

Steel 75

Chapter 75: Suing for Peace

The remainder of the day was spent intimidating the garrison hiding behind the deteriorating stone walls of the Castle. Berengar had tasked his militia to keep an eye on his father's professional forces and report any suspicious activity to their NCOs. After the events that transpired during the previous night, Berengar was far more cautious about the behavior of the men beneath his command. Luckily for him, his message was obvious, and the knights and men-at-arms who comprised of his father's forces were thoroughly intimidated into following orders. They knew the militia were loyal completely to Berengar, and they did not have a chance of surviving if they mutinied. As such, the night was far more peaceful than the previous one.

As for Baron Guntrum and his forces, they continued to hide behind their walls, praying that Berengar's forces no longer had the capacity to bombard them. Unfortunately for them, when the sun rose the next day, the bombardment continued. The solid steel balls constantly battered the stone walls, and slowly but surely, they began to crumble. It was not until noon when the gates of the Castle were opened, and a man dressed in knightly plate armor-wearing the colors of house von Kitzbühel walked out from the entrance flanked by several guards. In his hands was a white flag of peace. After noticing this, Berengar ordered his artillery to cease their bombardment, grabbed a white flag of his own, and marched with his grenadiers to meet up with the man he presumed to be Baron Guntrum von Kitzbühel in between the siege camp and the castle.

When Berengar finally arrived in front of Guntrum, the man sighed heavily, he knew his castle walls would not hold out for long, the damage done to them would already cost a fortune to repair, his armies were defeated, his conscripts did not have the means to defend the Castle any longer, and he was waiting for the end of himself and his family, at least this way he could negotiate with Berengar for the survival of his family.

"I have come to negotiate the terms of my surrender!"

Currently, Berengar and his grenadiers stood across from Guntrum and his house guard. The scene of the early modern force, standing across from their medieval counterparts, would be one day be painted brilliantly and become a

staple of German Culture. The painting would be titled "When Two Worlds Collide" and would display the overwhelming might of Berengar's rise to power. Of course, neither of the two men knew such a thing would occur in the distant future, and as such, they merely conducted themselves appropriately.

Berengar grinned at Guntrum, though he had stated he would act ruthlessly towards the arrogant Baron and his family during his declaration of war, it was all part of his negotiations. After all, the cost of rebuilding the castle and the resistance that would come to a new dynasty placed in authority by him was not something Berengar wished to deal with. What he wanted was Guntrum's subservience to subject him and his territory as a vassal state and to raise his family's status to a Viscounty as such; Berengar spoke with the authority and tyranny of a conqueror who would not accept anything other than an unconditional surrender.

"State your terms."

That is all that Berengar said as he looked coldly upon the once mighty Baron. This confused the man, but Guntrum tried to appear as if he was negotiating from a position of strength.

"I will give you back your steel and textiles. I will also offer you compensation for the cost of this war. In return, I want you and your men to leave this land and my family in peace."

Berengar gazed at Guntrum seriously before breaking out into laughter; after a few moments of awkwardness, he calmed himself down before saying his piece.

"You must be joking. You realize that if we continue as things are, your walls will collapse, and my men will storm your castle. At that point, I really will not spare you or your family's lives..."

Guntrum frowned at this response; he did not have a proper retort; he knew he could not effectively defend his keep for much longer. This was an overwhelming victory for Berengar, and Guntrum did not have the means to enforce his demands. As such, he asked Berengar in a slightly agitated tone.

"What is it that you desire from all of this?"

Berengar moved closer to Guntrum, which immediately alerted his guards; however, he maintained enough distance to maintain a degree of civility.

"What is it that I desire, you ask? I want you to accept your position as my family's vassal; I want to incorporate your territory into Kufstein and for my family's lands to be recognized as Viscounty with all of the status and prestige that comes with it. Now I can take this land by force, but in my opinion, there has already been enough bloodshed. You have two options; you can return to your castle and wait for your death alongside your family. Or you can submit to my rule and live to maintain your land under my sovereignty. It is time to choose..."

With Berengar's demands having been made, Guntrum was left with an ultimatum, one in which he knew Berengar could fully enforce. Either way, Kitzbühel would be incorporated into Kufstein; his choice would merely determined whether or not he and his family would live to preside over it. Being backed into a corner by the young Regent, Guntrum had no choice but to accept Berengar's conditions.

"Under these terms, I surrender to you... My Lord."

Berengar smiled as he clasped Guntrum on the shoulder as if he were an old friend before saying his piece.

"Swear fealty unto me, and I will accept your surrender."

Begrudgingly Guntrum kneeled before Berengar and spoke the Oath of Fealty

"I Baron Guntrum von Kitzbühel promise on my faith that I will in the future be faithful to the Viscount of Kufstein, never cause him harm, and will observe my homage to him completely against all persons in good faith and without deceit."

With these words spoken, the war that would be known to all in the future as the First Kufstein Border War was concluded, with Berengar and his family ascending to the title of Viscounts and doubling the territory under their

dominion. This would be the first of many conquests the Tyrant of Steel would engage in on his path to becoming Emperor.