fortress. At most, it had to be a thousand men.

While the Aztecs examined the large star fort, the Germans within stared back at the massive native army, ready to open fire at the first sign of hostilities. The golden-haired German soldiers acted as the guardians of their settlement in the new world. As far as they were concerned, this was German land, claimed by the Kaiser himself, and no force, no matter how large, would force them to depart.

The Aztecs could not believe their eyes. The men on the other side of the clearing were dressed in strange clothing, and wielded unique weapons, all while having an appearance that suggested divinity. Such a thing struck fear in to the hearts of the many warriors who had come in search of the reason for the many disappearances that had recently occurred in this part of their Empire.

The massive ships sitting within the docks suggested these men had indeed come from across the great sea. Were they perhaps envoys of the feathered serpent? If so, why did they appear to be so hostile? There were many questions in the mind of the Aztec warriors as they struggled to muster the courage to approach the large star-shaped settlement.

While the Aztec host was debating on how to proceed. A German officer gazed through his binoculars before reporting his evaluation of the enemy army to his emperor.

“My Kaiser, it is of my belief that we will be able to hold this ground, but they do not appear to be hostile, rather they seem to behave in shock. Perhaps the glory of the Reich has stunned them into submission?”

Berengar looked towards his officer as if the man was an idiot. He could plainly see that they were reacting in shock. However, he did not respond condescendingly to the officer, and instead gave him an order on how to proceed.

“I don’t care how they’re reacting. Fire a warning shot. If they step one foot on the land that I have claimed, then I give you permission to open fire. This is not a matter of negotiation, this is a show of force!”

With that said, the officer hurried to relay his orders to the nearest artillery battery. In a matter of seconds, the shells were loaded into the guns and fired into the distance towards the Aztec Army. The shells detonated on the shores of the coast, far enough away from the Aztec army as to not actually harm them, but close enough so that they could feel the sting of the explosive blast.

When the Aztecs witnessed the series of explosions, they panicked, nearly breaking ranks at that exact moment. They had never seen such destructive power from anything other than the forces of nature.

Yet such massive explosions had taken place right in front of their very eyes, and resulted from the foreigner's actions.

The leader of the Aztec army nearly fainted upon seeing such a powerful series of blasts. He had no desire to come any closer to the fortress. After all, he and his men had witnessed why so many people had disappeared over the past few months and, rather than risk such a thing happening to himself, he would rather retreat. He was about to issue this command when he heard a shriek from among his ranks.

The leader's own son had collapsed to the ground, bleeding through his padded armor. Evidently, a piece of shrapnel had embedded itself in the man's chest and had cut his aorta artery, killing the young man in a matter of seconds. When the leader of the Aztec army saw this, he was horrified, rushing over to the boy's side and grabbing hold of his lifeless body, begging for the gods to bring him back.

"This can't be. Wake up! Wake up, my boy! Gods, please spare him!"

The other Aztec soldiers tried to comfort their commander by grasping hold of his shoulder, but this only sparked a savage reaction as the man wiped the tears from his eyes and gazed towards the German fortress with such a hatred it threatened to swallow the world. No longer in a state of reason, he ordered an attack on the fortress.

"Kill these murderous bastards! I don't care if they are gods, or men, they must pay for what they have done to my boy!"

With the order given, thousands of Aztec warriors immediately questioned their orders. They would have to be mad to obey them. They had all seen the destructive power of these weapons with their very eyes. Whoever these foreigners were, they were capable of killing a man dozens of yards away from the explosive blast of their weapons. To charge the fortress would be to voluntarily forfeit one's life.

Still, despite this hesitation, they were enraged by the senseless death of the commander's son, as well as the fact that so many of their people had gone missing. Whether it was out of foolishness or pure hate, these thousands of men rushed towards the short stone walls of the star fort, screaming their war cries as they did so.

The moment this occurred, Berengar waved his hand, signalling for the rifled breechloaders, mortars, and revolving cannons, to open fire on the enemy. A combination of 75mm, 60mm, and 40mm shells landed upon the charging army, blasting every man within its radius apart.

Despite the massive casualties suffered from a single barrage, the Aztecs continued their advance, fueled with rage a screaming horde of Aztec warriors met with an overwhelming display of masterful artillery, as with each passing second the Germans fired another shell into the enemy ranks, blasting men into mincemeat as the shells detonated on the ground near their feet.

Blood-curdling screams filled the air, and yet the German artillery never once ceased their fire, raining explosive projectiles onto the Mesoamerica coastline. Reaping the lives of thousands of Aztec warriors who tried desperately to get into range so that they could launch their primitive stone atlatl.

Just when the Aztec war leader passed the danger close range of the German Artillery, the echo of rifle fire crackled in the air, as a .45-70 projectile embedded itself in the man's skull, blasting his head apart.

Upon seeing his successful kill, an overeager German soldier cried out in joy as he pulled back the bolt of his weapon, ejecting his spent cartridge before reloading his rifle.

“Got one!”

When Berengar heard this, he chuckled as he gazed upon the senseless slaughter. This was not a battle, it was a massacre. Despite the bloody scene, Berengar was unphased, he had seen enough of war to where such excessive violence had longer affected him. As he watched the conflict unfold, he heard another soldier comment on how simple things were when compared to their previous wars.

“It’s Like shooting fish in a barrel!”

With the enemy passing through the realm of danger close, the hand-cranked machine guns opened fire, sending thousands of rounds of lead down range in a matter of minutes. Those who were fortunate enough to survive the artillery barrage soon found their torsos blown apart by multiple rounds.

With the commander dead, and half their forces butchered on the field of battle, the remaining Aztec warriors wisely broke ranks and fled the scene. The Germans did not cease their fire until there was nothing left to shoot at.

In a matter of minutes, the battle had begun and ended with an overwhelming German victory. After the last shot echoed in the air, Berengar gazed upon his soldiers and called out to them, searching to see if he had suffered any casualties.

“Is anyone injured?”

The German soldiers took a quick body count and found that none of them had been harmed during the battle. Thus, a confident voice filled the air, as a marine officer responded to his emperor’s question.

“Not a single casualty, my kaiser!”

Upon hearing this, Berengar smirked as he once more gazed upon the bloody scene. The smell of gunpowder blood filled the air as he reflected on the next phase of his operations. With a single order, the battle came to the close.

“Secure the area. Victory is ours!”

With this said, Berengar descended from the ramparts of his fortress and returned to the holding cell where the Aztec Princess lie in wait. He planned to flaunt his victory in her face before bringing her on his journey to conquer the Aztec Empire.