

Steel 78

Chapter 78: Lambert's Decision

Lambert was currently in the courtyard of the Castle of Malbork, where he was currently undergoing the brutal training to which the initiates of the Teutonic Order must adhere. Currently, he was sparring with many of his fellow initiates; the young men wielded blunt steel swords against one another as they fearlessly tried to gain the upper hand against their fellow initiates.

Joining the Teutonic Order was not the honor it had been centuries ago, in the eyes of the public outside of the German-speaking regions, they were seen as warmongers, spreading the views of Catholicism to the neighboring Orthodox Kingdoms by the tip of the spear. An action that greatly strained the relations between the two pillars of Christianity.

Currently, the Teutonic Order was in a war with the Grand Duchy of Moscow and, by extension, the Golden Horde, who were the Muscovites feudal overlords. A war in which they were faring quite well, however the need for new troops was constant, and as such, the Teutonic Order had begun taken in criminals as an attempt to fuel their endless Crusades in the North.

As such, Lambert was engaged in a sparring session with another initiate; the young man was an orphan adopted by the Teutonic Order many years ago and had been training within the castle for quite some time. Though he was talented, Lambert was far superior in the art of swordsmanship and easily bested the man as he dropped him to the floor with a murder stroke. After knocking the man to the ground, Lambert looked upon him with disdain before barking orders.

"Get up!"

however, the moment he did so, he felt a thump on the back of his head from the master of arms of the Teutonic Order, who quickly chastised him.

"Initiate! You do not give orders to your brothers! Nor do you use such force against them in a mere sparring session! As punishment for your actions, you will be cleaning the latrines after your training is over!"

By now, Lambert knew better than to protest. Despite being a man of Noble birth; none of that truly mattered in the Teutonic Order. To every Knight within this castle, he was considered nothing more than a criminal and a meager initiate who had yet to earn the right to bear the black cross of the order. As such, Lambert merely nodded before getting back to sparring.

Throughout the remainder of the session, he vented his frustration onto his sparring partners, resulting in the other young men greatly dissatisfied with Lambert and his unruly behavior. This past month since the boy had begun his exile, he had suffered constant humiliation at the hands of the established knights and had been greatly humbled in his duties. He hated every moment of his time spent here while blaming his brother and his ex-fiancee for his current circumstances. The only thing keeping him sane was the thought that one day he would gain his vengeance against those who had wronged him.

After the sparring session, Lambert began to clean out the latrines, it was an exceptionally filthy and degrading task, but it was a fitting punishment for his behavior. Lately, he had spent a lot of time doing menial tasks such as this. Though he was by far the most talented of the new initiates, his attitude made him unpopular and unlikely to make any new friends any time soon.

After finishing cleaning the latrines, he was approached by a couple of Knights; the one in command immediately gave him a summons.

"You have been summoned to the Great Hall! I suggest you make yourself presentable before you meet the Grand Master..."

Without allowing him time to reply, the Knights turned around and left; they had fulfilled their duties and no longer cared about what happened to the boy. Whether or not he heeded their advice was entirely up to him, and they had no desire to aid such a disorderly initiate any further than necessary.

Thus Lambert took a bath and put on a clean set of initiate's attire before approaching the Great Hall of the mighty Castle. After entering the great hall, he saw the Grand Master standing near the fireplace, reading a letter contained within his hands. This letter was from the Vatican and informed him of the many alleged misdeeds of Berengar since the young man had taken over the role of Regent in his father's lands.

When Lambert approached the Grand Master, the man turned around and stared at him intensely in silence. The Grand Master was an older man in his sixties; he was completely bald, with a large white beard and steel-gray eyes. He wore a set of plate armor in the appropriate style of the era with a white tabard on top of it, which had the golden and black cross of the Grand Master emblazoned upon it. The man looked at Lambert with a stern expression as he greeted the boy.

"So you are the second son who tried to murder his elder brother for the inheritance? It is a pity you failed; your brother has turned into a thorn in the Church's side; because of that, I just received a request from the Pope to invade your family's lands and annex them as a part of the Teutonic State..."

Lambert stood in shock as he heard this news, he did not know what events had occurred to his brother after he was exiled, but the Inquisition should have arrived by now. However, the fact that the Holy See had requested the Teutonic Order's intervention meant something extraordinary had happened over the past month. Lambert could not prevent himself from inquiring about the details.

"What happened?"

The older man placed down the letter in his hands on his desk and grabbed a chalice filled with wine as he began to drink from it; it was only after he had chugged the entire contents of the glass did he reveal the details of what had transpired.

"Your Brother has killed two members of the Inquisition. Afterward, he was excommunicated and declared a heretic. An action that should make a man think twice before engaging in any further wicked behavior. Yet I just received word that he has unlawfully invaded and annexed one of his neighbors, declaring his father, a Viscount under the newly established Viscounty of Kufstein. If that were not bad enough, the Baron of Kitzbühel had promised a substantial degree of raw materials to the Vatican as a gift, your heretic of a brother has now seized those resources, and he refuses to relent on the issue."

If the Church was good at one thing, it was propaganda, and in an area so far away from Berengar's influence, the only news about his actions came from

the Church. They did their best to paint him as a villainous fiend whose very nature was antagonistic to the Church and their teachings. The Grand Master was completely unaware of the truth behind these events and, as such, chose to believe his masters' lies.

After hearing the events that had occurred over the past month in his family's lands, Lambert struggled to find the means to express himself, and in his brief moment of silence the Grand Master closed the distance between the two and gazed at him with a grave expression.

"At the moment, I do not have the men to spare to fulfill the Pope's request. However, that will not be an issue within a matter of months, so the question on my mind is simply this. Are you going to continue to throw a tantrum like a small child? Or will you take up the mantle of our Order and enact God's justice upon your heretical brother and the heathens who support him?"

Lambert had found himself at a crossroads; if he continued on his current path, the likelihood was that he would not be able to achieve his goals; however, if he started to behave himself and make an actual effort into joining the order, then climbing the ranks would be an easy task for someone like himself, as such Lambert decided to kneel before the Grand Master and pledge his servitude to the Order.

"I apologize for my actions Grand Master, and henceforth I will make every effort to make up for my mistakes. If God wills it, then one day I hope to be a part of the army which brings the Lord's judgment upon my wicked brother!"

As such, on this day, Lambert had truly begun to dedicate his heart and soul to the Teutonic Order and the hope that one day soon they could allow him to gain his vengeance.