

# Tyranny of Steel

## Chapter 13

### *Chapter 13: The Count's Daughter Arrives*

Adela stared outside the windows of her luxurious Carriage, guarded by a retinue of knights belonging to her father. Her golden blonde hair which was tied into twintails, glistened under the sunlight which shone upon her face; enhancing the natural beauty of her dazzling sapphire eyes. Despite being twelve years old, she was nicely filling out the long baby blue dress which she wore. Her perfect hourglass figure would only improve further with age. A drop of sweat began to pour down from her milky white shoulders as she fanned herself off with her exquisite hand fan.

She had traversed a large distance to enter this lowly Barony. Adela von Graz was the third daughter of Count Otto von Graz who was the Count of Steiermark. Against her wishes, she had been betrothed to her sickly elder cousin, which during the last time they met he appeared to be on his last limb. Somehow Berengar had managed to limp onwards in life until his 20th year.

She had no idea how such a frail, and unhealthy youth had endured life this long. However, because of this, she was furious with her father who had used her as a way to get a stake in Kufstein's rich iron mines. As a girl, she was nothing more than a tool for her family to secure alliances, and she was not content with this lot in life.

Nevertheless, she had to obey her family's wishes, and as such demanded to meet the man she would eventually be married to. However, to her dismay, her requests to meet with him kept being delayed. For an entire month, she had to endure this behavior until the point where she left her home and traveled across the entire Duchy of Austria to meet with him. From her perspective, the behavior of Berengar and his family was unsightly. Clearly, something was wrong with his health, otherwise, why would his family keep delaying his visit. If he was seriously too sick to travel, then she would convince her father to break the betrothal. It was no wonder that Berengar was twenty years old and still unmarried.

When she entered the Village of Kufstein she took notice of the smoke rising in the air, and initially thought a fire had broken out. Yet, to her surprise, the peasants rushed towards the smoky area in flocks as if something extraordinary had transpired. Curious as to what could gain the interests of so many of the common folk, the young lady ordered the driver of her carriage to approach the area to see what the commotion was about.

After stepping out of the carriage and entering the industrial sector which had recently been built, her eyes were not attracted to the strange machinery which was producing

the smoke but to that of a tall and handsome young man with slicked-back golden blonde hair, and sapphire eyes which matched her own perfectly. Despite the luxurious clothing he was wearing, the man stood next to an ordinary peasant both of which had large smiles on their faces.

The young lady had not paid the slightest amount of attention to the peasant next to the handsome young man who she immediately recognized despite the many years since their last meeting; she spoke her disbelief aloud as her cheeks flushed at the sight of her elder cousin who had grown extremely handsome since she last laid eyes upon him.

"Berengar?"

Despite voicing her thoughts, she remained unheard by the Baron's son who was otherwise engaged with the actions of the machinery before him. It did not take long for the Bessemer converted to dump its load of molten steel into the small factory, where it was further processed into ingots. The slag, which was produced as a byproduct, was taken away and converted into a phosphate fertilizer under the instructions of Berengar.

Adela was stuck in a trance and had not heard a word that escaped Berengar's lips; her body moved on its own as it inched ever closer to Berengar's presence. Who was still blissfully unaware of the contingent of knights clearing the way for the Count's daughter.

"Ludwig, you did not disappoint. With this batch of steel, we can use the profits to get the mines working at full capacity. We should be able to produce an overabundance of steel within a year!"

However, before Ludwig could respond to Berengar's compliments, the young lord's attention shifted to the girl approaching him and the knights who protected her. He could not explain why but he felt like he knew this beautiful young girl from somewhere. He immediately noticed the flushed cheeks and entranced gaze she was giving him as she bashfully looked away from Berengar, and into the direction of the ground, she asked him the question that was on her mind.

"Berengar is that you?"

Apparently, he did know this young girl, but he could not place a finger on who it was, he felt it would be improper to ask, but he truly had no choice as he could not fully remember the girl's identity no matter how much he tried.

"You are?"

Adela instantly felt like her heart had grown three sizes upon seeing Berenger and then plummeted into an abyss when he failed to recognize her. This bastard had grown so handsome, and yet he did not manage to recognize her beautiful face? What was wrong with his thick head!?! Despite her inner fury, Adela put a smile upon her face and a graceful act as she bowed before Berengar.

"It is me Adela, your fiancée"

Berengar was taken aback, he was not expecting her visit today. He thought for sure his father had told him she would arrive tomorrow. Damn it all, did that sly old fox seriously set him up again!?! He was once more furious at his father, nevertheless, there was nothing he could do about it now. Standing in front of him was his fiancée, who if he was being honest had developed wonderfully, in a few years she would definitely be a knockout.

Nevertheless, despite her potential beauty, he had no real attraction to her, after all, she was still a young girl, and not yet a woman. However, he smiled after knowing that his fiancée would grow into a stunning woman. After calming himself down, and adjusting to the situation Berengar put on the facade of a proper nobleman.

Truthfully Berengar had virtually no experience in charming the opposite sex, so he had to rely on his one source of infallible knowledge that explained how to win a young girl's favor. That source obviously being the many shoujo manga he had read in his previous life. Without any shame, he adopted the mannerisms of a character from some random manga in his memories which just so happened to be a prince.

"Apologies my lady, I did not recognize you, the last time I saw you, you were but a child. Now you have become an astonishing young woman."

He cringed internally at his acting, but if there was one thing shoujo manga had taught him, it is that if you wanted to win the favor of a young girl, you had to be handsome and charming; and this was the only way he knew how to act charming. If Berengar wanted this engagement to work, he at least had to make the girl feel like he was interested. It worked like a charm, Adela was fully enamored in Berengar's handsome appearance and charming act. She had completely forgotten the fury she felt not long ago when Berengar failed to recognize her.

Ludwig watching the cheap romantic display struggled to contain his laughter while observing the boy's performance. Luckily for Berengar, this girl was but a child and could easily fall for such falsities. Though the longer he stood there watching, the more he recognized that he was no longer needed and tapped Berengar on the shoulder.

"You don't need to worry, milord; I can handle the rest of the production myself; why don't you take your girl out for a sandwich."

Berengar gazed at Ludwig with brotherly affection, both men knew that Berengar was more interested in staying and overseeing the production of the steel and slag, but he was limited by his noble obligations. Thus Ludwig gave him a reasonable excuse to leave him behind.

"If you insist, I will leave the matter to you, I thank you for your hard work."

Adela gazed at Berengar with further interest; despite being a Baron's son, he treated the peasants almost as if they were equals. She had never heard of such a thing before. Though most nobles would mock him for such behavior, she found the friendly exchange between the two acquaintances to be quite endearing.

Berengar offered his arm for the young lady to grab onto, which she accepted as the couple walked towards the center of the town with smiles on their faces. During the walk to the sandwich shop Berengar spent the time to say hello to the locals who had passed by, he appeared to be on a first-name basis with many of the commoners, and they, of course, referred to him with the proper respect for his position.

Adela became increasingly curious about Berengar's relationship with the commoners, they did not fear him, nor were they intimidated by his position. Instead, they willingly walked up and chatted with him, and by extension her. She was not used to such a sociable walk; in her father's domain, the peasants stayed out of the Count and his family's way, never making eye contact with them. It was as if she had stepped into a totally different culture.

One woman had even approached the couple and handed Berengar a rose to give to the young lady next to him; All of the commoners could tell by the way Adela was dressed that she was obviously nobility. Due to the way she was clinging to Berengar, they were most likely engaged; because of this, the common folk treated her with the same dignity and heartfelt respect they gave to Berengar, who had spent so much time helping develop the town over the last month.

By the time they reached the Sandwich shop, Berengar had approached a woman in her thirties who was at the counter running the store in her husband's absence. Her name was Helga, and she was the local Baker's wife. She helped her husband run the bakery and the sandwich shop which was co-owned by the local baker and butcher.

She saw Berengar walk through the store entrance with a pretty young girl in hand and smiled at the couple.

"Milord, you honor us with your presence."

Berengar smiled in return and ordered a meal for himself and Adela.

"Helga, two of the usual, please."

Helga immediately got to work as she began to prepare the food, but not before washing her hands; by now, the entire village was aware of Berengar's health habits and had begun to adopt his clean ways. After serving up two sandwiches, each paired with a glass of fresh milk, Berengar paid the woman with a white pfennig which was worth more than the entire meal

"Keep the change,"

he said as he smiled and took the food and glasses over to a table outside the restaurant. Seeing as how it was the middle of spring in the mountains of Austria, the weather was more than acceptable to sit outside and dine.

Adela had not said a word the entire time they were walking; she observed Berengar's behavior which was far from what she expected from the notoriously idle and petty sickly lord. He was nothing like the rumors had said. Clearly, someone was making up lies about him to ruin his reputation. She would never believe that his personality had changed overnight due to a near-death experience.

Being a noble lady of high repute, she was confused about the absence of silverware when dining; how exactly was she going to eat this concoction referred to as a sandwich by the locals. Berengar smiled at her as she intensely stared at the food, the charming smile nearly sent her into another daze.

"What's wrong? You don't like it? You haven't even tried it yet!"

The young lady struggled to find her words as she stared at Berengar's exquisite smiling face. Eventually, she managed to find her tongue.

"There's no silverware..."

Berengar chuckled as he had forgotten about the aversion the nobles had towards the way commoners behaved. Thus he decided to lead by example as he grabbed ahold of the roast chicken sandwich with his hands and bit into it. The look on Adela's face was priceless; it was as if she was looking at a barbarian; there was no way she would stoop to such uncouth behavior.

However, after a few moments of watching Berengar eat the sandwich with a satisfied smile on his face, she could no longer resist the temptation to try the food. As such, she held onto the sandwich with her petite hands and took a small nibble out of it. Which nearly caused Berengar to choke on his food from laughter; this girl was too cute. In a way, she reminded him of a slightly older Henrietta.

The sparkle in Adela's glistening sapphire eyes lit up as she tasted the sandwich; she had never had something like this before. Truth be told, the culinary arts of the medieval age were severely lacking; he had spent great effort teaching the chefs in his castle, as well as the locals, how to make basic dishes from his previous life.

After a while, she noticed Berengar watching her and felt embarrassed. However, she couldn't stop eating the sandwich. Only after she finished the entire thing did she question his gaze

"What are you staring at!?!"

Berengar chuckled slightly; women, no matter what time they're in, are still the same.

"I just thought that you are cute, is all."

Instantly the girl's entire face turned red as his voice was played back in her head repeatedly. She had not expected him to say such a thing. Her brain had practically fried itself thinking about it. Did he have no shame? Though it's not as if she didn't like the compliment. Only after the two of them had finished their meal did Berengar bring up the noble obligations that had to be paid.

"Well, I suppose we should go visit my father so that you can pay your respects. Lord knows he will be outraged by the fact that you entered his territory and failed to pay him respects upon entry."

This snapped the girl out of her trance as she quickly realized she had failed to follow basic noble etiquette. She nearly slapped herself for following her curiosity rather than sticking to the schedule. By the way, Berengar spun it; she might have insulted the Baron's authority by doing so.

The little girl had no way of knowing that Berengar was playing a prank on her. Sure, if it were any other noble who entered his father's dominion and failed to pay respects, the Baron would be furious, but this was his niece and also his son's fiancée. He would easily forgive her for playing around with Berengar upon arrival, especially since that was what her visit concerned in the first place. Sieghard would be happy just knowing the two were getting along.

Nevertheless, the girl began to tremble with fear as she realized the grave sin she had committed; she did not know her uncle well, her mother rarely talked about him. She feared there would be a reprisal for her actions. Seeing the terrified expression on the little girl's face, Berengar grabbed hold of her hand and calmed her down.

"Hey, there's no need to be so afraid; I was only joking. My father won't be mad at you for spending the day with me. Trust me; even if he is angry, I will take the blame. Considering I was the one who dragged you to lunch."

The little girl wiped away the tears that had been forming in her gentle sapphire eyes and sniffled slightly.

"R.. Really?"

Berengar nodded; maybe he shouldn't play jokes like this on children. After all, noble obligations and etiquette were likely a scary thing for a young girl such as her. If she messed up, it could not just affect her well-being but that of her family.

After wiping the tears from her eyes, Adela got up from her seat and asked Berengar.

"Well, what are we waiting for?"

Afterward, the betrothed couple headed towards the Castle, her retinue of knights closely following from a distance. They knew if they had followed their young lady so closely on her first date, she would be furious; as such, they stayed behind, keeping an eye on her safety from a close enough distance that if trouble showed itself, they could fulfill their duty. Of course, that would never happen in a town that celebrated Berengar as a pillar of the community and not just the Baron's son.

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