

## Steel 96

### *Chapter 96: Adela's Birthday I*

The day was quickly arriving for Adela's thirteenth birthday, and the excellent set of jewelry in which Berengar had specifically crafted for his little fiancée was complete. The set comprised of a 24k gold necklace in the Tudor style from his previous life, with finely cut black garnet gemstones as well as an official engagement ring, made of a matching composition of materials, and finally, a pair of clip-on earrings, which was also made from gold and black garnet.

Ultimately when worn by Adela, it would be the most extravagant set of jewels in possibly all of Austria, and Berengar was greatly satisfied with the result of his craftsman. Linde gazed upon the magnificent jewels with a hint of jealousy as she looked at her own, which were exquisite in their own right, but not quite as grand as the set crafted for Adela, which were fit for a Queen or even an Empress.

She could not stop herself from remarking the grand expense Berengar was making to appease his future wife.

"I see Adela is getting a costly gift for her birthday..."

Berengar flicked Linde on his forehead and gave her a strict order

"Stop being jealous; it is only right that I spoil Adela; after all, she is to be my wife one day... As for you, I already have spoiled you more than enough!"

Though Linde continued to pout, she could not argue with his words; the sheer capacity of her wardrobe was filled to the brim with magnificent clothing designs and accessories in which Berengar had personally designed for her. Now that Berengar's parents had moved out, Berengar had taken the master bedroom as his own and moved Linde into the quarters with him. She no longer had to sneak around at night to spend time with him. If anything, despite being merely his lover, she was currently living the life of a wealthy Viscount's wife.

Ultimately Berengar had one final request of Linde before he departed for Graz, and he knew Linde would not like the decision he had come to. As such, with a heavy heart, he addressed his lover with a serious expression.

"Linde, I have a favor to ask of you..."

Linde was immediately aware of his tone and knew it would be something she disliked, but she nodded, signaling that he could continue. Thus Berengar made his request in an authoritative tone.

"I need you to stay here while I visit Graz. It would be inappropriate of me to arrive at my fiancée's birthday celebration with my lover in hand. Thus I have decided to leave you behind; promise me you will behave yourself while I am gone."

Linde had not expected Berengar to leave her behind while he went off to flirt with another woman. Though she knew nothing would happen between the two besides some childish kisses, she was still perturbed by the idea of being left out. Despite this, she knew this was not actually a request but an order, and as such, she obeyed her master's will, albeit begrudgingly.

"I will do as you command."

Berengar could tell by the expression on the young woman's face that she was not happy with the news, and as such, he made her promise to lift her spirits.

"I promise that when I return, I shall make it up to you."

With this, Linde smiled; she knew she would be able to use his actions as an excuse to monopolize him to herself for a few days, and thus she was instantly amicable to the arrangement. After saying this, Berengar gave her a parting kiss before leaving the Castle and entering his carriage. An entire company of Cuirassiers was tasked with guarding Berengar as he departed to Graz. Needless to say, he was properly guarded in the event some conspiracy was to take place.

After traveling for an uneventful 23 hours, Berengar and his caravan finally arrived at the castle in Graz, which currently acted as the capital of the County

of Steiermark, over which the von Graz family presided. He was still a day early, but the von Graz family quickly greeted him as he arrived. Berengar immediately paid his respects to Count Otto von Graz, whom he had not seen since the engagement ceremony.

"Count Otto, it is an honor for you to receive me like this."

Count Otto returned his praise to Berengar; he was truly impressed with the boy's performance; it was not easy to expand the territory of a Barony into that of a Viscounty, and yet he had done it so rapidly that his liege did not have time to interfere. It was truly a remarkable feat; looking at the strange armor and weapons in which Berengar's "knights" wielded, Otto was immediately filled with curiosity. However, it would be inappropriate for him to ask about the details at such a time. After observing the force, the Count welcomed Berengar into his home.

"Viscount Berengar, the honor is all mine. I have heard of your exploits and am deeply impressed with your feats. To think that you would rise to such a level of power and infamy so quickly is quite astounding."

It had been a matter of months since Berengar had changed his character. Yet, during this time the youth had crushed a rebellion, removed his brother as a threat to his future, seized his neighbor's lands, and ultimately succeeded his father.

Of course, Berengar accepted the praise from the count with magnanimity

"You honor me with your praise, Count Otto."

the Count merely smiled and grasped Berengar's shoulder

"It is well earned, my son."

After exchanging pleasantries with Otto, Berengar walked over to Adela who was waiting patiently for her turn, after arriving in front of her Berengar began to pet her head as he greeted the girl.

"Adela, it has been some time since I last saw you; you have grown even more beautiful in my absence."

As always, Berengar played the part of a charmer with his little fiancée, causing her to blush at his words immediately. Despite her reaction, Adela was still quite mad with him about his affair with Linde in which she was almost certain of; as such, she muttered under her breath in a voice so low even Berengar could not hear it.

"Womanizer"

Berengar did not hear her properly and tried to clarify what she had said

"What was that? I'm afraid I didn't hear you."

The girl quickly snapped out of her daze and returned to her normal cheerful self; after putting on a wide smile, she accepted the praise Berengar had given her.

"I said thank you!"

After this brief reunion, Berengar entered the von Graz family's castle, which was significantly larger and more fortified than his own, where he spent the rest of the evening playing the part of a loving fiancée and a graceful Viscount.