

# Steel 671

## Chapter 671 - The Triumphant General Returns Home

Adelbrand stepped foot onto the fatherland for the first time in a long time. After years of being deployed to Iberia, the Kaiser had commanded him to return to the Reich. The official reasoning for this visit was to personally inform the man of recent developments in Iberia. Of course, Adelbrand suspected that Berengar simply wanted to show off all that he had accomplished over the past few years.

Though Adelbrand had heard about the national railway project, and the use of trains. He was amazed to see them in person. He could hardly fathom how different Trieste was now, from the moment he departed for Iberia years ago. Unlike the rest of the German citizens, Adelbrand had a tanned complexion from the years of being under the Andalusian sun.

If it weren't for his golden hair, it would be likely that the people of Germany would view him as a foreigner. Luckily for him, Berengar had dispatched a military train for his transit to the Capital of Kufstein. As the train passed by at high speeds, Adelbrand witnessed the complex mechanized agriculture that persisted throughout the Austrian landscape.

The train stopped in several stations along the way, and Adelbrand was able to witness the previously feudal Austrian cities, turned into industrial powerhouses. Each city was carefully laid out with dedicated sectors to industry.

The blend of architectural styles displayed the overwhelming prosperity that the German Empire was currently facing. He had only been gone for a few years, acting as the Supreme Commander of the Iberian Theatre, and yet the fatherland had changed so much during this time.

Eventually, the train pulled into Kufstein, where Adelbrand gazed in awe at the capital of the Empire. What was once a small agricultural town was now a thriving metropolis. The cobblestone streets were clean, and people walked throughout the city in semi-modern fashion, sitting on benches, and partaking of coffee and cookies.

There were dedicated sectors in the city to entertainment, with a large arena being constructed to display prominent sporting events. Such as Mixed Martial Arts, boxing, kickboxing, wrestling, submission grappling, etc. However these were not the only sports that had become popular in Germany, but also weightlifting, swimming, track and field, and other competitions that focused on strength and agility.

Aside from the sporting arena, there were other entertainment areas, such as bars, art galleries, concert halls, theaters, and plenty of other activities to engage in. Outside of the entertainment district was the trade district, where small shops and large shopping malls existed to sell their products to everyone within the city.

Farmers hauled in their fresh produce on wagons and sold them to large grocery outlets, which not only contained fresh food but also canned and pickled goods. Anything that anyone could possibly desire was sold in the trade district, with trade from regions as far east as India making its way to Kufstein.

The area that Adelbrand would have to meet the Kaiser was actually in a public setting. Rather than visiting the Palace District, where Berengar and the heads of the German Government lived, a group of

soldiers escorted Adelbrand to a large bar in the center of the entertainment district. After approaching the area, these men informed the Field Marshal that he would be on his own from here on out.

This bar served beer, wine, and distilled spirits, but also had its own dedicated team of chefs where they served food to its customers. It was a popular destination for people in the city, where commoners and nobility alike could get together and speak about recent events.

When Adelbrand step foot into the bar, he saw Berengar seated alone, dressed in rather simple attire. Berengar was not garbed in his usual imperial regalia, but rather in a white silk dress shirt whose sleeves were rolled up, and whose collar was loosened.

As for everything else, Berengar was dressed in a pair of grey dress slacks, with black leather oxford style shoes. He wore an elegant wristwatch that was obviously made of white gold, and for the first time in a long time, did not wear his eyepatch which normally concealed his wound.

Rather than wear his signature slicked back hair, Berengar had styled his golden locks in a side-parted style. At first glance, he did not appear to be the German Emperor. Thus, the crowds of people left him be. Instead, he sat alone and drank from a pitcher of beer.

When the Kaiser noticed his Field Marshal approach, he waved towards him, signalling for Adelbrand to sit down. The veteran commander was a bit shocked to see the Kaiser in such an informal appearance and immediately commented on it.

"My Kaiser, I did not notice you at first, you look so different..."

Berengar merely raised one finger to his lips, signalling for the man to be quiet before whispering in response to Adelbrand's statement.

"Adelbrand, when I am among the public like this, simply refer to me by my name. You could say that I am incognito right now..."

Such a response surprised Adelbrand. He did not know why Berengar would do such a thing and quickly inquired about it.

"Can you tell me the reason?"

Berengar simply chuckled in response before taking another swig of his beer. After wiping his lips with his forearm, he explained why he was not in his formal attire.

"I like to mingle with the people and see what they really think about the Empire. They would never dare reveal the truth to me if they knew I was the emperor. Here they just think I'm an old veteran who has made a decent living.

You would be surprised how disbelief prevents people from connecting two and two together. In their eyes, it is more reasonable for me to be someone who looks like the Kaiser than the kaiser himself. After all, why would the Kaiser trouble himself with going out into public and enjoying his time in a bar?"

Adelbrand looked around for a few moments and sighed before asking Berengar the question most pertinent to his mind.

"So, this is what you do in your spare time?"

A slight chuckle erupted from Berengar as he revealed how little spare time he had to do things like this.

"Very rarely. Once every few months, I'm able to escape from the palace long enough to share a few drinks with my people. Since you were coming back today, I thought I'd show you a good time. After all, it has been a while since you last step foot in your homeland. So tell me, what do you think of the Empire that I have forged in your absence?"

Adelbrand looked around and saw a bunch of young women casually mingling with men. These were not noble ladies, but they were dressed in what appeared to be silk cocktail dresses. They were speaking to men that were obviously older than them, who were dressed in suits. Those more casual were dressed similar to Berengar. He could hardly believe what he was seeing, and quickly spoke his mind.

"I'm a little shocked to see all the changes that have occurred since I was last here. It is overwhelming, to say the least."

While Adelbrand was saying this, a waitress walked by the table where the two men were sitting. Berengar immediately flagged her down and made a request with a charming smile on his face.

"Ma'am, can you please get a few pitchers of beer for a couple of old combat veterans?"

The young woman was at most sixteen years old and simply smiled at the two men. Though Berengar was handsome, she was more interested in the man sitting next to him, who was wearing a Field Marshal's uniform. She never would have guessed that Berengar was actually the Kaiser, thus she paid extra attention to Adelbrand as she responded to him instead.

"Certainly! What would you boys like to drink?"

Adelbrand was slightly perplexed by the attention the waitress was giving him, and did not immediately respond. Because of this, Berengar answered on his behalf.

"How about two more of these to get us started?"

The girl smiled and nodded before walking off to the tap, where she poured two liters of doppelbock beer for Berengar and Adelbrand. She returned and handed off the drinks, deliberately exposing her cleavage to the young Field Marshal before asking about their order.

"Can I get you two anything else?"

Berengar was smirking as the waitress flirted with Adelbrand. Until today, the young Field Marshal never would have believed that women in Germany had become more aggressive in pursuit of a man to marry. With men now being able to have five wives, women had to compete among each other fiercely to obtain the favor of a man in an influential position, like Adelbrand.

He did not know it, but since he was an unmarried man of substantial rank in society, he was now seen as a rare commodity within the Empire. Women from all walks of life would kill to become one of his wives, especially with so many foreign beauties flooding into the Empire in pursuit of marriage.

Ultimately, in his confusion, Adelbrand remained silent, and Berengar ordered a meal for each of them. After receiving the order, the women went back to the kitchen to deliver it to the chefs. Adelbrand was in disbelief for several seconds before asking Berengar what had happened.

"What the hell was that?"

In response to this, Berengar merely chuckled before making a joke to his Field Marshal.

"Welcome to the new age. It's your own damn fault. You're not even wearing a wedding ring, and yet you are dressed in a Field Marshal uniform, with several orders of chivalry on your breast. You are basically asking for every single woman within five hundred meters to pursue you. Why do you think I wear this damn thing?"

After saying this, Berengar revealed the wedding ring on his finger, which was made of white gold, and had five diamonds that wrapped around the ring. Such a thing symbolized he had five wives and could not legally marry another one.

Though Berengar had four wives at the moment, he wore the ring encrusted with five diamonds to deter women from flirting with him. Knowing the petty jealousy of his women, it would not surprise Berengar if a poor common girl went missing after trying to seduce him. After seeing the astonished expression on Adelbrand's face, Berengar shifted the topic to one the man was more comfortable discussing.

"So tell me about Hasan. I want to hear in person what madness has compelled that idiot to invade Morocco..."

#### Chapter 672 A Night Out

After hearing the Kaiser ask him about the situation in Iberia, Adelbrand sighed heavily before taking a large swig from his drink. It was only after several seconds of nonstop drinking did he place his cup down before complaining about Hasan.

"I tried. Lord knows I tried to convince him otherwise. However, the fool is dead set on expansion. He does not think about consolidating his gains, and instead wants to conquer more land. I warned him, if he invades Morocco, the people in Spain and Portugal will rebel.

At first Hasan agreed, but when the Emir of Morocco insulted him, by insinuating that he was your bitch, the esteemed Sultan decided it would be a brilliant idea to march his army into Morocco and prove to its ruler that he could conquer North Africa on his own."

I have little doubts that he will win, but in the meantime, the only thing keeping the Iberian Catholics at bay is the threat of another German invasion. However, our small amount of troops in the region will not be able to deter them for long. It is only a matter of time before the catholics rebel against Hasan's rule."

Berengar had a stern expression on his face as he heard this. He had invested a substantial sum of money and blood into reuniting Al-Andalus in exchange for control over the straight of Gibraltar. He did not want this investment to go to waste. Thus, he had decided to consult with the man most familiar with the Iberian theater about his opinion.

"So, how do you suggest we proceed?"

Adelbrand took another giant swig from his beer before responding to Berengar's question.

"At this point, there is little of the Granadan Royal Army that remains in Iberia. If we do not send support now, rebellion will occur. The only thing preventing full-scale revolution is the five thousand or so support personnel we still have in the region, maintaining peacekeeping operations."

Berengar did not immediately respond to this opinion, instead he contemplated his options carefully. If Hasan responded to such a petty provocation with war, then it demonstrated that he was not fit to rule over Al-Andalus. The man had yet to have a son, and if he were to die in Morocco then, it would leave Ghazi as the heir to the Throne.

Berengar could use his authority over his son with Yasmin and declare himself regent of Al-Andalus, where he would micromanage the nation with the support of some local advisors until a point where his son was old enough to claim ownership of the Sultanate.

The problem with this plan was that Berengar would never risk Yasmin's love by assassinating her brother. Though she planned to put her own son on the Iberian Throne, she would not kill her foolish younger brother to do so. She merely expected him dying young because of his stupidity.

Upon thinking about it for some time, Berengar nodded his head and gave Adelbrand his response.

"Very well... I will deploy a division to Iberia. Their job will be to maintain the peace of the region by any means necessary. Which leaves me with one question for you. Do you wish to continue to oversee operations in the Iberian theatre, and act as my personal advisor to the Sultan? Or do you wish to return home to the Fatherland and oversee the defensive operations of the war that will soon take place in our lands?"

Adelbrand understood the hidden meaning behind this question. Berengar wanted him to replace Eckhard, after all the previous Field Marshal who acted as the second in command of Berengar's Land-Based Forces had retired, and now ruled over Prussia as its King.

Until now, Berengar had not replaced Eckhard's position. Out of all of Berengar's greatest Generals who had been with him since before he established himself as a monarch, Adelbrand was the only one left who had not retired from the military in favor of politics. This meant that Adelbrand was the most trustworthy General Berengar had left and wanted the man by his side in Kufstein.

Though Adelbrand would not be officially promoted, as the only rank above that of Field Marshal was the Reichsmarschall, which Berengar maintained as the Kaiser. He would unofficially be second only to the Kaiser in terms of land-based operations. The prospect was daunting, as the man did not feel he could adequately replace Eckhard. However, Berengar's next words thoroughly convinced him.

"Adelbrand, you have served me for many years, and have been the most important factor in our victory in Iberia. You have earned the right to return to the fatherland, take a few wives, sire a few heirs, and command my armies from the safety and comfort of the capital. I understand you wish to see things through in Iberia, but Reconquista is over, and someone else can be assigned to the region to maintain peacekeeping operations. You belong here in the fatherland..."

Before the man could respond, the waitress returned with the food they had ordered, and a pretty smile on her face. She quietly handed the two men their meals before asking a question to Adelbrand.

"I'm sorry to bother you sir, but my brother is in the Army, and I just had to ask, what theatre are you in command of?"

Berengar smirked as he dug into his food, waiting for Adelbrand to finally say some words to the girl, who was aggressively pursuing him. Adelbrand gawked in silence for a few moments before he cleared his throat and answered the woman's question.

"The Iberian Theatre..."

The woman gazed in shock at the man and covered her mouth before making a comment.

"Then you must be Field Marshal Adelbrand. I am your biggest fan. Can I have your autograph?"

The woman took out a fountain pen and her notepad and handed it to the man, where he awkwardly signed his name. After saying receiving his signature, the girl held her notepad to her chest before speaking more with the man.

"My brother is in Iberia. He has told me how bravely you have led your troops to victory in the region. He says without you, there was no way that the Granadans could have won the war!"

Adelbrand was slightly flustered as he heard this, and Berengar merely goaded him on.

"Oh yeah, that's right. I heard it was Adelbrand who led the defense of Granada when the peasant crusaders marched onto its borders. I also heard it was he who sacked the city of Toledo and killed the King of Castille. After all, it's not like the Kaiser did much other than sit back in the city of Granada and enjoy the company of its princess."

The moment the girl heard this, her expression sank before chastising Berengar for his words.

"What do you know? I heard the Kaiser was brilliant when he was in Iberia, personally leading the cavalry charge like a conquering hero! However, after he left, the war fell to Adelbrand's hands, and it was he that played a pivotal role in ending Reconquista. Shame on your for insulting our Kaiser. I have half a mind to report you to the local authorities for suspicion of treason!"

Berengar struggled to contain his laughter. It appeared the girl was also a fan of his. Thus, he played a prank on her as he called the girl's bluff with a cunning smile on his face.

"Go on then, call for the authorities. I'd like to see what they have to say..."

The girl was so flustered by Berengar's errant behavior that she was about to run away and call the city guards when Adelbrand stopped her by grabbing her wrist.

"He's just kidding. My Kaiser, you're torturing the poor girl, you should be mindful of your position..."

Berengar wore a shit-eating grin when he saw the woman react to his title. She was astonished. Though she knew the man looked like the Kaiser, and was hanging out with Field Marshal as an equal, she simply believed there was no reason for the Kaiser to visit her family's humble beer house. She trembled over her words before bowing respectfully to Berengar.

"K...Ka...Kaiser, please forgive me for my rudeness! I did not know!"

The moment she said these words, the entire atmosphere turned silent as everyone gazed towards Berengar. Realizing that his cover had been blown, the man reached into his pocket and pulled out a can of pomade, which he used to slick back his hair. After doing so, he placed his eyepatch over his head, which was concealed within his nearby coat, and attempted to calm the girl down.

"Relax, I was merely joking. Besides, you have nothing to worry about. It makes me proud that my people will defend me against slander. I'm sorry if I caused you any mental anguish. Well, it looks like things have gotten awkward, so I'll just head out."

After saying this, he reached into a coin pouch and placed an Austrian Gulden on the table. The girl's eyes grew wide as she saw the money the Kaiser was leaving as payment. It was far more than such a humble beer house could ask for. Berengar patted Adelbrand on the shoulder before leaving behind his parting words.

"Adelbrand, do think about my offer. I will be returning to the Palace for now, feel free to drop by whenever you have an answer..."

After saying this, Berengar left the bar, where everyone was stunned at the scene they had just witnessed. The Kaiser had been sitting in such a humble establishment and drinking among them the entire time, and nobody had noticed.

Some of the older people in the crowd simply smiled and reflected on the days when Berengar personally taught them how to read, write, and do basic arithmetic. It brought a smile to their faces, knowing that despite the vast increase in power that he had obtained over the years, Berengar's good nature had not changed.

#### Chapter 673 - Death of an Emperor

While Berengar was managing the affairs of his realm, and preparing for an expedition to South Africa. Itami was modernizing her army and preparing for a major battle with the rebels. However, in Morocco, Hasan had already invaded North Africa and had made some significant gains in the little time since his troops had landed.

In every battle he had waged since he arrived on the continent, Hasan and the army of Al-Andalus had prevailed. Why wouldn't they? They were battle-hardened from years of fighting against the Catholics' attempt to reclaim Iberia and were now equipped with the best weapons money could buy. In the entire western world, only the arms used by the Imperial German Army were superior to Hasan's.

The soldiers of Al-Andalus were primarily equipped with rifled flintlocks, many of which were refurbished weapons previously used by Germany's forces, and twelve pound cannons modelled after the infamous M1857 12-pounder Napoleon from Berengar's past life.

They had even copied the tactics used by their German Counterparts, which while fighting offensively followed the principle of fire and maneuver employed by the Prussians in the Franco-Prussian War of Berengar's past life. Until now, the soldiers of Al-Andalus had been completely undefeated in their campaign.

With superior range and destructive capability, the first few engagements between Hasan and his rivals were total massacres. The war had only begun recently, and yet significant ground had been made after

a few clashes with the enemy. In the previous battle, the enemy forces had broken ranks and fled further inland towards their capital. It was because of this that Hasan was hasty in his pursuit, not even realizing that such a tactic was a basic feigned retreat.

The thought did not even cross the young Sultan's mind. After all, his army was vastly superior to the enemy's, and he genuinely believed the war was practically over, despite the conflict beginning only recently. In the first few battles, he had smashed his enemy's forces and broken their will to fight. They had even fled towards the capital in fear of their lives. Hasan was brimming with confidence as he thought about such things.

Berengar? Who is Berengar? Has Berengar ever won a war as swiftly as I have now? These were the thoughts dwelled in the mind of the young Sultan as he smiled smugly while riding atop his steed. Currently, Hasan and his forces were marching through a ravine with their objective being on the other side.

Normally, Hasan would think twice about entering such difficult terrain. The ravine was narrow, so much so that it was impossible to form ranks in such a position, but oddly enough, the enemy had not taken advantage of this terrain, and simply ran through the valley. Hasan truly believed it was a simple matter of charging through the chokepoint and fighting the enemy on the other side.

Unfortunately, things were not so simple. After all, there was a dangerous presence in the hills above. The current Monarch of Morocco, Sultan Said al-Haqq, was lying in wait alongside the majority of his forces, who were preparing to strike against the Al-Andalusian host.

He gazed in disbelief at the Al-Andalusian forces who had walked into an obvious trap. Truthfully, he felt as if this feigned retreat was his last chance to achieve victory in this war. It was a desperate gamble that he did not believe would actually work.

Yet, Hasan had marched his forces into a ravine where he had no means to fight effectively. Was this ignorance on Hasan's part? Or was he the one being led by the nose? Said was hesitant to give the orders to attack and quickly conversed with his advisors about the current situation.

"Do you think this is a trap? Hasan can't be this stupid, can he?"

Said's most trusted vassals gazed at him with mixed expressions. The truth of the matter was they didn't think their plan would work out either. Yet Hasan and his army were clearly in the ravine, unknowingly surrounded by enemies on all sides.

At this point, they had to consider the possibility that they might be the ones who had walked into a trap. However, one man in particular raised his voice after witnessing the hesitation in his sovereign's eyes. He could not believe they were being so timid at such an opportune moment.

"Does it matter!?! Either our plan works, and we are victorious, or it fails and we are all dead. Exactly what are we waiting for? A signal from Allah to begin the attack? Initiate the assault already!"

Said and his advisors shrugged their shoulders before giving the orders to attack.

"light them up!"



After saying this, the men in his army lit their torches and used them to ignite several large fuses that led to a series of explosive casks lined on the ridge. The resulting explosion caused a massive rockslide to tumble down the hill and towards the Al-Andalusian Army.

Initially, Hasan had thought that one of his soldiers had fired his weapon without the order to do so. However, upon seeing the explosion on the cliffs above, and massive boulders tumbling towards him and his army, Hasan's eyes widened in disbelief as he cried out in agony.

"It's a trap!"

However, it was too late. Gravity forced the thousands of rocks down from the hills above, and into his army, crushing men alive beneath their heavy weight. The boulders did not stop with one or two men, but continued to trample across the Al Andalusian army until they reached the other side of the Ravine.

Hasan had marched an entire division into North Africa, and they had few casualties until this point. However, in a single moment, tens of thousands lie dead. Miraculously, the foolish Sultan survived only to gaze in horror as his enemies descended the cliffs, firing bows, matchlocks, and cannons upon his position.

The surviving soldiers of Al-Andalus barely had enough time to collect their thoughts as enemy projectiles pelted them. Solid six pound cannonballs tore apart those who were unlucky. Panic had long since filled Hasan's mind, and he tried his best to command his horse to rush through his own ranks, and back on the path he had come, but it was no use, the enemy truly had him surrounded on all sides. With no choice left but to fight, the young Sultan gave the orders to attack.

"Open fire! For the love of Allah, open fire!"

Those who could get ahold of their weapons were quick to pull the triggers, however these were muzzle loaders, and before they could even think of reloading their weapons, the swords, and spears of the Moroccan infantry had found their way into the flesh of their enemies. As if copying the German Army in its entirety, the Royal Andalusian Army had worn protective gear only over their heads and their torso. Because of this, there were plenty of gaps in their armor to make use of, some of which were fatal, such as the neck and the femur.

Hasan had no choice but to unleash his blade and fight against the enemy, all while trying to avoid the enemy's missile fire. He slashed his scimitar across a hostile warrior's unarmored neck, severing his head in the process.

A few members of the Royal guard surrounded Hasan with their muskets and their bayonets. Doing their best to protect their sovereign. The men fought desperately, trying to break out of the grand melee that was taking place.

While shots fired towards them from above and his men fell around him, Hasan had made his way to the edge of the battlefield. However, what he witnessed was a firing line of Moroccan arkebusiers who aimed their guns towards him and his royal guard.

The Moroccan sultan sneered in disdain as he gave his Andalusian counterpart a final speech.

"You know, Hasan, I thought you were smart enough to see a trap when it was laid out for you. However, the rumors are true. Until now, you have relied on the talents of greater men to achieve the position you have today.

Your most critical mistake was believing that you had won the war before a treaty was signed. Your arrogance blinded you as you charged after my feigned retreat, and into a position where you could not effectively use your soldiers. Even if I had not triggered the rockslide, you still would have died here today. Do you have any last words before I take your life?"

In his last moments, Hasan's life's memories flashed in his mind. His biggest regret was not leaving a son and heir to carry on his work. He had been so busy enjoying his life that he had not even considered the possibility of death. He truly should have listened to Adelbrand and never marched his armies into these lands. With a bitter smile on his face, Hasan expressed his last words.

"Tell Kaiser Berengar von Kufstein, that I'm sorry... I'm sorry that I have failed him, and in doing so, have forced him to clean up my messes once more. He was right. I am not fit for the battlefield."

Having said this, Said smiled sinisterly before lowering his hand abruptly, causing the arkebusiers to pull their triggers, resulting in a volley that shredded Hasan from head to toe. What remained of his body would be devoured by the desert's beasts.

With the death of the Sultan of Al-Andalus, the throne would pass to his five-year-old nephew. Seeing as he was so young, Ghazi would be forced to name a regent to rule over his lands. Naturally, the boy would name his father. This meant that for the next eleven years, Berengar would be the de facto ruler over the Sultanate of Al-Andalus and the German Empire.

#### Chapter 674 - All Hell Breaks Loose

Yasmin stood in disbelief as she read the contents of a transcript that had arrived from her homeland. The telegraph was short, but its contents were enough to overwhelm the Moorish princess.

"The Sultan is dead. His army was ambushed in Morocco. There are no survivors."

Tears streamed from the woman's amber eyes and affected the ink that stained the page. She always knew her brother would get himself killed in some vain pursuit of glory, but she did not expect it to happen so soon. Berengar was in the room, latching his arms around the woman's waist as he tried to comfort her.

"I'm sorry Yas, I don't know what to say, even I didn't think he would die so soon... What the hell was he thinking?"

The woman in mourning did not have an answer to Berengar's question. What was he thinking, indeed? While Yasmin was grieving for losing her brother, Berengar had more important things to worry about.

Initially, he planned to bring Adelbrand to his side in Kufstein and have the man command his forces as the second highest ranking official in the German Empire. However, that was no longer an option. The Sultan of Al Andalus had gotten himself killed in a foreign country while his realm was already facing an unprecedented state of instability.

Iberia had only recently been unified under his rule, and because of this, there were many in the region who wished to return the days of Catholic Kingdoms. Hasan had left no male heir, and since women could not rule in the country, the crown would naturally fall to his nephew, a five-year-old boy living in a foreign country thousands of miles away. Of course, Ghazi was incapable of ruling the realm, and because of this, it would soon fall into anarchy unless Berengar acted immediately.

Ultimately, he was forced into a difficult dilemma, comfort his wife during her grief, or take immediate action and salvage the situation to his favor. Though Berengar loved Yasmin, and wanted to support her in her time of need, like she had done for him so many times before. He was an emperor first, and the lives of millions of people were at stake. He held the woman firmly in his hands before kissing her on the forehead.

"Yas, I am so sorry. I know this is not fair to you, but I have to go. If I do not act now, Iberia will descend into anarchy, and millions of lives will be affected. Your brother and I have worked too hard and shed too much blood to allow something like that to happen. I only hope that after this is all over, you can forgive me for not being by your side when you needed me."

After saying this, Berengar left without saying another word, for if he waited for Yasmin's response, he would be stuck in this room, comforting her while a nation collapsed. The woman could only cry as her man walked past her and abandoned her when she needed him most. Linde was already waiting for Berengar with a report in her hand as she saw him exit the room.

"With the deaths of Granada's first division, we have little in terms of assets that are in the area who can defend the region. I have already given orders on your behalf to scramble the Army, and deploy the Third and Fifth divisions to Iberia. However, it will take at the very least a week to deploy the men to the region.

In the meantime, the five thousand peacekeepers we have stationed in the region are the only thing standing in the way of absolute anarchy. For the record, Adelbrand has already been informed and is on his way to the war room as we speak."

Berengar took all the information into his mind and immediately assembled his game plan. He needed to act quickly or all of his efforts in the Iberian theater since he had reincarnated into this world would collapse. He quickly gave Linde a few orders as they walked through the halls of the Royal Palace at a brisk pace.

"Get the other girls to look after Yasmin. She is hysterical right now, and I don't know how she will react to the news of her Brother's death. Inform the Colonial governors about what has happened and tell them to be on alert.

As for the five thousand peacekeepers in Iberia, tell them to maintain a strong military presence in the capital of Granada. Order them to rally whatever is left of Hasan's forces in the region, and protect the Capital until our forces can arrive.

Make sure Imperial Intelligence prevents word of Hasan's death from spreading across the world until my forces can arrive. I do not want those catholic bastards interfering in Iberia yet again!"

Linde nodded her head in agreement before asking the question most important to her.

"You're going back there, aren't you?"

Berengar did not hesitate to nod his head in response.

"Yes, Ghazi is the heir to Al-Andalus, and I will take him with me so that I can officially crown him as the Sultan. I will also declare my regency and leave control of the region to Adelbrand until a time where I can effectively rule it. The people of Al-Andalus need a man they both fear and respect in charge right now, and aside from me, the only other option is Adelbrand."

Linde handed a dossier to Berengar about the ongoing situation. She had a stern expression on her face as she discussed the difficulties that lie ahead.

"We can keep this information from reaching the Papacy, and the other Muslim states, for at most a month, but the Moroccans are bound to take advantage of this situation and cross the strait of Gibraltar. We have a single battalion of men stationed in Gibraltar to protect our claim, and a few naval vessels. It won't be enough to hold the enemy back should they cross en masse."

Berengar knew exactly what Linde was referring to, but he refused to back down.

"I will not surrender an inch of German clay so long as I remain Kaiser, even if it is only temporary. Tell those boys that they are to defend Gibraltar until the last man. Should they do so, their families will be looked after for the rest of their days.

Tell them that reinforcements are on the way, and they just need to hold out for a few days. If that doesn't inspire the men, then inform them that any man caught abandoning his post will be considered a deserter and thus executed on the spot."

After saying this Linde departed to do as instructed, and Berengar arrived at the war room of his palace, where he opened the doors to witness a variety of Generals and high-ranking officers present. They immediately saluted Berengar and cried out the words.

"Hail victory!"

Berengar immediately raised his hand to silence the men as he approached the table, which displayed a giant map and miniature forces in it.

"At ease, inform me of the current situation. I have been briefed in summary, but I want to know in detail."

Adelbrand immediately jumped forward and pointed towards the Ravine where Hasan was killed in days prior.

"About four days ago, Hasan and his army crushed the Moroccan forces here. They quickly broke ranks after an initial exchange of fire and fled into this ravine. Hasan pursued them, thinking he would end the war by defeating the routing army, and was in turn trapped and encircled by the enemy. The Moroccan army used explosives to trigger a rockslide which wiped out over half of Andalusia's First Division. In the battle, Hasan, as with the rest of his men, was KIA.

We learned of this detail because Hasan and his army did not check in with the fleet that ferried them when they were supposed to. Because of this, the German Navy sent out a marine scout company to

investigate where they found the scene of the battle. Hasan's body has been recovered, but it is in rough shape.

At the moment, it is believed that the Sultan of Morocco Said al-Haqq is eying the strait of Gibraltar. Should he and his army cross, only a thousand men are in place to prevent his advance further into Granada. They are requesting orders. How should we respond?"

Berengar did not hesitate to inform the men of his decision.

"I already have Linde on comms relaying my orders to Iberia. Our troops are being mobilized as we speak. Adelbrand, you and I will sail to the Strait of Gibraltar and stabilize the situation in Iberia. Assuming we have to engage the Moroccan army, we will annihilate them in Gibraltar before marching our forces into the Capital of Granada.

Once we arrive in the city, I will seat my son Ghazi on the throne, who will then declare me regent. After that has occurred, he and I will stay in the region for some time until things settle down, where we will then return to the fatherland, leaving you as governor in my stead. If that is all, then preparations need to be made! We have little time before all hell breaks loose!"

With that said, the German War Machine rapidly assembled on a scale that they had not seen in years. The motto "Iberia must not fall!" became the slogan of the Third and Fifth Divisions as they deployed to the region.

#### **Chapter 675 - Defense of the Gibraltar Strait**

In the days following Hasan's death, the Sultan of Morocco had moved his forces to the coastline of his territory. He had done this before Berengar and his forces discovered the truth about Hasan's demise. Because of Al-Andalus' defeat in Morocco, the Iberian peninsula was now defended by a paltry sum of German forces. Most of these men were spread across the entire region and needed time to regroup. Said planned to take advantage of this lackluster defense by mounting an invasion of Granada.

Said's plan was simple, land his forces into Granada before the German reinforcements could arrive, and seize the southernmost portion of Iberia, connecting it to his sultanate. As for the Catholics in the North, he figured they would be happy to be free from the control of their current Muslim masters, and he had no desire to rule over them.

Naturally Said stayed behind in Morocco as he had an entire Kingdom's affairs to manage. Because of this, he trusted his eldest son Baariq with leading the invasion. Of course, neither of the two men were aware of the near instant communication between the German outposts in Iberia and the fatherland. Because of this, they were quite shocked to see a small fleet of three Armored Frigates lined up in the Strait of Gibraltar.

Until now, the Armored Frigates of the Imperial German Navy had not seen naval combat. Their responsibilities since their development had been to act as support to infantry by engaging in coastal bombardments. As well as ferrying troops between the fatherland and the colonies.

However, Morocco was unknowingly about to demonstrate the full combat capabilities of the Armored Frigates. The Sultan had gathered a hundred and fifty Moroccan ships for the purpose of invading Granada. The Moroccan Armada was a mixture of old galleys, carracks, caravels, and a new class of

warship they had developed to house cannons on their broadsides, much like the Catholic Kingdoms were in the process of developing.

To Baariq, who stood at the helm of the largest vessel, this was supposed to be an easy victory. After all, he had a total of one hundred and fifty vessels at his command. While the enemy only had three. It was his belief that no matter how advanced the German fleet was, they simply could not contend with his numerical advantage.

Unfortunately, reality was different from what Baariq had expected. These German Armored Frigates had steel plated hulls that were immune to the weapons of the Moroccan navy and boasted a grand total of forty 21cm rifled breechloading cannons on each vessel. The high explosive shells that these guns fired were twice the size of what Berengar had recently developed for use in his army.

An echo of gunfire resounded in the air, and the Sultan's son gazed in horror as sixty shells barreled through the sky and towards his fleet. Roughly one third of the 21cm high explosive shells hit their targets, reducing them to nothing but smouldering driftwood.

With such a mighty piece of artillery, the German sailors need only a single shell to sink a vessel. When the shells collided with their targets, the wooden ships of the Moroccan navy were blasted into smithereens. What remained was quickly engulfed in flames, as the wood was treated with flammable substances. There were no survivors.

In a single volley, Baariq had lost twenty ships, and all the men on them. However, in the next few seconds, another volley was fired from the three Ironclad Frigates, and with it another twenty vessels exploded upon impact, leaving nothing behind, especially not the lives of the crews, or the soldiers being ferried across.

The massive losses he had suffered in the beginning stages of the battle astonished Baariq. However, he was adaptable and quickly shifted to a tactic filled with desperation. He ordered his vessels to sail to the coast as quickly as possible, so that they could land their forces on the beach, no longer daring to contend with the overwhelming firepower of the German Navy.

With no other options available to them, the Moroccan armada sailed as fast as possible towards the beach, desperate to land their troops on the shore. The German frigates did not cease their firing, and obliterated over half of the enemy vessels before they could get past their line of defense. Baariq felt his heart bleed as he realized how many men were on board those ships which had been now reduced to burning rubble.

The first ship to sail past the Armored Frigates immediately opened fire with its broadside cannons, hoping to avenge the monumental losses that Morocco had already suffered. However, the eyes of the Moroccan sailors nearly jumped out of their sockets as they witnessed the height of their folly.

The sailors onboard the Moroccan ships gazed in astonishment as their cannonballs bounced off the hulls of the German Vessels. Just what were these ships made of? Steel? When the Moroccan sailors came to the realization that Germany had made a fleet of steel-clad vessels, they immediately fell into despair. If this were true, then there was nobody in this world who could contend with the Reich on the seas. Absolute Naval Dominance was a frightening prospect, and yet their own eyes acted as witness to it.

These men counted their lucky stars that there were only three German ships, or else they all would have been obliterated before reaching the shore. Still, they were happy to see when the German fleet did not pursue them. For the briefest of moments, the Moroccan sailors sighed in relief, foolishly believing that the most difficult moment of the battle had passed. That is, until they gazed upon the coastline of Gibraltar.

Berengar was a man of refined culture. As a result, there were two specific battles from his past life that came to mind when considering how to protect the coasts of German territory. The Normandy Beach landings, and the Battle of Okinawa, which occurred in two different theaters of the Second World War of his past life. Naturally, as a fan of the German and Japanese defenses in these battles, Berengar had established a large coastal defense filled with steel reinforced concrete bunkers, tunnels, trenches, and lots of barbed wire.

The relief the Moroccan sailors had when they sailed past the German frigates was immediately replaced with dread, as the men realized that the Concrete Bunkers held the same terrifying 21cm Naval Guns that had shredded their ships on the sea. Once the Moroccan ships were in sight, the coastal defenses bombarded them with powerful barrages. Unwilling to die with his ship, Baariq immediately gave the order to all of his men onboard his vessel when faced with such a terrifying barrage.

"Abandon ship!"

With these orders, thousands of men jumped off of their vessels and into the coastal waters, desperately trying not to drown as they swam ashore. Baariq in particular, was in a foul mood, as all the black powder weapons they had prepared for their invasion were useless now that the bores of their weapons were filled with seawater.

However, he did not have time to lament this loss, as the moment the Moroccan appeared on the shore, a mixture of 40mm revolving cannons and mk2 Schmidt guns opened fire on them, their operators hidden behind the safety of reinforced concrete bunkers.

Aside from the machine-gun nests fortified in the bunkers, there was a trench line on the hills above, where hundreds of German soldiers fired their G22 bolt action rifles towards the enemy. Baariq gazed in horror as the German defenders ruthlessly gunned down his men. A combination of bullets, 40mm shells, and mortar fire instantly shredded apart the bodies of those who were fortunate enough to make it to the beaches alive.

Within minutes, his army had been reduced to a fraction of its size, and as a result, Baariq realized the hopelessness of the situation. His response was to pull out a large wooden plank that lay on the beach. Most likely the remains of one of his sailing vessels. He quickly tied a torn white sail to it and lifted this piece of driftwood into the air, using it as a makeshift white flag while ordering his men to drop their weapons.

"Drop your weapons and surrender! The invasion has failed!"

Upon seeing the enemy surrender, the German soldiers ceased their fire, and dispatched their forces to take the survivors as prisoners. Of the tens of thousands of men who had sailed across the Strait of Gibraltar, less than three thousand remained alive. As for the Moroccan navy, it was completely obliterated in the battle.

The performance of the German Fleet, and the Coastal defenses that the Germans had erected in Gibraltar would act as a deterrent for any hostile power for years to come. It became immediately clear to the Western World that the Imperial German Navy was on another level, and could not be challenged on the seas.

When Said learned of how swiftly his fleet was defeated, he would realize his folly, and he would be incredibly thankful to the German soldiers that they showed mercy to his son. This lesson in humility would cause the Moroccan sovereign to never again step on the tail feathers of the eagle. As a result, Said had surrendered any and all claims to Iberia.

### **Chapter 676 - Long Live the Sultan**

In the days that followed the disastrous Moroccan invasion of Granada, German Imperial Intelligence was working overtime, trying to conceal the extent of how chaotic Iberia had become. If the Papacy were to realize that Hasan was dead, they would immediately start trouble in the region.

After all, though Hasan and Berengar had declared the end of Reconquista, the Church itself had not given up on their political ambitions in the region. They were merely buying their time and fostering dissent among the christians who lived there.

In the following days, Berengar, Adelbrand, and the young boy, Ghazi, set sail for Iberia. They were quick to deploy, with a small amount of the Imperial Guard beside them. Though the Third and Fifth Divisions of the Imperial German Army would deploy to Iberia in the coming weeks, Berengar needed to establish control as quickly as possible.

For the young boy Ghazi who was not even five years old, this was the first time he had spent any significant time with his father. He was roughly three years old, and did not have the cognitive faculties to understand what was going on. Still, his father was taking him on a trip, and he was excited.

The young boy gazed up at Berengar, who was dressed in a military uniform, and noticed that the two of them did not look very much alike. Berengar had pale skin and blue eyes, while ghazi had tan skin and amber eyes. The only similarity between the two of them was their blonde hair. He was much too young to understand the complexities of being a mixed-race child. Still, he felt a bit of pride in his heart. After all, his father had him dressed up in princely attire that bore the colors of Al-Andalus.

Berengar had a stern expression on his face. He knew the dangers that he was walking into, with his young son by his side. Luckily, he had prepared a certain device for this particular occasion. Since Berengar had not yet made combustion engines, he relied on animal power for his vehicles. As a result, he had designed and manufactured an armored stagecoach to act as protection for his son as they strolled into the capital. This armored stagecoach was equipped with a Schmidt mk 2 machine gun in case it came under fire.

The German Emperor would also be relying on his forces present in the region to clear the streets beforehand, and ensure that everything was safe before he and his son marched to the Palace. Eventually the ship landed at the Gibraltar dockyard, where the Royal guard escorted Berengar, Adelbrand, and the boy Ghazi to the fortress where the Al-Andalusian host lie in wait for them. The region had been secured since the Moroccan invasion a few days prior. Despite this, Berengar kept a watchful eye, in case there was any trouble.



The German Emperor led his son by the hand as the two of them entered the nearby fortress, which contained the highest ranking officer. The moment Berengar and Adelbrand arrived, they noticed a familiar face giving orders to his soldiers. Berengar was shocked to see that the man was alive and quickly called out to him with a wide smile on his face.

"General Ziyad Ibn Ya'is it has been some time... It is good to see that you are still alive after everything that has happened."

The Al-Andalusian General gazed over at Berengar with a bitter smile on his face. Things had been rough lately, and it showed on the lines of his skin. He was happy to see that his greatest ally had come to aid him in his time of need.

"Indeed, it has. I just wish our reunion was on better terms. The Sultan is dead, and he has no living heir. Though we have tried to keep quiet about this news, it is only a matter of time before the Sultanate his majesty had worked so hard to build comes crashing down around us."

It was at this moment that Ziyad noticed the little boy holding onto the Emperor's hand. Though he had blonde hair, and German features, the tan skin, and amber eyes were a signature trait of the Al-Fadl family, and this immediately piqued the General's interest.

"Who is this boy?"

A proud smile appeared on Berengar's face as he informed the man of the boy's identity.

"This is Prince Ghazi Al-Fadl. He is my son with the Princess Yasmin. This boy is Hasan's nephew and, by the right of succession, is the new Sultan of Al-Andalus!"

Truthfully Berengar was happy that the General was still alive, he had a good impression of the man, though he wasn't as capable as the men by Berengar's side, he was loyal to the Al-Fadl Dynasty, and was open to the ideas of reformation. He was also a decent enough general and was part of the reason that Granada did not fall to the Iberian Union during the early days of the war that Berengar had started. Of course, his impression of the man increased when the General lowered onto one knee and bowed his head to Ghazi.

"I Ziyad Ibn Ya'is, swear my loyalty to you, young Sultan. So long as you have me by your side, I swear I shall allow no harm to come to you, and will help you with everything that you wish to accomplish in this life."

Ghazi was confused about what was happening, and looked up to his father for support. Berengar merely smiled, nodded his head, and petted the boy's hair before informing him how to proceed.

"Accept it, Ziyad here is a good man, and a capable General, you will need his support in the future."

In an immature voice, Ghazi nodded his head and smiled as he struggled to pronounce the words.

"I accept your loyalty..."

After introducing his son to the General, Berengar questioned the man about the ongoing situation.

"With the First Division defeated in Morocco, how many men do you have at your disposal, General?"

Ziyad sighed heavily in disappointment as he heard these words before raising three fingers.

"I have at most three thousand men beneath my command. As per the orders we received from the Reich, they have been dispatched to Granada to secure the capital. Truth be told, I tried my best to get Hasan to focus on military expansion, but he was certain that his alliance with you was strong enough to drag the Reich into any defensive operation we required. Thus, he spent a large portion of the military budget on frivolities."

Berengar understood the man's pain. There were few things worse in this world than having incompetent and corrupt leadership, something he was all too familiar with from his past life. Hell, such a thing is ultimately what got him killed.

However, the era of Hasan's reign was over. From this day forward, Berengar would act as regent and help build Granada into a secondary power that he could rely on to aid him against his enemies. After taking some time to think, Berengar gave his orders to the nearest German comms officer.

"Inform the troops in the Capital to clear the streets and maintain a military presence for our arrival. There must be no signs of hostility in Granada before I am willing to march my son into the Palace. Once the path is cleared, we will enter the Palace and declare my son as the new Sultan. In doing so, I will be named regent until he comes of age, and we will get to work stabilizing the region. There is much work to be done if we wish to save what we have all built here in Iberia."

The comms were sent to the radiotelegraph that Berengar had established in the Granadan Royal Palace. From there, the orders were distributed to both the German peacekeeping forces and the surviving Granadan troops. After giving these orders to the men in the capital, Berengar issued further orders to the men on the Strait of Gibraltar.

"Maintain control over this area. I will lead my Royal Guard towards Granada where we will seize control of the capital and inform the Sultanate of what has transpired. Soon, two divisions will arrive in the Iberia and they will work with Al-Andalusian forces to hunt down and eliminate any threat to the new Sultan.

Once we have eliminated the dissidents and secured the region, these men will stay in Iberia until a time when you can raise a sufficient army to protect yourselves. From then on, we will withdraw our forces to a similar degree that existed before this tragedy occurred. Are there any questions?"

Ziyad had none and quickly saluted the Kaiser before shouting a war cry.

"Long live the Sultan!"

With this, the plan was now in place to begin a takeover of the Iberian Peninsula. Under Berengar's regency, the realm would see new heights, and would be established as power that was only lesser to the likes of Germany, and Itami's new Japanese Empire. Of course, it would be some time before Germany and Al-Andalus came across the rising power in the eastern world.

Chapter 677 - Long May He Reign

In the following days Berengar, and his son Ghazi travelled from the coast of Gibraltar to the capital of Al-Andalus. They rode in an armored stagecoach, which was protected by members of the Imperial

Guard. The caravan rode for some time before arriving in the city of Granada where both the remnants of the Granada Royal Army and the Imperial German Peacekeepers greeted them.

The city's streets had been cleared, and everyone who dwelled within its walls was forced to return to their homes for the time being. However, that did not stop men, women, and children from gazing out through their windows to see what important guest had arrived.

After the armored stagecoach arrived at the Royal Palace of Al Andalus, Berengar stepped out of the vehicle, before helping his young son down so that he was by his side. Ghazi gazed with wide eyes as he witnessed the splendor of the Capital. Though it was far from the glory of Kufstein, it was significant in its own right.

Truthfully, the boy had never left the palace since his birth, and now he was witnessing a foreign Empire on the other side of the continent. His young mind was flooded with excitement as he tried to run towards the massive palace, where he was quickly pulled back by his father, who lectured the boy with a stern expression on his face.

"Ghazi, one day you will rule this land. However, at the moment, it is not safe for you to go running off by yourself. Stay by my side at all times, and do not speak out of turn..."

Upon witnessing the intimidating appearance on his father's face the boy lowered his head in submission and muttered in a voice so low Berengar almost missed it.

"Yes... father..."

After seeing the boy had become obedient, Berengar grabbed his son's hand and led him into the Royal Palace of Al-Andalus, where the widows of the late sultan lie in wait for him. Hasan had been busy and had remarried after the loss of two of his wives who had previously conspired against him. Despite this, they did not give birth to a son, and instead, Hasan's lineage was left with a bunch of young daughters. Women had no rights to inheritance in Al-Andalus, and because of this, the crown naturally fell to Ghazi who was the previous sultan's nephew.

These young girls gazed at Ghazi with curiosity as he strolled through the Palace's entrance while holding his father's hand. He was so young, and yet they knew he would be the next sultan. At least one of the girls lamented the fact that she had been born a female. Unlike Ghazi and his newborn sister, these were full-blooded Moorish girls, and because of this, their hair was as dark as their eyes. They did not share the mixed features that displayed the noble German heritage that Ghazi had.

The servants of the Palace were quick to meet their new young master, who gazed upon the opulent, and exotic surroundings of what would one day be his new home. For now, the boy would spend some time in Granada and get to know the history of the region and its culture. However, he would return to Germany before long to live with his family, and one day soon start his education.

Berengar led Ghazi to a room where he had the servants of the Palace dress the boy in a ceremonial regalia. When he looked in the mirror, he was astonished to see the foreign clothing that adorned itself over his small body. He quickly called out to his father, questioning what was going on.

"Father, why am I wearing this?"

By now, Berengar had raided Hasan's liquor cabinet and poured himself a drink. He had a tired expression on his face as he sipped from the fortified wine imported from the Reich.

"Your Uncle Hasan has recently passed away. He died without leaving behind a proper heir. As the closest male relative, you are now the new Sultan of Al-Andalus."

Ghazi struggled to comprehend everything his father was saying. He had heard the man call him the Sultan in previous conversations, but he had no idea what that meant, thus he quickly asked for clarification.

"What's a Sultan?"

Berengar merely smiled before giving the boy an answer.

"The word Sultan is Arabic in origin. It essentially means monarch. King or Emperor would be the closest translation in my native tongue. You are now a King, boy, though you are still too young to govern your realm. Because of this, you will have to choose a regent to manage the Kingdom's affairs for you until you are old enough to take your rightful position."

The boy pondered about this for several moments. He was still too young to properly comprehend everything his father was saying. He was about to ask what a regent was when his father wore a reassuring smile before placing his hand on the boy's shoulder.

"Ghazi, you don't have to worry about the details. Just Leave everything to your old man. All I want for you is to grow up and live your life to the fullest. By the time you reach adulthood, you will understand your responsibilities. For now, just relax and treat this as a vacation."

The kid nodded his head with an excited expression on his face before responding.

"Okay, father..."

Upon hearing this, Berengar smiled and patted the boy's hair. In the next moment, a knock resounded on the door, and General Ziyad's voice disrupted the wholesome moment.

"Kaiser, everything is prepared. We are waiting on you and the young Sultan..."

Berengar quickly finished the rest of his drink in a single gulp, before grabbing his son's hand and leading him to the door. He left him a simple reminder as he informed the boy about what was going to happen.

"You don't need to say anything Ghazi, just sit still and wait for the ceremony to be over."

The young boy nodded his head and wore a kind smile as the duo exited the door, and were led through the corridors by the Moorish General, who presented them to the Great Hall where Hasan's gilded throne lie in wait for its new master.

Berengar led his son up to the throne, and sat him upon it where Ghazi gazed around at the spectacular grand hall in wonder. There were many people gathered, nobles from all over. The German Imperial Guard and the Al-Andalusian Royal Guard united to protect the young child from any threat. Berengar stood proudly by the boy's side, while Adelbrand and Ziyad took flanking positions.

As for the boy's cousins and aunts, they were forefront at the gathered crowd, and gazed upon the young boy with complex expressions on their faces. It was ultimately General Ziyad who led the proceedings.

"Sultan Hasan Al-Fadl is dead. During his campaign in Morocco he was ambushed, along with his forces, and killed in action. Since he has left no male heirs of his own, by the right of succession the Crown of Al-Andalus falls to his closest male relative. Which is his nephew Ghazi Al-Fadl, son of Kaiser Berengar von Kufstein, and Princess Yasmin Al-Fadl. Today we crown this boy as our King, and name his father Kaiser Berengar von Kufstein as Regent, until a time where the new Sultan comes of age."

After saying this, a servant brought forth a beautiful crown, and offered it to Ziyad who placed it upon Ghazi's head.

"I present to you, Sultan Ghazi Al-Fadl, first of his name, long may he reign! Kneel before your new sovereign."

The gathered noblemen were in shock to hear that the previous Sultan had died in Morocco, it took them several seconds to realize that this information had been kept hidden from them, and the true successor was already placed on the throne before they could conspire to control it. It had all happened so fast, and the only reason Berengar could place his son on the throne so easily was because of the near-instant communication that was a result of his radiotelegraphs.

However, there was nothing they could do now short of assassinating a small child, and that was highly unlikely, the German Empire backed the new Sultan, whose Kaiser acted as the new regent. This meant the full might of Imperial Intelligence would be protecting the boy from anyone who conspired against him.

Ultimately, even the most bitter of noblemen fell to one knee and bowed their heads to the new Sultan before repeating the words.

"Long may he reign!"

Under the regency of Berengar von Kufstein, Al-Andalus would see its political turmoil crushed, and the authority of the Crown strengthened. Berengar planned to do everything in his power to create a stable and prosperous empire for his son to inherit. After all, Hasan had left Al-Andalus in a terrible state, and many things needed to be fixed, if not overhauled entirely.

With this, the political situation in Iberia had entered a new phase of stability. In the coming days, German troops would land on Iberian soil once more, where they, alongside Imperial Intelligence, would conduct a thorough sweep of rebellious entities, beginning an era of political purges not so different from the Spanish Inquisition of Berengar's past life.

Chapter 678 - Yes Ma'am!

Itami sighed heavily as she gazed upon the document in her hands. Her intelligence agents had reported that the rebels were amassing their forces. They planned to launch a strike against her homeland in an attempt to break the morale of her forces.

It was an act of desperation on the rebels' part. Having lost the Shimazu clan as their supporters, the Rebel leader now intended to seize what remained of Itami's family and hold them hostage in order to force her to surrender.

How did Itami come by this information? One of her first acts when she initially came to power in this world was to establish a corps of spies recruited from all walks of life to engage in espionage and sabotage against her enemies. Using many of the same tactics that the Shinobi utilized in her past life, Itami gave these men and women the same title.

No, they were not men and women who came from the ranks of peasants, clad themselves in black tights, and waged a secret war against the Samurai. That was a fictitious representation of the Shinobi. Who in actuality were nothing more than simple spies, albeit extremely effective at their craft.

In fact, anyone could be a Shinobi, even a samurai. Ninjitsu was not some fabled martial art, but rather the name given to spy craft. For whatever reason, in her past life, the media in both America and Japan had greatly warped the perception of what a Shinobi actually was. It went so far that schools of fake martial arts calling themselves "ninjitsu" appeared across America. Though they had nothing to do with the actual historical practice.

However, with the rise of an Imperial State, that Itami was in the process of reforming, she would need to create a modern intelligence agency. It was because of this that she had recently given the order to reform her so called "Shinobi Corps" into a dedicated and modern Intelligence Agency, whose headquarters were located in her capital.

Modelled after the Kenpeitai from her past life, her new form of intelligence took the same name, and would coordinate as an entity of the military. Serving as both military police and intelligence for both the Imperial Japanese Army and Navy. Obviously in this life, Itami did not wish to repeat the many crimes that the Kenpeitai were responsible for in her past life.

Unlike Berengar, Itami did not see the rules of war as mere suggestions. She was truly dedicated to conducting war in the most civil way possible. As she recognized what her people had done across Asia, and did not want to repeat it. She was determined to build an Empire, that did not oppress its colonies, but incorporated them into society as productive members. Or so was her dream.

The recent reports from her Kenpeitai showed she could not wait any longer to dispatch her forces. The fact of the matter was, she could not let her ancestral homelands fall. Luckily, enough time had passed that her newest weapons were not only approved for production, but five thousand of her soldiers were now equipped with them.

This Brigade, which she named the First Brigade, would be more than enough to defend her homeland from the rebel army, while the rest of her troops were spread across her domain, protecting it from a secondary invasion.

While Itami was considering how best to deploy her troops into the field, a young man approached her. This man wore a modern military uniform modeled after those worn by Imperial Japanese Soldiers during the Taisho Era of Itami's past life. He was a handsome young man, only a few years older than Itami. He had long black hair that was tied back into a ponytail and had a scar across his face that

showed he was a battle-hardened veteran. The man spoke abruptly as he read from a letter that he had received.

"Your highness, the leader of the rebels, Mōri Nobuhisa, has issued a decree. He is willing to stand down, and recognize your rule on one condition..."

Itami averted her gaze from her map and glared at her subordinate. There was a murderous aura in her eyes as she heard the name Mōri Nobuhisa. He was a man who was a supporter of the Ashikaga shogunate, and was loosely related to the now defunct Imperial Family. He was quick to turn against Itami when she initially seized the position of Shogun and was responsible for the rebellion that followed her victory.

If he was suing for peace now after everything he had done, then there were only two possibilities that came to mind. Either he had realized she was building terrifying new weapons that would completely negate the numerical advantage that his forces possessed.

Or, he was confident that he would succeed in capturing Itami's family, and was giving his demands in advance, unaware that Itami was already aware of his plans. Obviously, if he had the means to achieve an overwhelming victory against Itami, then he would not come to the negotiating table. Thus, Itami forced herself to remain calm as she heard the condition. If she could end the rebellion peacefully, then she would take it.

"You may speak Shiba-kun."

The man named Shiba Kiyohiko cleared his throat before giving the Empress the demands of her most hated rival.

"He requests you marry his eldest son, Mōri Nobuyuri... If you choose to do so, he will end his rebellion and allow you to reign as empress until a time where the son between you and Nobuyuri comes of age."

Itami trembled with rage as she heard this demand. Was the man insane? She would never marry a man that was not of her choosing, especially not a young boy like Nobuyuri. She would feel dirty doing such a thing. Her hands shook as they rested on the hilt of her sword, causing it to rattle within the saya.

As the blade rattled in its scabbard, Itami broke out into mad laughter, like that of a woman who was about to go on a rampage. After she finally calmed down, a terrifying smile spread across her pink lips, as she muttered a single phrase under her breath.

"Two can play that game..."

By now Itami had redesigned the hilt and scabbard of her Katana to match those of a Type 94 Shin Gunto, which was the sword infamously wielded by Imperial Japanese Officers during the second world war. The blade of the Shin Gunto was actually modelled after the earlier tachi, rather than the Katana, but Itami's was different. Only the fittings of her blade resembled the Type 94 Shin Gunto. The blade itself was hand forged Katana using tamahagane steel. It had a defined Hamon, and a double bo-hi, making it have a very striking appearance.

In a response to the Daimyo's demands, Itami unsheathed her blade, and chopped the letter in half. She then glared fiercely at her advisor and gave him a decree.

"I had initially planned to defend my homeland with the new First Brigade. However, it appears that such a thing is no longer advisable. If that bastard wants to capture my family and use them as a bargaining chip, then I suppose I shall do the same. I wonder who will first succeed in the end?"

Shiba-kun, your orders are to lead the remainder of my army to my family's territory and defend it until the last man. As for the First Brigade, I will lead them into the Mōri clan's territory and capture Mōri Nobuhisa's family myself! I would love to see the face of that old bastard when he realizes I used his own shameless tactic against him!"

Shiba Kiyohiko was terrified when he gazed upon the wrath in Itami's blood-red eyes. So much so that he even stuttered a little as he tried to respond in affirmation of his orders.

"Y...Yes Ma'am!"

With that said, Itami dismissed her general, and gazed at the map she had sprawled out on top of a large table. She quickly adjusted the pieces which represented her army, sending ten thousand men to the territory of the Itami Clan, while sending another 5,000 straight towards the home of the Mōri Clan. While the rebels attacked her home, she would attack that which belonged to the Rebel leader. She doubted the man would still dare to fight against her when she held his family captive.

This was how Itami intended to end the rebellion and solidify herself as the reigning empress of Japan. If she was victorious in these endeavors, then she could focus on the modernization of her army, and the future invasion of Hokkaido. The Ainu people would not stand a chance against her army once she marched into their lands.

It was a race against time to see who would succeed in capturing the other's family first. The Rebel leader Mōri Nobuhisa or the Self-Proclaimed Empress Itami Riyo. Only time would tell who would win in this battle of hostages.

#### Chapter 679 - overcoming Grief

Yasmin sat alone in one of the many bedrooms of the Imperial Palace of Germany, the shades were drawn over the windows which completely blocked out the sunlight from entering the room. Tears streamed down from her amber eyes and onto her cheeks, like small rivers. She wanted nothing more than to hug her husband and two children at this moment. However, the man had left her when she needed him most, and took their young son with him.

A week had passed since the Princess of Al-Andalus heard that her brother had passed away. Though she wasn't given the exact details, it was clear that he had gotten himself killed in Morocco. For her entire life, Yasmin had looked after her brother, ensuring that he did not get into any trouble. She felt guilty over his death, believing that had she been by his side, advising him on matters of the State, then she could have convinced him not to act so recklessly.

For the past week, Yasmin had done little more than cry and sleep. The care of her infant daughter was left up to her husband's other wives, as she grieved the loss of her little brother. Though the other women attempted to comfort her in Berengar's absence, she had rejected their courtesy, and secluded herself in a bedroom.



However, her personal solitude could not last forever. At this moment, the door to her room opened despite it being locked from the inside, and Linde forced her way inside. She had a tray of food on her hands, which included a variety of dishes that Yasmin commonly enjoyed. There was also a pitcher of fresh milk and a couple of crystal glasses. When Yasmin saw the intruder, she frowned before lashing out at the redheaded beauty.

"What are you doing here? I thought I requested to be alone..."

Linde was not the slightest bit insulted by the Moorish Princess' rudeness, and instead set down the tray of food on the bed, while pouring a glass of milk for the woman. She handed the glass cup over with a gentle expression on her face.

"You need to eat. I can only imagine how you feel right now, but that is no reason to throw away your health..."

Despite Linde's kindness, Yasmin was skeptical of her behavior. The Moorish beauty had always kept a close eye on the veteran spymaster. She was well aware of the relationship that Linde had with both Berengar and the other wives. Yasmin knew that whatever grace Linde was showing her would surely have ulterior motives behind it. Thus, she did not hold back her thoughts, and quickly voiced her cynicism.

"What reason do you have to care so much about my well being? Surely you're not just looking after me of your own good will..."

The moment Linde heard this remark her caring facade came crumbling down, seeing that Yasmin was not accepting her treat, she decided to drink the milk with the grace befitting of an Empress, her demeanor had shifted from that of a caring mother to a brilliant monarch.

"You always were a sharp one... Very well, if you insist, I will cease my false pretense. After all, you have thoroughly displayed your indifference towards me and my girls."

It was at this moment Yasmin interrupted Linde's speech by chuckling briefly before firing back at the woman.

"Your girls? I thought they were Berengar's?"

Linde responded to this with a slight giggle. She had an arrogant expression on her pretty face as she lectured Yasmin for her choice of words.

"Of course, we are all Berengar's girls, are we not? However, that doesn't change the fact that he has put me in charge of his little harem. With the exception of you, since you don't want to be a team player. But I digress.

You ask why I am helping you? Well, you are correct to assume that it is not just for your sake. Unlike the other women in Berengar's life, who I deeply care for as my sisters. You are much more of an acquaintance who my husband married as a side piece for the sake of political convenience. Though he has some feelings towards you, probably more than the others, I don't recognize you as one of my sisters. Hell, if I'm being honest, I care for Henrietta more than I do you.

However, it is because of these feelings that Berengar has for you that I must ensure you deal with your grief in a healthy and natural manner. Staying cooped up in this darkness all day is no way to grieve the loss of your brother. If Berengar saw you in this state, he would be heartbroken. So, I have decided to help you, so that I may spare my husband some pain.

So, you are going to eat everything on this plate; you are going to drink all of this milk, then you are going to take a bath with me, and come out of this darkness, and integrate into our family the way you should have done years ago. The harem doesn't just exist for Berengar's pleasure; it is a sisterhood, where we support each other in our difficulties, even though we may bicker at times."

Yasmin scoffed at this suggestion as she shifted her head so that she no longer met Linde's fierce gaze. She responded with a coy attitude.

"And if I refuse?"

In response to this, Linde merely licked her lips as she gazed at Yasmin's substantial bosom, and made a threatening gesture with her hands.

"Then I am going to grope you until you admit defeat! We can do this the easy way, or the hard way, Yasmin!"

Yasmin gazed at the lust filled expression on Linde's lips and sighed heavily before agreeing to the woman's request.

"You are a weird one... Fine, I will do as you say."

After saying this, the Moorish beauty dined on the food that had been prepared for her while washing it down with milk. Linde smiled when she saw Yasmin had done as she had commanded. After the woman had finished all the food on her plate, Linde approached her with a seductive smile and whispered in her ears.

"Don't you feel better now that you have had a delightful meal?"

Yasmin brushed Linde's advances off and stubbornly shook her head in silence. Though in truth she had to admit that Linde's cooking had gotten better, the fact that the woman went to the lengths to prepare the meal herself rather than order the kitchen staff to do it was somewhat heart warming. Upon seeing the woman play hard to get, Linde grabbed hold of her dainty yet tanned hand and dragged her off to the bath. Yasmin cried out in shock as she realized what was happening.

"We're not really going to bathe together, are we?"

Linde remained silent as she dragged the Moorish princess to the Royal Bathhouse that existed in The Imperial German Palace. The two women stripped off of their clothing before opening the door to the large pool that existed as the personal bath of the Imperial Family.

Inside, Yasmin was shocked to see through the steam that Berengar's other women were already present, and in the water, where they washed each other's bodies. Henrietta was groping Adela's chest, while rubbing it with soap, something that caused the young woman to be shy.

"What are you doing, Henrietta? Stop this instant!"

However, Henrietta did not stop, and instead mocked Adela for her petite size and considerably smaller bust.

"Oh Adela, how is it that despite the women in our family all having substantial bosoms, you somehow have such small breasts?"

Adela immediately felt uncomfortable as Henrietta tweaked her nipples. She quickly threw the girl aside and rushed into the deep end of the pool to avoid her.

"I said that's enough. Besides, I don't have small breasts! I have C-Cups! That's bigger than most women!"

When Linde heard this, she called out to her oldest rival in an equally mocking tone.

"Sure, you're bigger than most women, but you still have the smallest bust of all of us!"

Adela gazed around and noticed that Berengar's harem were all extremely busty, with the smallest size besides her own being D Cups. She became dreadfully embarrassed and hid her face halfway under the water. Such a cute reaction caused the other girls to laugh at her. Honoria quickly called out to her, causing her to become even more flustered.

"Adela, you are too cute. You are the same little girl I met all those years ago!"

Adela immediately erupted in anger as she splashed the girls with the steaming bathwater.

"Shut up, all of you!"

Despite the outburst, all the women continued to laugh at Adela's expense. When Yasmin gazed at this scene, she was astonished. Since when did these women get along so well? Had she really been neglecting the bonds between herself and Berengar's other women all this time? Linde noticed the expression on Yasmin's face and grabbed hold of her hand before leading her into the bath.

"Come on, Yasmin, it is time to clean you up. I've been trying my best not to say this, but you really stink!"

Yasmin blushed when she heard this before being led into the bath. For whatever reason, becoming a part of such a friendly scene caused the grief in her heart to lessen. A slight smile curved itself upon her pretty lips as she bathed with Berengar's harem. For the first time since she married Berengar, Yasmin finally understood what it meant to be part of the team.

#### Chapter 680 - Resorting to Underhanded Tactics

While Yasmin was overcoming her grief with the company of Berengar's other women, the man himself was busy managing the Sultanate of Al-Andalus. The first thing that Berengar did upon seizing the position of Regent was establish the National Conscription Act forcing all men between the ages of eighteen to twenty-four to serve a minimum of two years in the newly reformed Andalusian Armed Forces.

With the unification of Iberia under the reign of a single monarch, Berengar had to work hard to create a military system that integrated the various different cultures, languages, and religions into the same army, one that could efficiently work together as brothers in arms against hostile forces. It would not be

easy. He had to take into account the Portuguese language, the various dialects of what would one day be the Spanish language, as well as the Arabic tongue.

The integration of so many languages into one army was already giving Berengar a headache, and he was just glad that his own empire was ethnically, culturally, and linguistically homogenous. There were some slight dialectal differences in Germany, such as the Bavarian tongue, but such minor barriers could easily be overcome. This was not the case for Iberia.

On top of the military conscription, Berengar had forced the refurbishment and sale of the remaining unconverted Berengar-class sailing frigates to the Sultanate of Al-Andalus. A total of fifty vessels were to be sold to Al-Andalus in the coming years. In honor of the previous sultan, these ships would be repainted and renamed as Hasan-class frigates. This would make the Sultanate of Al-Andalus the second greatest Naval Power in the Mediterranean.

Unlike the fatherland, whose economy was robust and booming, allowing the crown to have a constant influx of funds to fuel their endeavors, Al-Andalus was devastated from years of warfare. It had never been given the time to fully introduce the agricultural and pre-industrial reforms that Berengar had given Hasan.

When Berengar first gazed upon the ledgers of the Royal Palace, he was shocked to see just how many funds were embezzled by Hasan so he could continue to afford the luxurious products of the Reich. He was actually embarrassed by this stunning revelation, believing that Hasan's death may have been the greatest thing to happen to the people of Iberia. He could not help but curse the man for his corruption.

"Hasan, what the hell were you thinking? Those funds could have been used for agricultural and educational reforms, instead you wasted it on personal frivolities!"

Standing by Berengar's side as he enacted new laws on behalf of the new Sultan was General Ziyad, who gazed at the ledgers in the same state of disbelief as Berengar. He had not been privy to this massive scandal. If he had been, he surely would have advised Hasan to use the money he spent more wisely.

Though this technically wasn't a crime, as Hasan had never advanced his realm beyond that of a feudal state, and because of this the Sultan could do whatever he wished with his nation's treasury. It was still a monumental waste of resources in Berengar's view. Though Berengar may live in a state of excess that few men in history have or ever will achieve. He had not spent a single thaler of taxpayer's money on himself and his family, at least not since he advanced beyond a feudal realm.

It was true that Berengar had used his feudal power to invest in the many major corporations that now dominated German trade, but that was the end of it. The personal wealth of the von Kufstein Dynasty came from having massive shares in major corporations such as the Gunther Merchant Company as well as personally owning a few corporations themselves, such as the Kufstein Armory, which was the largest and most prosperous arms corporation in the world. There was also the fact that Berengar owned the intellectual rights to all his inventions, which every company in his empire relied upon for business.

Berengar sighed heavily as he looked at the meager funds he had to work with in order to rebuild Al-Andalus from the state it had suffered from under its previous ruler. He quickly concluded the best way to do that was step by step. He would use what funds he had now to invest in the agricultural

innovations he had given to Hasan years prior. After fully implementing such a thing across the realm, the profits would be meager, but enough to sustain development in other areas.

It was with this in mind that Berengar signed a new law that would overhaul the agriculture of Iberia so that it resembled Austria prior to the invention of the steam engine. Berengar still had a stockpile of the old agricultural devices lying around that he could sell to Al-Andalusian farmers at a reduced price.

When Ziyad saw this, he could not help but question if such a vast expense was really acceptable.

"Are we really going to spend such a large sum of money on agricultural improvements?"

When Berengar heard this, he simply scoffed before responding to the man's question.

"Of course, agriculture is the basis of any functional civilization. The more food you produce, the more your people can eat. The more they can eat, the more healthy they will be. The more healthy they are, the longer they can work, the longer they can work, the more they can produce. Without a surplus of food, this Kingdom will never truly prosper. So we will invest in agricultural production, then when we have gained the profits from that, we will invest in the industry."

Ziyad merely nodded his head in response. What Berengar said had made sense, and if he was just going to follow the route he had used to make Germany so successful, then the man did not have any complaints. He had no grand vision that Al-Andalus would ever rival the Reich, but under the regency of Berengar von Kufstein, the old general felt that Al-Andalus would most certainly be superior to its neighbors.

Berengar gazed at the next document in his hand and sighed heavily before grabbing hold of his flask and taking a stiff drink. The report was from Imperial Intelligence, who had infiltrated a resistance movement in Northern Spain. With the announcement of Ghazi's ascension to the role of Sultan, and Berengar's appointment as regent. The Catholic Church was whipped up into a frenzy.

For the papacy, this was the worst situation imaginable. Iberia, which they had long since sought to unite, and would have normally been a major backer of the Holy See, was now completely under control of their greatest enemy. As a result, the Papacy immediately diverted attention from the crusade in the Holy Land which had reached a stalemate, and funneled supplies into the hand of Iberian rebels.

The fact of the matter was that there was simply no conceivable way to drive the German Army from the region, and because of this, the papacy had come up with a sinister alternative. They had one target, the new Sultan Ghazi Al-Fadl. The Catholic church believed if they could assassinate the boy, then they could remove Berengar's regency over Iberia.

Upon uncovering this plot, Berengar was trembling with rage. If there was one thing in this world that Berengar would never tolerate, it was threats to his family. As a result, he had decided to send a message to the Pope and all of his followers across the world. With a sinister smile etched upon his lips, Berengar posed a question to the nearby general.

"Ziyad... Tell me, are there any men in your army who are fanatical haters of the Catholic Church?"

The man scoffed in response to this. Was there really a need to ask such a question? However, when realizing that Berengar was serious, he recovered his demeanor and nodded politely.

"Of Course! Why? What did you have in mind?"

Berengar did not explain in detail the malevolent plot he had conducted, instead he wore a terrifying smile as he gave the man an order.

"I need you to assemble a list of candidates. I need one man to undertake a dangerous operation that will ultimately result in his death. If he succeeds, he will be able to wipe out the college of cardinals in its entirety..."

Ziyad raised his brow in confusion and horror as he heard what Berengar had in mind. His first thoughts unknowingly escaped his lips.

"You have the means to achieve such a thing?"

Berengar nodded his head slightly before revealing what he was thinking.

"I do... It is a detestable method, but an effective one. Normally I would never ask a man to perform such a suicidal act, but the Papacy has gone too far. They are now targeting a member of my family, and I will not allow them to get away with even thinking about such action. The college of cardinals must die, and it must be an Andalusian who sends them to hell. Your orders are simple: compile a list of men who are ready and willing to give their life in martyrdom, and leave the rest to me."

Ziyad bowed his head respectfully before responding in affirmation of his orders.

"Yes, sir!"

After saying this, he immediately got to work on finding the list of candidates for Berengar's secret mission. Berengar, on the other hand, took another drink as he gazed off into the setting sun of the Granadan sky. A single phrase escaped his lips as he dwelled on what he was about to do.

"I'm going to go to hell for this..."