

Steel 95

Chapter 95: Alchemists Arrive in Kufstein

When word of his Legal Reforms spread across the land, it was not just the nobles who were his vassals who had become upset by the news. In fact, pretty much the entirety of the Austrian nobility was outraged by such wild and ambitious ideas. For starters, they were unsure if Berengar actually had the legal authority to do this; technically, Berengar was a Vassal to Count Lothar, who was, in turn, a Vassal to the Duke of Austria. As such, it was entirely unclear if he had the legal authority to do away with the Feudal system in his own territory.

The second major point of contention was that he was essentially challenging the absolute authority of the Nobility across Europe as a whole when the commoners of other territories heard that their counterparts in Kufstein were going to be afforded political representation, and public education in Kufstein, one of two things, was going to happen. They would either abandon the land in which they slaved away upon for the sake of their Feudal overlords, or they themselves would demand representation in their territory and thus pave the way to revolution.

Berengar's actions had not exactly made him any friends. However, there was really not much they could do about it; rumors of him having the power to conjure thunder and lightning had spread across the German-speaking regions; not only that but Kufstein was a relatively isolated and fairly mountainous territory, it would be challenging to invade and would surely cost many lives. Needless to say, his reforms were woefully unpopular among the nobility of this feudal world.

As time passed and word inevitably spread, Kufstein received many German peasants running away from their masters and seeking a better life in Kufstein. This massive influx in the population of Kufstein rapidly expanded his workforce and sped up the production of the Grand Infrastructure Initiative, increased the size of his army, and enhanced industrial productivity.

Of course, the most important group who were attracted to the Viscounty of Kufstein by these bold new legal reforms were a group of fugitives on the run from the Church's persecution; these fugitives were Alchemists who had invoked the ire of the Church, as men of science commonly had done in the

past. Knowing that Berengar was branded a Heretic by the Church, and seeing as how he had supposedly enacted legal reforms to separate the church from the political power of the State in his region, these alchemists arrived in Kufstein under cover of the many peasants seeking a better life, which despite the protests of nearby noblemen, Berengar refused to return to their former masters.

When they arrived in the growing City of Kufstein, the men comprised of this small group of alchemists numbering no more than a dozen were amazed by what they saw. The ongoing construction of the city walls set up in strange a star-like pattern, the large apartment complexes that were being built, the industrial sector which had technology they had never seen before, even the sewage treatment facility which was currently under construction had caught their eye. It was as if these men stepped into a land of technological marvels.

Of course, after sightseeing for some time, they made their way to the Castle's gates which were guarded by men in strange attire and unknown armor who wielded what appeared to be a hand cannon, but the design was not like anything they had ever seen before. When they approached the guards, they were quickly stopped by the bayonets affixed to their muskets, with the deep gruff voice of the squad leader giving them a command.

"Stop right there! The Viscount is not seeing guests at the moment!"

Fearing the unknown weapons, the group of fugitives quickly did as they were commanded while lowering their hoods, which revealed their faces. The man in front of them all was a tall and regal man who was in his fifties with a finely groomed set of gray hair, a matching mustache, and a monocle; the man quickly introduced himself and stated the urgency of his need to visit the Viscount.

"I am Aldo von Passau, former court Alchemist for the Duke of Bavaria, and these are my students. Please, I have urgent business to discuss with your Lord!"

The guards immediately looked at each other and began to discuss whether or not they should allow this group entry into the Castle. After all, Berengar had long since informed his men that if an alchemist ever arrives in his territory, he would very much like to meet them. However, they were also

under strict orders not to let people into the Castle at the moment. Ultimately the squad leader decided to make an exception and allow the men to pass; if they were really who they claimed to be, Berengar would surely forgive them.

As such, the group of a dozen scholars were led to the Great hall where Berengar was currently working; their arrival surprised the young Viscount as he stared at the uninvited guests. Before he could inquire about their identities, his guards properly introduced the men.

"My Lord, I know that you have given us orders not to allow guests into the Castle, but these men claim to be alchemists, and as such, I thought you might like to meet them."

Berengar's sapphire eyes immediately sparkled with delight as he heard those words, and a smile beamed across his immaculate visage. Finally, after many months, he might have a group of dedicated chemists working for him. The mustached man with the monocle quickly introduced himself to Berengar.

"My Lord, I am Aldo von Passau, former Court Alchemist of the Duke of Bavaria; I have traveled a long way to meet you. I wish to offer my services to you and that of my students."

Berengar frowned when he heard this, he was quite skeptical about why a Court Alchemist of a Duke would bother coming to a lowly place like Kufstein. As such, he decided to investigate.

"If what you claim is true, then why are you here in my domain instead of at the Court in Bavaria?"

The man quickly explained his story, which was all too common for brilliant men in the medieval period. He was studying alchemy when he discovered some new advancement that the Church declared blasphemy in their massive ignorance; as such, he was declared a heretic, imprisoned, and his research was stolen. With the aid of hidden supporters in the Duke's castle, he escaped with his students and had been on the run since. He was quite lucky to escape. Otherwise, he most likely would have been burnt at stake.

After hearing his story Berengar thought it was plausible, but he wanted to confirm the man's story. As such, he would later task his spy network to

determine if the man was telling the truth or not; if he were, then Berengar would gladly accept his employment. For now, he would provide shelter to the man and his so-called students. If they happened to be enemy agents, he would have no qualms lining them up against a wall to be shot.

As such, he informed the group of his decision.

"Until I can verify your identities, I will grant you shelter here in my domain, if your identities are properly verified, I have no qualms about offering you employment as I have a dire need for chemists, as for the consequences if you are lying to me, and seek to do me harm, well I'm sure you can imagine them yourself."

Aldo bowed gratefully to Berengar; he did not doubt that his identity and that of his students would be confirmed, and as such, had nothing to fear. Thus he thanked the local Viscount for his gesture before being lead away.

"I thank you for the kindness you have shown my student and me on this day, and I look forward to working for you."

The only thing Aldo thought was strange was that Berengar had used the term "chemist" instead of "alchemist," maybe he had misheard the young Viscount...

With the arrival of a dedicated team of alchemists in Kufstein, Berengar would teach them actual chemistry and would be able to accomplish many things in which he was currently lacking. As such, he was brimming with excitement; he truly hoped they turned out to be who they claimed and that they harbored no evil intent.