

Steel 69

Chapter 69: Declaration of War

Berengar currently sat upon the seat of power within Kufstein, listening to his father's advisors squabble over trivial matters. He was beginning to gain the desire to blow his own brains out with one of his pistols if this dreadful conversation continued any longer. Throughout the past two weeks, Berengar had been engaging in a war of intrigue with his neighbor the Baron fo Kitzbühel. What started as a simple seizure of assets under a bogus investigation quickly turned into repeated acts of sabotage with Berengar getting the best of Guntrum in every single encounter. At this point, Berengar was starting to get bored with how easy it was to best Guntrum in the minor war of intrigue they were waging.

Baron Guntram von Kitzbühel was a deeply pious man in his forties who was an ardent supporter of the Church. He donated a significant sum to the Vatican each year as a show of his faith. In pursuit of justice on behalf of the church, the man had foolishly been seizing Berengar's trade caravans and holding them for an extended time, while "investigating" the caravans for any heretical materials. By now, the man was sitting on a significant stockpile of steel and textiles that should have been delivered to their buyers during this time frame. Without the shipment of these supplies, Berengar's lucrative trade to the East of his lands was beginning to halt.

Though on the surface Berengar had attempted to resolve these differences diplomatically, the reality was he was giving significant pressure to his rival behind the scenes. Of course, none of his agent's actions could be tied to him other than mere speculation. Baron Guntrum had initially promised that after the supplies were thoroughly searched, he would allow them to pass through his borders; however, it had been two weeks since the man had first begun seizing his trade caravans, and Berengar was starting to lose his patience on this matter. If he could not resolve the issue soon, then he was sure to suffer heavy financial losses. However, merely seizing his goods and inspecting them was not a proper cause for war, and as such, Berengar could not force Guntrum to return his assets. While spacing out in a daze of boredom, Berengar briefly overheard Eckhard's shouts as one of Berengar's spies rushed into the Great Hall and reported the situation to the new Marshal.

"Baron Guntrum did what? This is clearly an act of war!"

Berengar, with a look of confusion, as he was unaware of what had transpired and decided to confirm the situation. By the sound of it, it was bound to be good news.

"What is an act of war?"

Eckhard respectfully bowed before Berengar and reported the current situation at the border to his liege.

"My Lord, Baron Guntrum has stated that he will be seizing your supplies indefinitely and donating them to the Church as compensation for the alleged crimes you have committed against Christendom! He also has begun executing the Caravan Guards, saying that they are heretics without providing any evidence to back his claims!"

Despite the horrific news, a sadistic grin spread across Berengar's face as he heard Eckhard's words. Finally! This was his chance to not only use force but lay waste to the pious cunt once and for all! As such, the young Regent gave his decree immediately without any form of hesitation in his tone.

"Eckhard, call the banners and rally the militia. If Guntrum thinks he can execute men under my protection while robbing me like a common brigand, then he clearly underestimates my power! Aside from the local Garrisons, I want the full military might of Kufstein deployed to the border as quickly as possible!"

Eckhard quickly pounded his chest in a salute

"It will be done, My Lord!"

With that, he quickly departed and began to rally the Barony of Kufstein's forces. The professional army in which his father had fostered had roughly 1000 men among their ranks, and they would be fighting alongside Berengar's militia which now numbered over 1300 strong. If the Baron of Kitzbühel wanted war, then Berengar was more than happy to oblige! As such, Berengar quickly drafted an official declaration of war to deliver to Baron Guntrum, which was then rushed to his territory by an official diplomat.

Though Berengar's other advisors quickly swarmed around him and attempted to calm him down, in particular, his Chancellor gathered by his side and chastised him for so quickly resorting to violence.

"My Lord, do you believe it is wise to march upon the Barony of Kitzbühel, Baron Guntrum has quite a large force of well equipped professional soldiers, and while your father may have outfitted our troops with excellent supplies, that does not mean it will be easy to lay siege to his mighty Castle! I beg you to rethink this recklessness and focus on diplomacy!"

Berengar sneered at his Chancellor with disdain; what purpose did this man have to lecture him on the art of war. However, he refrained from doing anything unwise and merely scolded the man.

"Falko, I have been robbed of my people's labor. I will have satisfaction; the entirety of the Barony of Kitzbühel will more than make up for the assets which have been stolen from me!"

A look of horror spread across the chancellor's face as he quickly realized what the young Regent meant by these words.

"You would lay claim to the Baron's lands?"

Berengar's sinister gaze landed upon Falko and made him shiver in fright, the words the young Regent spoke only furthered the dread in which the chancellor felt at that moment.

"My dear Chancellor, my father, is getting quite old; what kind of son would I be if I did not make him a Viscount before he passes from this world?"

Berengar would use this excuse for war as a means to destroy Guntrum's entire family and incorporate his domain into Kufstein. This would accomplish two of Berengar's ambitions, sending a clear message to his enemies that he should not be provoked; and expanding the borders of his family's dominion. While Falko gazed upon Berengar with a horrified expression, Berengar marched off to get himself equipped for battle; he would personally lead his forces into the Barony of Kitzbühel and lay waste to their army. The young Regent could not help but think to himself as he dressed for the upcoming war.

"Finally... something interesting has happened!"