

Tyranny of Steel

Chapter 12

Chapter 12: Production Complete

As the month passed by Berengar, found himself spending most of his days exercising, eating healthy, and acquainting himself with his subjects. By now, the common folk of Kufstein was mostly aware of his humble and just nature. He had found himself spending some of his free time helping villagers with personal requests. Every day for lunch, he would dine among the common folk at the local bakery. Under his guiding hand, the local Baker and Butcher teamed up to create a local sandwich shop booming in business.

Berengar had to admit, inventing the sandwich was one of his best ideas. It was a cheap and healthy option for the villagers to cobble together and eat when they had the chance. The longer time went on, the more he added to the culinary culture of Kufstein. Instructing chefs on making schnitzel, spaetzle, and other common German foods that were iconic in his previous life but had yet to be invented. It was not simply a matter of advancing technology; he would have to bring a new era of culture with him if he wanted to accomplish his goals for the land over which his family governed.

During this period of time, Berengar had earned the trust of the servants in the castle and the village folk and had even set up a small spy network within his family's lands. It was used entirely to counter Lambert's attempts to end his life and usurp his birthright, and as such certain commoners became aware of the Baron's second son's true nature. In public, Lambert seemed like a noble and pious man, but the reality was very different.

Lambert was completely unaware that his every move had been watched by the common folk he looked down upon and reported to his older brother. He may have the local nobility on his side, but there was only so much they could do when the people protected Berengar. Who would poison his food? If the chefs who admired Berengar's passion for the culinary arts were the ones who would directly bring the food to the table in an attempt to hear Berengar's criticisms so that they may learn from him.

In his past life, Berengar had lived alone for many years and cooked for himself. Over time he had become quite the adequate chef. Though these men who cooked his meals had far more talent than he ever had, they lacked the knowledge of recipes and spices that Berengar brought with him from the memories of his past life.

Every so often Berengar would check up on the progress in which Gunther and Ludwig had made, and he was pleased with the results. The progress on the Beehive Ovens, Blastfurnace, and Bessmer converter was going smoothly. By the end of the month, they would be complete. The same could be said about the four-field system; with Gunther's backing and Berengar's improving reputation, the barony would have a four-field harvest this year.

While the month came to a close, the young Lord had found himself healthier by the day. No longer was he haunted by the gaunt lines of malnutrition that ravaged his otherwise excellent appearance. The shallow cheeks of his face had filled in nicely and had enhanced his already majestic features. The improvement to his condition was tremendous. It was amazing what a high protein and calcium diet could do for the body. Though he was by no means a bodybuilder and had still maintained a very lean appearance, Berengar was certainly no longer sickly in the slightest. His torso no longer had the haggard appearance of a feeble old man but shined with the vigor of youth. There were even signs of definition in the muscle on his body, and a six-pack steadily began to form.

His milky white skin maintained its grace, but the unhealthy pale effect had been replaced with a healthy glow. Despite these gains, he was still far from the fitness goals that he wished to accomplish, yet Berengar was satisfied with his appearance for now. He had finally overcome a lifetime of pestilence and frailty. Perhaps now he could even swing a sword properly, though, with his plans in mind for military innovations, the age of swords and arrows would soon be coming to an end.

After finishing his morning bath time, Berengar entered the dining room to eat his morning meal with his beloved family. However, Lambert was noticeably missing from the occasion. He had ventured to Innsbruck to visit his fiancée. This allowed Berengar a slight reprieve from the constant battles of intrigue he had secretly been engaging in with his little brother behind the scenes. He was aware that Lambert was cooking up an assassination attempt in the shadows and the likelihood of his visit to Innsbruck involving that purpose was high. If the Count of Tyrol was backing Lambert's plot to eliminate him, it did not bode well.

Thus Berengar had no choice; he would have to meet with his fiancée and gain the backing of her father, the Count of Steiermark. It was a task he had been putting off for some time now, primarily out of concern for his appearance. He had not seen Adela since she was a little girl; as such, this meeting would be the first time she had seen his adult appearance, and he had been waiting for satisfactory results. First impressions were key, especially when he really needed to convince the girl's father that he was not a sickly young man, of mild intellect and idle nature as the rumors had stated. He needed to prove he was healthy, determined, and cunning.

If he were to be backed by a noble of equal stature, then the Count of Tyrol would have to think twice about assassinating Berengar. As long as Berengar could contain Lambert's schemes to those dwelling within the Barony of Kufstein, he was positive he

could foil any attempt on his life and inheritance. Eventually, though, he would need a more permanent solution to Lambert and his many schemes. Berengar could not very well have someone who intends to kill him live within his domain.

The conversation at the breakfast table was delightful now that he did not have to worry about Lambert trying to affect his family's opinion of him. His father was very proud of the results of his training, and his mother could not help but smile every time she saw how healthy her baby boy had become. Henrietta on the other hand was happily enjoying her food without a care in the world.

Berengar was snacking on a breakfast sandwich made of toasted sourdough bread, sausage, egg, ham, bacon, and cheese. It was one of his favorite breakfasts in his previous life, and it was just as great in this one. His parents did not know where the idea of sandwiches came from, but they also enjoyed the new culinary inventions over the past month. After finishing the sandwich and washing it down with a mug of milk, Berengar discussed his concerns with his father.

"Father, I do believe it's time for me to meet with Adela. We've been officially betrothed for nearly a month now, and I have yet to see her face."

Sieghard smiled; he knew his son would be asking about it soon enough; the reason he hadn't asserted they meet sooner is that he too shared Berengar's concerns over the boy's prior appearance, but that was no longer a factor. Truth be told, he had received several letters requesting his son's appearance, which he had been stalling for time with his replies. However, he could not ignore the last one. Apparently, the little girl got fed up waiting on Berengar to accept her requests for a meeting and had already set out for Kufstein to force an encounter with her betrothed. He had not informed his son of this yet, and he figured now was the perfect time to do so.

"About that, it would appear your little cousin was too eager to meet you, and she has already set out for Kufstein. She should be arriving tomorrow morning."

Berengar smiled, he truly had not expected this, but he liked the little girl's determination. Maybe they could get along after all. However, he was not too sure what he could have in common with a twelve-year-old girl. Nevertheless, he was pleased to hear the news; he would not have to wait a fortnight to meet the girl, nor would he have to travel all the way to Graz which was the capital of Steiermark and the home to its Count.

"Good, that fits with my plans for the upcoming days."

Sieghard relaxed his shoulders and sighed after hearing Berengar's response; he thought the boy would be displeased with the news. After all, he had reacted so strongly to being engaged that he feared the boy would do something stupid in an attempt to break it off. Nevertheless, his son appeared to have accepted the betrothal. Sieghard had no idea that the only reason Berengar accepted the idea was that he needed to

borrow the Count of Steiermark's power to interfere with Lambert's deadly schemes. Berengar still was not pleased with the betrothal, but necessity forced his hand. If he had to court a young girl to ensure his survival, he would do so. Luckily the two wouldn't be married until the girl was sixteen, an acceptable age to Berengar.

Neither of the two men knew that the girl was ahead of schedule and was already at the border of the Barony; it would not be long before the couple would meet for the first time in many years. Nevertheless, because they had no way of knowing, Berengar went on with his plans for the day. Ludwig should have completed the project by now, and as such, after finishing his meal and being excused, Berengar went to the town and visited the area where Ludwig had constructed the devices.

Gazing up at a series of beehive ovens which were already aflame cooking the coal mined from the mountains into coke, a wide grin spread across Berengar's face. As Berengar stood in awe at the small industrial sector that had rapidly sprung up over the past month, Ludwig snuck up behind the young lord and patted him on the shoulder.

"Milord, as you can see, we have completed your designs and have already begun the process of creating the first batch of steel!"

Berengar looked across the small industrial sector built beside the river and saw that the Blast furnace, which was powered by a water wheel, was already in the production of pig iron. The beehive ovens produced the coke, which was then used to fuel the blast furnace to create molten pig iron, which was sent into the Bessemer converter to create steel!

Everything was flowing like a well-oiled machine; it would not be long until they had produced their first batch of steel, which they could sell to Innsbruck for a small fortune. Once he gained the profits, he would invest them into the mining sector of the small Barony and truly begin large-scale production of steel.

Berengar smiled as he slapped Ludwig on the back in a friendly gesture

"Ludwig, my friend, you have really outdone yourself!"

The two men smiled at each other as they stared in silence watching the operation of the semi-modern industrial sector in which they had created together. Though they had no way of knowing it. On this day in the year of our Lord 1417, the second of April marks the day when Berengar would become known by his enemies as the "Tyrant of Steel"...