

Steel 83

Chapter 83: A Father's Grief

Berengar awoke bright and early once more; with his lover by his side, he could not help but smile at the shining of the dawn upon their gentle embrace. However, now was not the time to entertain his little pet. Instead, he quickly got out of bed and began to begin his daily exercise. Today consisted of mainly cardio; as such, he went for his daily run before engaging in swordplay with Eckhard. By now, he was at least competent enough with the sword to survive in a fight on the battlefield.

Today was not a sparring day. Instead, he drilled intensely, getting the proper movement of attacks and defensive positions engrained into his muscle memory; after nearly two hours of learning swordsmanship, Berengar retired to the bath where he cleaned himself before visiting his parents chambers.

Berengar arrived at the door of his family's chambers, where he knocked upon it several times before his mother opened the door. She had a look of worry on her face as she glanced upon Berengar before dragging him into the room and shutting the door behind. Shocked by his mother's actions, Berengar could not help but question her motives.

"Mother, what is going on?"

Gisela did not say much and merely led Berengar to the bedside where his father was resting, it had been over a month since he last saw the man, and his condition had changed for the worse during this time. The old man truly looked as if he had aged ten years, his hair which was starting to grey in the past, had greatly progressed in that matter, and his face was gaunt with malnutrition adding to his age. Evidently, the man had been fasting heavily and repeatedly praying to the Lord for guidance. Yet, all such actions managed to achieve was deal a significant blow to his health; he now looked worse than Berengar did when he first arrived in this world.

Berengar looked at his father with a great sense of guilt; if the old man was this bad after having exiled his son, then Berengar did not want to imagine his condition if Lambert had been executed for his crimes. As a dutiful son Berengar took responsibility for this and approached Sieghard, lying in a state of depression on his bed. After grabbing hold of his hand, Berengar spoke to

his father, informing him of some of the good news that had happened over the last month or so.

"Father! I want to inform you that you are now a Viscount! Due to a border conflict with Kitzbühel, I have successfully conquered them, forced Baron Guntrum into your vassalage. As far as Lambert is concerned, I have received news that he fits nicely in the Teutonic Order and will soon take his vows. There is no reason to be suffering so much; the boy will surely redeem himself in the eyes of the Lord soon enough!"

Berengar did not have the heart to tell his father that he was engaged in a serious conflict with the Church and that he had been excommunicated and condemned as a Heretic. Nor did he have the desire to inform the old man that the Teutonic Order planned to march on their lands within 6 months to a year in an attempt to depose himself as Regent and annex the territory allowing Lambert to rule over it under the Banner of the Teutonic State. If the man heard such terrible news, he might literally die of a broken heart, and Berengar could not bear to witness such a thing.

Sieghard smiled for the first time in a long time as he heard the news; it brought a brief sense of respite from the crippling guilt he felt for failing his sons as a father. He spoke weakly to Berengar with an affectionate smile.

"A Viscount, huh? I suppose that is good news for you, my son, soon enough, you will inherit my lands, and you deserve far more than ruling over a lowly Barony like I was able to provide for you. I regret that I will not live to see your wedding..."

Berengar could not help but tear up as he heard these words; his father had truly given up on life, at the rate he was going, he would not even make it to the war to which he had been so desperately looking forward to. Nor did Berengar believe that Sieghard even cared for such a thing at this point. He tried to give meaning to the old man's life in any way he could; as such, he thought about Linde's pregnancy and tried to urge his father to care about that.

"Father, do not speak in such a manner; you will soon be a grandfather. Do you not wish to gaze upon the sight of your first grandchild after it has been born?"

With this, Sieghard merely scoffed and returned to his depressed state as he stopped looking at Berengar and returned his gaze to the ceiling of the cold stone room. He voiced his concerns aloud, not caring how Berengar would feel about hearing them.

"Pfft... A bastard child, the result of which will forever be a reminder of my failure as a parent. One of my sons conspired to murder his elder brother, and the other impregnated his younger brother's fiancée. What a masterful job I have done raising you boys..."

Berengar's plan to cheer up his father had completely backfired so spectacularly that he had sent his father into a further state of depression; Berengar could understand his father's grievances with his relationship with Linde. At this point He was just happy that Sieghard was unaware of how his relationship with Linde came to be; if the old man was aware that it was the result of yet another plot against his life by Lambert, he might actually die on the spot.

As such, the young Regent could not help but sigh in response to his father's state. There was truly nothing he could do; he was not socially adept enough to properly comfort his father through his sense of overwhelming guilt and grief. His one attempt to do so had just managed to make his father feel worse about the whole situation. He may have just caused several weeks to be taken off his father's life. Berengar needed to find something that could give the old man some hope, and quickly. If not, he feared the reaper would take his father from him far earlier than he should.

Before leaving the room, Berengar expressed his empathy for his father while choking back the anger he felt at himself for being so socially inept when comforting others about serious issues.

"Get well soon, father..."

With that said, Berengar departed from his father's room with a sense of defeat. He did not know how to fix this situation, and all that he could manage was to throw himself into his work to avoid the sense of despair that had begun to take hold of his heart as he thought about the hopelessness of his father's current state.

