

Tyranny of Steel

Chapter 16

Chapter 16: Harsh Mistress

Lambert lied shirtless, bound, and prostrate on the floor of his fiancée's bed-chamber. A peerless beauty with a flawless heart-shaped face and silky strawberry blonde hair cascading down her shoulders gazed coldly at her foolish fiancé with her sky blue eyes. She was currently in the process of punishing. Her foot pressed his head down into the cold stone floor while her left hand carried a curled whip. Her heavenly bust heaved as she sighed in disappointment at the news of failure in which Lambert had brought her.

Linde von Habsburg was the eldest daughter of Count Lothar von Habsburg, head of House von Habsburg-Innsbruck which was a cadet branch of House von Habsburg whose main branch were the rulers of the Duchy of Austria. She was sixteen this year and was renowned across the duchy as one of the three heavenly beauties of Austria.

However, looks were often deceiving; personality-wise, Linde was secretly a sadistic bitch known among a select few as a young woman who broke her toys easily. Yes, her toys, that was how she referred to her suitors, many of which had come and gone over the years as they could not endure the physical and mental abuse which she took pleasure in inflicting upon them. Lambert was just the newest arrival, and though her father had supported his proposal, she did not personally recognize it.

An intense gaze stared down upon the teenage boy lying prostrate before her as she raised her whip and struck his back; a large cut appeared as it made contact with his flesh. Lambert desperately attempted not to let a painful cry escape his lips; however, he could not resist screaming in agony after another two lashes. Which only further enraged the dominatrix, who pressed his head further into the cold stone floor with the heel of her foot.

If Lambert gazed up, he would be able to clearly see the beautiful girl's embroidered white silk panties that lie beneath her sinful baby blue nightgown, which had been purposely designed to show off the girl's immaculate curves. However, it would only further provoke his fiancée if he did so, something he would do his best to avoid.

After venting her frustration on the youth's body, she sighed heavily and lowered the whip before bringing Lambert's face up to meet her own vicious glare. Tears streamed from the boy's eyes as she chastised him for his weakness.

"It looks like frailty runs in your family; how pathetic..."

The girl got up from the bed and kicked Lambert back down to the ground as she sat on his back, using him as a stool for her to rest on.

"You're useless; you know that?"

After hearing about Lambert's attempt on his elder brother's life which failed spectacularly, she was in a particularly foul mood. Exactly how hard was it to poison a sickly and frail man to death? Somehow not only did Lambert's attempt fail, but it inspired Berengar to get his act together and began the process of becoming healthy. By now, The young lord had overcome his childhood infirmity, thus ruining her and her father's plans.

The news was even worse as they found out that the Count of Steiermark had engaged his third and youngest daughter to Berengar, thus giving them a greater stake in Kufstein's rich iron reserves. If they could not remove Berengar within the next few years and place Lambert as the sole heir to the Barony, then this engagement was entirely useless for the Counts of Tyrol.

Lambert struggled to endure the weight of his fiancée, who sat atop his back. Nevertheless, he managed as she continued to scold him. Though at the moment, she was more speaking to herself than anything else.

"If you want something done right, you've got to do it yourself..."

The heavenly beauty saw her toy gazing up at her and looked at him with disgust. She grabbed ahold of the handle of her whip and shoved it in the boy's mouth, forcing his head away with a violent thrust.

"Do not set your filthy gaze upon me, wastrel! You have not earned that right!"

Lambert averted his gaze as he forced himself to ask the question on his mind.

"Apologies, mistress, I was just curious about what you said. What is your plan exactly?"

A wicked grin appeared across the immaculate visage of the sinister beauty as she gazed down at her favorite toy, sending chills down his spine.

"Isn't it obvious? I'm going to go back to your home and seduce your brother; then, after he is on his knees begging, I will end his life. Clearly, you can't be trusted to do this simple task yourself."

Lambert felt conflicted after hearing such words; his fiancée was going to seduce his brother? Even after enduring all this abuse, Lambert had not even been able to sleep with her yet! The lustful teenage boy was extremely envious of his older brother at the current moment, but as he thought about the pain he was currently facing, his mind shifted to joy instead. If she was like this with her fiancée, how cruel would she be to Berengar when she finally got him on his knees?

Without awaiting her fiance's approval, Linde called out in an authoritative tone.

"Hanz!"

Immediately the door to the bed-chamber swung open, and a young knight clad in full plated armor with a sword slung around his waist entered the room and knelt before the Young Lady, evidently he was well accustomed to the sight before him, as not a hint of surprise could be seen from his expression.

"Yes, my lady?"

Linde sat atop Lambert's back with her arms crossed and an indifferent expression. She did not care for someone as low as a knight. As the privileged daughter of a Count, she even considered Barons to be nothing more than elevated trash, let alone a common knight.

"Get my shit packed; I'm going to Kufstein."

Hanz would never disobey an order from the young lady. He did not want to end up in Lambert's current position. As such, he obeyed her orders, despite it being a menial task unbefitting of a knight. He was well aware that a servant was a servant in the eyes of the harsh mistress, and there was nothing he could do about that.

"Your will is my command!"

afterward, the knight quickly left the room and went to manage the task set before him. It would be a matter of hours before she set forth on the road to Kufstein with a retinue of knights to protect her and her current boy toy in tow.

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Meanwhile, in Kufstein, Berengar had just finished his daily breakfast and set forth on the task to begin constructing his irrigation system, which was based on a system used in his previous life commonly referred to as wheel line irrigation. In his previous life, this irrigation system provided water to vast fields across the entirety of the United States of America. With this system in place, the Barony of Kufstein would efficiently water their many crops without the need for several farmers to water them by hand. Eventually, this would allow for fewer farmers while utilizing larger plots of land for growing crops.

When Berengar entered the industrial district, he saw his friend and partner in the steel industry, Ludwig, currently overseeing steel production. When the old man noticed the young lord approach, he bowed respectfully.

"Milord, it is wonderful to see you; I have been awaiting your instructions on what to do with all this fine steel we have amassed!"

Berengar smiled and mocked his friend in a jestful manner

"Oh? I thought my father visited you yesterday. Did the Baron not have any plans for the resources of his domain?"

Ludwig scratched his head with an awkward smile on his face as he led Berengar over to the storehouse which currently contained all of the steel, briefly summarizing his discussion with the young lord's father the day prior.

"Ultimately, I managed to convince him to let you manage the steel business. He was so shocked by the amount of steel in our stockpile that he had no idea what to do with it all!"

Berengar chuckled; if he were in his father's position, he would be a bit overwhelmed as well.

"A wise move, we'll sell between 3-5 tonnes of it, I am certain that in these uncertain times, there is bound to be a buyer for that much steel."

Ludwig scratched his beard while entertaining the thought

"What about the rest?"

Berengar had a look of excitement in his eyes as he stretched out the blueprints for his irrigation system. Though it looked complicated at first glance, Ludwig quickly realized the ingenious nature of the design.

"This is for watering crops?"

The old man asked, almost in disbelief that such a thing could exist. Berengar nodded in affirmation of the statement and looked off into the distant fields of Kufstein with a determined expression on his face.

"Imagine it, all of our fields supplied with water through this system, not a single patch of land unquenched."

Ludwig looked off into the fields, which were filled with farmers slowly watering their crops by hand. He could envision the future quite well, but a concern instantly entered his mind.

"Won't that put a lot of farmers out of work?"

Berengar smiled at Ludwig and grabbed ahold of his shoulder

"Out of the fields and into the factories! Of course, they will be properly compensated for their labor."

After hearing the extent of Berengar's thought process, Ludwig could not help but share in the feeling of excitement that these blueprints had generated. Truly Berengar had a mind like no other. The fact that he had used the word "factories" proved that the young lord's ambitions for the steel industry did not end with this one factory they had just built. Ludwig was slowly starting to piece together Berengar's concept of an industrialized society. The more designs the young lord showed him, the more his understanding of the world changed.

After chatting a bit more about his plans, Berengar finally allowed Ludwig to work on the irrigation system. It would take a while to produce it, but he figured it could be done in a matter of months. At most, in half a year, the fields of Kufstein would be properly irrigated, ushering in a new age of agriculture. By then, he hoped to have some of his mechanized inventions in production, like the combine harvester, seeder, as well as the steel plow.

Now that he had accomplished his plans for the day Berengar returned to the Castle, it was about time he began making preparations to befriend the local nobility. As such, he went back to his room and began drafting invitations for the minor lords and knights under his father's vassalage, as well as their families. After all, he had an excuse to host a party, he had recently gotten engaged to a fine young woman, and it was time to throw an official celebration and allow the world to know of his intent to marry her.

Initially, he had reservations about the idea of marrying his cousin; after all, that was not a common thing in his previous life; in American society, it was outright outlawed throughout most of the country. However, Adela proved to be beyond his expectations; he honestly did not have many expectations for the young girl to begin with. At the very least, he figured she would be a noble snob who would chastise him for his friendliness with the commoners. Yet, she proved to be a kind-hearted young girl who thus far had appreciated the culture he had begun to foster in Kufstein. Maybe one day soon, he could share his vision for the future of his domain with her.

Even if something happened and the engagement did not work out, he still needed an excuse to gather his father's vassals, and this was the best one he could come up with. By refusing to show, they would not be insulting him, but his father, the Baron. Something the lesser nobles beneath his rule could very well not afford.

While he was drafting up the letters of invitation, Berengar heard a knock on the door. As such, he placed down his quill into the ink bottle and investigated the disturbance. After opening the door, he was surprised to see Adela with a tray full of snacks and two glasses of milk standing in his doorway. With flushed cheeks, the girl asked what was on her mind.

"Would you like to share a snack with me?"

After seeing the girl's cute expression, Berengar could not find it in good consciousness to decline her offer. Thus he parted from the doorway and led the girl to his desk, where

he pulled out another chair and set it up next to his workstation. After placing down the tray of Lebkuchen and Pfeffernuss cookies which the castle's chefs had recently baked for the young lady, Adela spotted the exercise equipment in the corner of Berengar's room. Naturally, she inquired about their use.

"What is that in the corner, back there?"

Berengar did not even need to glance behind him to know what she was referring to; as such, he snacked on a Lebkuchen cookie and reminisced of his mother's baking from his previous life. After getting back to reality, he answered the young girl's question.

"That's exercise equipment; it helps build strength."

The girl had never seen such equipment before, but she immediately lost interest when she heard it was used exercise. As long as she kept her current figure and grew into it properly, she had no desire to do any more exercise than was necessary. Her gemstone-like eyes quickly took notice of the letters in which Berengar was in the process of drafting.

"What are those for?"

Berengar washed down the cookie he had just snagged with a sip of milk before getting back to work on his letters.

"They're invitations for our engagement ceremony. I figured I might as well invite the local nobility to the occasion. After all, I feel they would be more inclined to talk to me with you by my side. Once they get to know the real me, the vicious rumors that have been spread about me will begin to disappear or at the very least replaced with less harmful ones."

Adela looked at Berengar with hearts in her eyes. He was throwing a party to celebrate their engagement? That was completely unheard of and extremely romantic, at least in her eyes. Berengar was aware that traditional engagements from his previous life and the ceremonies that proceeded them would not become a thing for many decades still. However, what he was unaware of was just how much of an effect this party would have in his fiancée's opinion of him. The girl got really excited when she heard he was throwing a party and inviting many nobles; she couldn't wait to see such a splendid occasion.

"So when will this party be taking place?"

Berengar answered without delay as he continued to write the invitation letters.

"About a month or so, I need time to sell some of the steel I have stockpiled to afford the expenses. It won't be a simple affair."

As Berengar realized the expense this party would incur, he figured he might as well sell an extra tonne or two to avoid causing his father unnecessary heartache. After all, the man loved to spend his money on luxuries but always felt bad about it afterward.

As such, the couple spent the remainder of the afternoon together enjoying some snacks while discussing the details of the upcoming party. Pleasantly unaware of the storm heading in their direction, taking the form of a sadistic vixen.

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