

Steel 73

Chapter 73: Establishing a Siege Camp

The enemy Marshal had made it back to Baron Guntrum and informed him of his massive defeat before the enemy forces had arrived in the town of Kitzbuhel. Baron Guntrum could not believe his ears as he listened to the near fantastical tale of how easily his armies were torn apart by Berengar's forces and the thunderous weapons they wielded.

"My liege, Our armies are defeated; the survivors of our forces are few in numbers and have already begun to flee the land. It will not be long before the enemy has us surrounded, and we are besieged! Tell me, sire, what are your orders?"

Baron Guntrum was still shocked by the news and truly did not know how to react to this situation. The best he could do was hope his walls could withstand the cannon fire of Berengar's artillery. After all, surely his marshal was exaggerating their effectiveness? After regaining his senses, Guntrum gave his decree.

"I want every man and child capable of bearing arms atop these castle walls defending it with their lives! If you have to, send the garrison into the village to gather the forces necessary to achieve this, and do it swiftly before the enemy arrives!"

For once in his life, the marshal wished his Liege would sue for peace. Unfortunately, he could not voice such concerns as his orders were already given; as such, the man quickly gathered the Castle's forces and rode into the village, conscripting anyone capable of bearing arms into their forces to defend the Castle's walls. It did not matter if they had never used a bow before; simply having the bodies necessary to launch missile fire at the enemy attackers was good enough for the Baron, who had grown desperate after his recent defeat.

Berengar rode atop the back of his mighty steed as he and his forces marched into the town of Kitzbuhel; the local castle lay in the hills above, overlooking the valley and the people within it, displaying the authority of the mighty overlord of the region. Berengar had no time to spare with securing the township and merely ordered his troops to move through it so they could set

up a siege camp within the vicinity of the Castle. Sieges were long-lasting endeavors, but he figured he could bring down the large stone walls fairly quickly due to his superior firepower. As such, he barked commands at his troops who heeded his commands.

"I want a siege camp set up and fully fortified by Dusk! Make sure it is out of the range of enemy missile fire!"

Eckhard, who was marching in command of the infantry forces, quickly pounded his breastplate as he saluted Berengar while responding to his orders.

"It will be done, my Lord."

The local townsfolk who remained after the massive conscription which had just taken place quickly fled their homes as they saw the army arrive; they were frightful of the potential actions which the enemy forces would take against them now that their own had been defeated in the field of battle. Many women and children wept for the loss of their husbands, fathers, and sons, who were torn to shreds by the overwhelming might of Berengar's forces. Very few of the Baron's soldiers had escaped the wrath of their enemy. Those who were lucky enough to survive had begun to flee with their families towards one of the other villages in the Barony. After witnessing the frightening display of their enemy's power, they had no hope in rallying behind the Castle walls and successfully defending against the siege.

Berengar made sure his men were fully disciplined as they marched through the village. He had made it abundantly clear to his men beforehand that the people of this region were not to be mistreated, and as long as his watchful eye cast over them, they managed to behave themselves. Whether they would be able to maintain this degree of professionalism during a protracted siege was a different story. Berengar set his siege camp up just out of range of the enemy defenders. However, Berengar's forces were still in range of attack, and as such, they could successfully bombard the enemy defenders with cannons and rifles throughout the entire period.

The effective range was essentially a mere 300 feet, and their longbows had a maximum range of 328 yards. Even the once-mighty steel crossbow had a mere 380 yards of effective range. In comparison, the effective range of

Berengar's cannons was roughly 1618 yards. His Long rifles, while in the hands of effective marksmen, were roughly 500 yards in range. As such, by placing their siege camp roughly 400 yards away from the enemy castle, they were able to effectively attack their enemy from dawn to dusk without a single enemy attack on their forces.

It took quite some time; however, the Siege Camp was fully set up and effectively fortified by the evening. The guns had been loaded and begun their bombardment; they would not stop until the next morning. The Napoleon-style 12 lb cannon was already a sturdy and robust cannon design in his previous life, mostly made of bronze. However, Berengar's cannons were made of high-quality steel, and as such, could withstand the pressures of a steady firing rate throughout the night. As such, the Thunder of guns echoed throughout the entirety of the night while the twelve-pound solid steel cannonballs battered the mighty stone walls of the enemy's castle, slowly chipping away at the enemy's defenses.

Those defenders unfortunate enough to get caught in the blast were torn apart by the enemy bombardment. Stone shards constantly spat out the areas affected by the continued bombardment and acted as shrapnel against the defending forces. Though it was only 12 guns, they were able to effectively bombard the enemy defenders to the point of suppressing them completely; even if they were within firing range of the defenders, those who lie behind the castle walls would not be able to cause much harm upon their foes. The might of steel and shot had shown itself as Berengar sat in his tent drinking from a goblet of wine. Tomorrow he would allow the cannoneers to rest and give his enemy a slight reprieve. He would resume his bombardment the following morning.