

Steel 63

Chapter 63: Joining the Teutonic Order

Currently, Lambert was still within the confines of the prison carriage constructed for his transport to the Teutonic Order. They had traveled for several weeks with a Caravan to Malbork Castle within the Pomerelia region to maintain the transported prisoner's safety and integrity. Lambert sat in his cage with a blanket over his shoulders. The only thing keeping him alive throughout his journey was the idea that he would return home one day and exact vengeance upon his family for what they had done to him.

The State of the Teutonic Order oftentimes referred to as the Teutonic State, was currently embroiled in a series of wars against the eastern European populations. Whether they were pagans or eastern orthodox, the fanatical crusaders of the Teutonic order did not care and used whatever excuses they could to justify their wars of conquest. Pomerelia, however, was far closer to the borders of Germany and was merely used as a training ground for recruits. To foster them into the Order and their way of life over time.

As a Militant Order of the Catholic Church, the Teutonic Knight required all full brothers to take monastic vows. They would become celibate and father no children, nor could they ever marry. If they were noblemen, they would give up all claims to their family's lands. This was a genius act by Gisela to spare Lambert's life while making him no longer a threat to Berengar's position.

On the other hand, Lambert saw this as a chance to rise in the ranks of the Teutonic Order and gain enough power to enact vengeance upon the family that had abandoned him. Especially that whore Linde, he would never forgive her for her misdeeds. After all the time and energy he had spent courting her, she threw it all away for his despicable brother. He was utterly disgusted with himself for being such a fool as to think he could be with a girl like Linde and putting up with her degrading acts because of it.

Not long after having these thoughts, Castle Malbork came into sight, and the sentries of the Teutonic Order rode out to meet with the approaching Caravan. A knight in full plate armor, with a white tabard and black cross emblazoned on it, stopped before the carriage and gave his commands.

"By orders of the Grandmaster, all outsiders are forbidden from traveling beyond this point! State your business or be on your way!"

The Caravan Guard was not the least bit threatened by the knight and calmly stated his reasons for being in the area.

"By decree of Sieghard von Kufstein, the Baron of Kufstein. This young man Lambert has been convicted of the crimes of assassination, treason, and attempted fratricide and hereby sentenced to join the Teutonic Order where he may redeem himself in the eyes of God in righteous crusade!"

Though the Knight's face could not be seen beneath the visor of his great bascinet, his exasperated expression could be heard in his voice as he sighed deeply.

"Another one? Alright... We will escort the Prisoner from henceforth."

The truth was Crusading was not nearly as popular as it was in the previous centuries; after the French conspired against the Templars for their wealth and burned them all at the stake as heretics, many people had no desire to suffer a similar fate. Nowadays, the ranks of the Teutonic Order were filled with either convicted criminals, refugees, orphans, or disillusioned noble youth. Despite the success of the Crusades to the Holy Land within this timeline, the Northern Crusades were not exactly popular in the eyes of the people of Christendom. In many countries, one might even say they were unpopular, especially now that the heathens of the Baltic had mostly been conquered and were in the process of being Germanized, which was a polite way of saying that they were being wiped out entirely and replaced by ethnic Germans.

Regarding the other so-called Holy Crusades, Reconquista was a matter of Iberian pride; as such, the Militant Orders of the region swelled with the ranks of zealous young men who wished to drive the moors from their lands. However, unless one were particularly hateful of Muslims, they would not venture from another region to join the fight to reclaim Iberia.

The ongoing Crusades in North Africa, if you could even call them such a thing, were mostly handled by the might of the Byzantine Empire's vast army, who wished to reclaim lost territory in Egypt and Lybia. Despite being

Orthodox, the Byzantines and the Orthodox Church were far more cordial in this timeline with Europe and the Vatican. As such, they had gained the support of the Hospitaller order in the efforts to reclaim North Africa for Christendom. This was far more popular than the Northern Crusades among Catholics and Orthodox alike, as they were reclaiming lost land instead of venturing into backwaters and forcefully converting the natives.

Upon hearing the Knight's orders, the Caravan guards quickly got down from their Carriages and released the lock on the gates which confined Lambert. Where he was swiftly dragged out of his cell and handed over to the Knights of the Teutonic Order, who carried him off to the Castle of Malbork, this would be the last time the boy saw the Banners of House von Kufstein for some time. He would forever engrave them in his memory as he desired to see them burning along with his homeland.

After arriving in the Castle, Lambert was led to the recruit's quarters, where he acquired the attire of an initiate and had his head shaved. For the next few months, his life would be a grueling hell as he toiled and slaved away to prove himself worthy of the title of Brother. Luckily for him, he was already a competent swordsman and would quickly make a name for himself among the initiates and the order members alike. After having a simple meal for the evening, he returned to his quarters, where he began to drift into a deep slumber; the thoughts of vengeance were the only thing that would allow him to survive this ordeal.