

Tyranny of Steel

Chapter 14

Chapter 14: A Fine Evening

Berengar entered the Castle's Grand hall while holding Adela's hand; her cheeks were flushed with embarrassment the entire time as she hid slightly behind Berengar's back, gazing up at him from behind. She had not expected the day to play out like this. Nevertheless, she was glad it did. She would be beside herself if Berengar had truly been as the rumors painted him.

Sitting upon the seat of power of the realm was Baron Sieghard von Kufstein who had a stern expression on his face. He was not expecting his niece's visit until tomorrow, yet here she was standing before him. These complicated things, he would undoubtedly need to throw a feast this evening to welcome a young lady of her position into his lowly territory. Sieghard was no fool, and he knew why his Brother-in-Law, the Count of Steiermark, had offered this proposal. Despite the Counts hidden intentions, looking down upon Adela, and how she behaved, he could already tell that this was a good match.

When the Baron's cold gaze landed upon Adela, she shivered slightly, which did not go unnoticed. However, with a supporting gesture from Berengar, she fulfilled her noble obligations as she bowed before her Uncle greeting him with respect. After all, it has been quite some time since she last saw the man.

"Lady Adela von Graz expresses her gratitude for providing hospitality during her visit."

Berengar bowed before his father as well; despite being the old man's son, he still had to show respect for his father's position. Sitting next to Sieghard was his wife Gisela who had a much more warm expression on her face than her husband's. She thoroughly examined her daughter-in-law to be. Though she felt as if Adela was a bit young, the mature Baroness still nodded with approval; The girl was truly a young woman befitting her beloved son. Deep down, she felt bad for Lambert, whose fiancée was an entitled and sadistic brat who gained pleasure from humiliating the young boy; such behavior had evolved from the brat's unearned sense of superiority. It would undoubtedly be a rough marriage for Gisela's second son. However, the feeling she gained from Adela's behavior gave the doting mother much confidence in her firstborn's future happiness.

Truth be told, Berengar would much rather be out working on his plans for the future of industry and agriculture. However, building ties to the nobility was of dire importance to his current diplomatic strategy. He may be safe while in his own territory due to the protection provided by the people. Yet, if he were to travel beyond the borders of

Kufstein, he may find himself plotted against by his brother's allies. Getting on good terms to his betrothed, whose father was a mighty Count, provided him with a level of security necessary to deter those of a similar position.

Sieghard carefully observed the relationship between his son and niece. Apparently, the two had spent some time together this afternoon. Though it spat in the face of common etiquette, he could forgive the young girl for getting tied up with Berengar. Recently his son had an aura of charisma that he severely lacked before. The boy seemed to be far more sociable than in the past. Truly Sieghard did not know what inspired the recent changes in his son's behavior, but he was grateful for whatever caused it. Now, if only Berengar could get along with the local nobility as he did with the commoners.

Despite the girl's lack of manners, the old Baron would still address the matter as he wanted to gauge the girl's character. After clearing his throat, Sieghard narrowed his eyes at the young girl. While standing up from his seat of power, he began to speak in a stern voice.

"It seems you and my son are already acquainted. Tell me, is this why you did not immediately come and pay respects to me, the sovereign of this land?"

Adela immediately flinched upon hearing her Uncle's words and looked over at Berengar for help. The minute she did so, Sieghard pounded his fist on the armrest of the chair while his voice raised to a new height.

"Don't look away from me while I'm talking to you! Answer the question."

Tears began to form in the young girl's eyes which she quickly wiped away, sniffing while she responded to the Baron's request.

"I'm s... sorry I didn't m... mean to."

Seeing the expression on the poor girl's face, Berengar could no longer put up with his father's test. He grabbed ahold of Adela and dragged her into his arms while chastising his father.

"Father, don't you think that tone of yours is a bit rude? After all, if anyone is to blame, it is me; I was the one who took her out to lunch before meeting you."

The young girl looked up at Berengar with a sense of warmth in her sapphire eyes; the tears were still streaming down her doll-like face. She was slightly surprised that Berengar had stuck to his word and protected her from his father's wrath. Until now, there had been a slight hint of suspicion in her heart that he was putting on a facade and that deep down, he really was an idle wastrel like the rumors had said, even if he had become healthy. In the end, Berengar really was as he presented himself. This was true for the most part; despite putting on a charming act based on a generic shoujo

character, he more or less spoke from the heart, and his actions around the town had been completely genuine.

Upon seeing his son stand up for the girl he was betrothed to, Sieghard's stern expression turned into a warm smile as he attempted to placate the girl and his son.

"I'm sorry, Adela, I was quite rude. I only wanted to gauge your character; I hope you can forgive me."

The young girl wiped the tears from her eyes which had finally begun to dry, and swallowed her excess saliva. She had slowly begun to understand why the Baron had tested her that way. Clearly, the loving parents wanted to know if Adela would deflect the responsibility onto their son or not. Even though Berengar took the blame himself, if she had thrust the responsibility on his shoulders before he could do so, it would have been an enormous act of disrespect to Berengar and his father. Evidently, Sieghard and his wife were very protective of their eldest son.

After regaining her dignified appearance, the young lady accepted her Uncle's apology with grace.

"There's nothing to apologize for, dear Uncle; you were merely protecting your son and heir."

After she said that, the smiles on Sieghard and Gisela's faces improved. Further, this young lady was much better wife material than the bitch they had sold their second son to. In a few months Lambert would be married, and his fate would be sealed. However, there was nothing they could do about it; refusing their liege because they disapproved of his daughter was an unwise play. If the relationship between those two could improve relations between their two houses, then so be it. For whatever reason, Lambert did not seem to mind the abuse he suffered at the hands of his fiancée.

Sieghard stood up from his seat and approached Adela, and greeted her with open arms. "Welcome to my humble house; I hope you find your stay to be acceptable."

Knowing that the girl was from a wealthy family, the lowly Baron could not possibly believe that she would be being pleased with the humble lodgings of his domain. He had no way of knowing that the young girl had already fallen in love with the quaint old town where the locals were so friendly, and the culinary culture was unique. Adela was a big fan of the sandwich she had tasted earlier. By the time she dined at the feast in the evening, she would never want to leave the humble Baron's domain.

For now, though, the family engaged in small talk, getting caught up on the past few years. Adela was especially interested in how Berengar transitioned from a feeble, idle, and petty young lord to the man he was today. When she found out that the miraculous transformation only began a month ago, she could not believe her ears. Did the man

before her seriously spring up after a near-death experience? If Berengar had not confirmed it himself, she would have never believed her aunt and uncle.

Eventually, the table was set, and the feast had begun. Adela sat next to Berengar, who sat in his usual place at the table. The only family member who was missing was Lambert, which did not go unnoticed by Adela. When she heard he was visiting his fiancée, she was shocked by the coincidence. She never expected both of the von Kufstein sons to be out with their fiancées simultaneously. Nevertheless, her thoughts towards the missing son disappeared when she smelled the aroma of the food set upon the table by servants.

Adela had never seen such extravagant cuisine before. Berengar had instructed the chefs to go to all out on their new recipes. Schnitzel, spaetzle, wurst, rouladen, sauerbraten, all the staples of German cuisine from Berengar's previous world, were presented on the table. All except one, the one in which Berengar desired as a side dish to his jaeger schnitzel most of all... potato pancakes. Curse his fate for being thrust into this world a century too early for the discovery of potatoes! That is what Berengar initially thought to himself as he lamented their absence from his favorite dishes. Still, he was glad to be alive. He swore to himself that when he became wealthy, he would hire an exploratory fleet to discover the new world and bring him back potatoes. Screw the Aztecs and their massive gold reserves; he needed potatoes!

While his family had become accustomed to eating such treasures over the past month, Adela's eyes were lit with ecstasy as she tasted the gourmet cuisine for the first time in her life. No matter what, when she finally returned home, she had to bring these recipes back with her for her father's cooking staff! Though she was ecstatic about the delightful food, she still ate with the grace and civility expected of a young lady in her position.

After delighting upon the food for the evening, the family finally went their separate ways; Henrietta was tasked with taking Adela to her room. The young girl also insisted on her future sister-in-law taking a bath before she went to bed. At first, the young lady refused as she did not see a reason, but the persistence of a girl younger than herself was not something she could escape. After bathing together in awkward silence, Adela finally got to her room where she could rest. As she lay down on her stomach and hugged her pillow in a baby blue nightgown, she could not help but think about Berengar's actions throughout the day. The girl fell to sleep shortly after with a loving smile on her face.

Berengar, on the other hand, was burning the midnight oil, hard at work in his room drafting up plans for the expansion of the mines. There was also another matter in which he wanted to address as quickly as possible—the textile industry. Unlike Adela, he was not thinking about the day he had; instead, the young man thought about his plans for the family's territory. Eventually, after drafting up several documents, and blueprints Berengar snuffed out the oil lamp, which provided illumination, and fell to sleep; the only thoughts on his mind were about the wonderful meal he had during the

evening and the complete and total lack of potato pancakes! The young lord had no way of knowing that Adela had already fallen head over heels for him.

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