

## Steel 80

### *Chapter 80: Revelation of Corruption*

Weeks passed and Berengar was, of course, busy overseeing the construction of his grand city and also managing the affairs of the realm at large. Linde continued to manage her spy network, and Eckhard continued to train the troops. Everything was running smoothly as far as Berengar was concerned.

In this time nothing major happened, though there were some minor improvements to Berengar's overall plans. For example, today was the day Ludolf finally became an ordained priest. As such he was kneeling in the church at Innsbruck where the local Bishop conducted his ordination. The ceremony was nothing extravagant, and it was soon over.

When the Bishop of Innsbruck finished the ceremony he began to speak to Ludolf, having no way of knowing that he was already in Berengar's camp.

"Ludolf, I must say you have your work cut out for your working in that godless territory."

This struck a nerve with Ludolf as the land he was currently residing in was referred to as godless by the Bishop simply because he disagreed with Berengar's policies. As such he immediately defended it.

"Godless? What makes you refer to Kufstein as Godless?"

The Bishop smiled in with a condescending look as he chastised Ludolf for his naivety.

"Good Ludolf, I know you have sympathies towards the people of the region, but the Regent who currently commands them is a Heretic, excommunicated and damned as such by the Pope himself. Clearly, the people's souls are suffering under such a wicked tyrant. It is up to you to lead the people of Kufstein to the light of God. Thank goodness we will not have to put up with that heretic for much longer."

The last portion of the Bishop's lecture caught Ludolf by surprise, this meant there was clearly a plot underway against Berengar and as such he decided to dig deeper into the Bishop's meaning.

"I'm sorry, I'm afraid I don't understand what you mean by that? Why will we not have to put up with Berengar much longer?"

The Bishop thought he was talking to someone on his and the Vatican's side and as such had no qualms about discussing their conspiracy behind closed doors.

"Why because of the Teutonic Order of course!"

Ludolf was visibly confused as he heard the Bishop's orders, as such he explained the entirety of the situation to Ludolf who listened intently.

"As you may be aware the Teutonic Order is currently at war with the Grand Duchy of Moscow, however, they have a plan to wipe the floor with those damned Rus and install the power of the Holy See over their Patriarch. As such within six months to a year, they will be free to bring their wrath down upon the Heretics in Kufstein and annex the territory as an area of the Teutonic State. Surely the control of the territory will return to God's favored son of the von Kufstein family at that time!"

Ludolf was shocked, but he clearly understood what the Bishop meant by that, as such he had to ask the question on his mind.

"Does the Pope know about this?"

The Bishop merely broke out into laughter thinking that Ludolf was joking before noticing the serious expression on his face.

"Who do you think requested the aid of the Teutonic Order in this endeavor?"

If previously Ludolf had any doubts about the extent in which the Catholic Church was rotten they no longer existed. Truly the entire Catholic Church was filled to the brim with corruption, and he could no longer stand by it. Now that he was a properly ordained priest he would take action. He had thought about everything Berengar had told him about the Church and was certain

now that everything he said was the truth. When he returned home to Kufstein he would quickly get to an academic disputation of the church and its corruption he would be sure to post it on the door to the Church of Kufstein and have Berengar print it with his printing press so that it could be distributed to all learned readers across the German-speaking regions.

However, at the moment he was surrounded by enemies and had to play the part of a loyal subject, as such he quickly smiled and nodded to the Bishop's response

"Of course, I was merely curious. I hope Berengar gets what he deserves."

As such the two communicated for a long while over a few glasses of communion wine, the revelations he heard from the bishop now that he had become an ordained priest only increased his resolve to publically condemn the church. Embezzlement was the least of the Church's crimes, they had done truly unspeakable things in the past, and the Bishop let loose all of the details in which he was privy to after having more than his fair share of wine. Loose lips sink ships, and after a few drinks, the Bishop was more than willing to share anything in which Ludolf asked.

Ludolf quickly came to the realization that The institution he had once looked up to as the beacon of hope in a terrible world was utterly corrupted to the core, and it would take a miracle to save it. Berengar was right all along, though the two had debated over the extent to which the corruption of the church reached, he had always seen Berengar as a benevolent ruler, and kind man to those who deserved it. Ludolf had always justified Berengar's more ruthless actions as bringing the judgment of heaven onto the wicked, even when the inquisitors were executed he did not bat an eye. Yet now he was fully convinced that Berengar's ideals were 100% correct and needed to be preached by a proper priest. Little did he know that he was playing exactly into Berengar's hands.

Berengar had long since desired to use Ludolf to be the Martin Luther of this world and to usher in the protestant movement. Something which would give Berengar a valid casus belli to seize the territories of the German world for himself after he came to power in Austria. After all the Catholics would never let an openly protestant state exist, and through the might of science and

engineering, Berengar would bring down the influence of the Church over the German people and instate his own, one which would serve his interests.