

# Tyranny of Steel

## Chapter 1 - Transmigrating to Another World

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Lt. Julian Weber gazed across the construction project his unit was responsible for. As the U.S. involvement in the war in Afghanistan came to a close, he was stuck building a bridge in the middle of nowhere for some god-forsaken country. If there was one thing he had learned during his four years as an officer in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, it was unwise to criticize the high command's stupidity openly.

Thus he kept his mouth shut as he and the other officer's mapped out the construction project while the enlisted personnel was hard at work building the massive bridge that served virtually no purpose whatsoever to U.S. forces who were already fleeing the country in large numbers. That's right, "fleeing." Julian may not care for a hellhole like Afghanistan. Still, he considered it a monumental loss to pull out of the country when the Afghan National Army was clearly incapable of contending with the Taliban without U.S. support.

In his mind, the U.S. had invested over 2.2 trillion dollars in the war and thousands of lives, yet before their mission was complete, they were pulling out. Leaving a fledgling democratic country like Afghanistan, which the US had installed as a puppet state to fend for themselves. This was Iraq and Vietnam all over again, and we all know how that turned out.

Despite his internal protests over the geopolitical situation, he was glad to be out of the region on a personal level. He was much more comfortable sitting in the barracks of some base in the homeland playing strategy games, city builders, and agricultural simulators. When he wasn't working, he played such games or educated himself on history, philosophy, politics, economics, and old technology.

After all, he was a fairly educated individual, having graduated at the top of his class in Civil Engineering from Westpoint. During his youth, he always had a fascination with Engineering. If you gave him a toy, he was more interested in taking it apart and putting it back together than he was playing with it.

As he grew into adolescence, he had spent most of his time on the web or in a library researching history and how the Industrial and Agricultural revolutions came to be; The significant improvements in technology, and how to replicate them. With a photographic memory and an above-average IQ, he could commit these things to his permanent memory.

During his college years, he once more focused on his studies, taking many unnecessary electives; by the time he graduated and entered the armed forces, he was

practically a walking textbook of knowledge ranging from liberal arts to technical knowledge. Obviously, this did not do him any favors in the dating scene.

Largely because this is how he chose to spend his free time, he was quite obviously perpetually single and had no dependents to rely upon him. Not even a house pet, as he considered pawning them off to a relative while he was deployed a hassle for not only himself but his relatives as well.

Yet here he was, stuck in the Middle East, engaging in a construction project in a country the U.S Military had already declared its full withdrawal date, which was only a month away. He didn't understand the brass' thinking, but it was just another enormous waste of the taxpayers' money at the end of the day.

I mean, sure, the Afghan National Army could use the bridge for tactical purposes, but could they seriously not build it themselves? That was obviously a rhetorical question he was asking himself, as he was well aware of the degree of competency he could expect from the ANA and was not impressed.

While he was thinking of such trivial things, he could hear the voices of a few Non-Commissioned Officers joking around in the background, discussing how they intended to celebrate the end of the war. These older men had been in the war far too long and did have a shred of nationalism left in their bodies; as such, they did not care about the loss the country faced in this land; they only cared about going home. Not that he could blame them.

Just as one of the NCOs was about to mention their plans, a large explosion went off in the distance, and the whistling sound of a shell in the air could be heard as it headed in Julian's direction. Only a single thought crossed Julian's mind as he gazed at the shell coming down upon him.

'Fuck my life!'

and with that final thought, his consciousness was engulfed in the blast of the explosive shell, as well as the lives of the other officers in the area. He was truly, and utterly dead.

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Berengar awoke with a shout as his hoarse voice echoed throughout the large stone room. His eyes darting frantically across the area. After careful examination, he realized he was not blown up by an artillery shell but instead lying on a massive bed with a canopy above. Near his bedside was a young girl at the early stage of adolescence gazing at him with fearful eyes. Henrietta was his younger sister; despite her youth, she was already quite pretty, with long blonde hair and sparkling blue eyes the color of the sky.

As he gazed upon the frightened girl, he quickly thought to himself something of significant importance.

'Henrietta? Sister? Since when did I have a sister? What is going on? and why was that my first thought upon observing this stranger?'

Berengar furrowed his brows as he searched his memories; it would appear that in his mind were two sets of memories. One was of the body in which he currently resided in whose identity was Berengar von Kufstein, son of Sieghard von Kufstein and heir to the Barony of Kufstein. He was twenty years old this year.

The other set of memories belonged to Julian Weber, a First Lieutenant in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers who died tragically in Afghanistan by an attack from the Taliban. Had he received new life? Just what was going on?

Before he could further question his situation, the young girl named Henrietta held his hand with tears streaming from her beautiful azure eyes.

"I thought I lost you! Thank God you're alive big brother!"

she then followed up her statement with the sign of the cross and a brief prayer in a language Berengar recognized as Latin.

Berengar sat back in his bed and continued to ponder about his situation as the memories of Berengar's life flooded into his head. This world was an Alternate Earth set in the Late Medieval Period. His family's land was a small Barony set within the borders of the Holy Roman Empire. Though many historical events were similar to the world he once knew, there were still many differences.

While the timeline of Antiquity was mostly intact, what happened after changed drastically from the world Julian was from. The East-West Schism never occurred within the church; as such, the Orthodox and Catholic Churches never drifted apart. Instead, the relationship between the two churches was rather Cordial, thus the Papacy held even more power than it did within our timeline.

Because the Byzantines were not considered heretics by the west by the time that the Crusades were declared. When the Holy Land was retaken from the Saracens, it was granted to the Byzantine Empire as they had the most rightful claim to the land. Thus The Byzantine Empire remained a powerhouse in the Mediterranean and never suffered the massive losses from the Fourth Crusade, which eventually would lead to its destruction not too far in the future.

There were many important figures from our timeline that had been replaced and many changes within the Holy Roman Empire. For example, in its current state, the Kingdom of Italy and its monarch reigned supreme. The Kingdom of Germany had become a

secondary state within the Empire and was on the verge of civil war as the various feudal powers contended for the throne.

These were just two of the many changes to the timeline. There had been far more than Berengar could count off of the top of his head. If he truly wanted to know the major differences in the timeline, and the power structure of the world he would have to thoroughly research it in his spare time.

With all these conflicts in his two sets of memories, Julian, or Berengar as he was now known, was beginning to get a headache and rubbed his temples with his fingers. Henrietta, who mistook this action as a sign of illness, immediately stopped her prayer and left the room, saying only one phrase as she rushed out the door. Her fine noble dress fluttering in her escape.

"I'll go get the physician!"

Berengar shuddered as he heard the sentence; from what he knew of Medieval medicine, he was more likely to be harmed by the treatment than cured from what ailed him. However, his throat was dreadfully dry, and he found himself unable to stop his little sister as she fled the scene. Leaving Berengar alone with nothing but his thoughts and an ever-increasing headache...