

# Tyranny of Steel

## Chapter 21 -30

### *Chapter 21: Forming a Battalion*

It had been over a week since Linde first arrived, and as far as Lambert knew she still had not made an attempt at Berengar's life. In fact, aside from the first night where she flirted with Berengar at dinner, she had made no effort to seduce him afterward. Worse yet, she had actively impeded her attempts to do so by deliberately provoking Berengar when the young lord spent time with his fiancée. Lambert could not begin to comprehend the thought process of that crazy bitch he called his mistress.

Lambert was not a slow kid by any means; he was beginning to piece together that something was not right; after all, Linde had not abused him since the second day of her visit. During that time, she was extremely unstable and forced him out of her room while insulting his appearance. Though he did not enjoy the treatment he received from Linde, the fact that she no longer engaged in such brutality meant one thing, she had completely lost interest in her toy, but why? Why would the girl who sadistically took pleasure in his pain until just a week ago; change her attitude completely overnight. Unless something happened the night of her arrival?

The more he thought about his beautiful fiancée's odd behavior, the more he realized that something was going on with her; he just could not quite find out what. He would have no choice but to politely interrogate her when the two were alone. There was still a deep internal fear of the young maiden who had caused many scars upon Lambert's body and heart.

Currently, Lambert was sitting across from his older brother at the dining table, who chatted with his 12-year-old fiancée about the delicacy sitting on the table before them. The family was dining upon German Pancakes; Lambert had no idea where these culinary inventions were coming from. Nevertheless, he thoroughly enjoyed the food that had recently appeared on their tables.

Suddenly Lambert could hear his father's stern voice question Berengar; the contents of the which shocked Lambert.

"So Berengar, my son. I hear you have equipped your militia with hand cannons? Do you believe this to be a wise choice?"

Berengar nodded his head at his father's words as he snacked on a piece of breakfast sausage.

"Of course, father, learning archery or the sword takes an extended period of time to gain the proficiency necessary to be useful on the battlefield. Hand cannons are simple

weapons that the peasant forces can effectively use as a line of defense. Their effective range is quite poor, so they're better suited to defensive positions."

Berengar had intentionally not corrected his father about the true nature or efficiency of the muskets. If he had done so, his weapons undoubtedly would be confiscated, and the technology leaked to his enemies as such, Berengar emphasized their defensive ability, but not offense.

Sieghard still had many questions about the weapons used by Berengar's militia, they were not ordinary hand cannons and artillery, but he trusted his son's word, as such when he heard they were defensive in use, he lost interest in the muskets; they were best suited to a local militia after all. However, the cannons, on the other hand, he had heard remarkable things about and needed to know if they could be used efficiently in the field.

"What about those cannons they're using? I heard they have the remarkable ability to fire many balls at once?"

Berengar had already prepared an answer for his father; seeing as cannons of the time were mainly static weapons used in sieges, he decided to lie about the mobility of his 12 pounder cannons and highlight that they were exactly the opposite.

"A strictly defensive weapon, have you seen the size of my designs? They are far too large and far too heavy to be used effectively on the field or even during a siege. They're best suited to be mounted on the Castle's walls and used as a means of defending our home from any potential threat."

At first, Lambert was concerned about such sophisticated weapons falling into the hands of Berengar and his peasant rabble. Still, when he heard his brother say they were entirely defensive in nature he had no desire to report such useless products to his partner in crime, Count Lothar of Tyrol. The Count needed weapons of war, not weapons of defense. Little did Lambert know that this was all a ploy by Berengar to keep his revolutionary designs as confidential as possible. The likelihood of Lambert or Sieghard having the desire to test the weapons themselves was virtually zero.

Eventually, the Baron lost interest in the topic as he heard their use was solely for defending their territory; it appears Berengar was truly content with his position as a Baron's heir and had no loftier ambitions than that. Something in which Sieghard could agree with, minor noblemen like themselves had no place getting involved in the affairs of the great families.

The Baron decided he would leave the peasant militia Berengar had founded as defenders of his family's territory should he ever be called to war again in his lifetime; after all, according to his son, they were practically useless in an offensive manner.

Only Berengar was aware of how efficient his forces would become on the field of battle, during a siege, engaging in guerilla warfare, and especially defense. Yet, he would never inform anyone of their effective capacity to do so; only when his forces were truly needed would Berengar display the overwhelming power of steel and shot to this feudal world.

After finishing breakfast, the family dispersed, and Lambert found time to approach Linde about her recent behavior, something he would utterly regret doing. Berengar had already given her orders to maintain her relationship with Lambert; she would continue to abuse, punish, and degrade him, though she could not sleep with him, nor did she desire to. When Lambert approached the young temptress and grabbed ahold of her wrist, she instinctively slapped him in the face; her flawless sky blue eyes contained the fire of a woman's rage as she scolded her toy for touching her perfect skin without her approval. The sound of the slap could be heard throughout the courtyard, which briefly drew the attention of the servants working nearby.

"How dare you touch me without my permission. Who do you think you are?"

Linde was furious, and it was not just a facade; only her master could touch her without her consent. Though she no longer held her previous sadistic personality, she was still ordered to abuse the boy, and as such, she would do as her master had commanded. The violent slap left a red handprint on Lambert's face. Now, this was the mistress he knew and lusted after. The truth is that Lambert despised Linde's personality, but he could not help but forgive her many transgressions, for, in his eyes, she was the incarnation of physical perfection. Some men would do anything to please a beautiful woman, and Lambert was one of them. As such, he kneeled before her and apologized.

"I'm sorry, mistress, I did not mean to offend; I just wanted to inquire about your progress with Berengar."

Linde kept a calm facade. However, she was internally furious that this little punk wanted to assassinate her master. Nevertheless, she had to put her feelings aside and play the part; after all, Berengar had tasked her with spying on Lambert and her Father; he even promised her a reward if she did so successfully.

"I have not found the ability to be alone with him; he is very wary of my actions and is always around others when I approach him. He's far more cunning than you give him credit for."

Lambert felt his heart stinging. Did this bitch seriously compliment his accursed brother? She had never done such a thing for him! This was outrageous, but he could not deny the fact that recently his brother had become quite cunning. It would not surprise him if Berengar had become aware of his plot to use Linde to assassinate him. Eventually, Lambert decided to ask Linde for her plans; after all, she was the one who insisted on getting rid of his brother herself.

"So, what exactly is your plan to deal with him?"

Linde looked at Lambert as if he was a pitiful fool before giving her a response.

"I will keep approaching him as I have been and improve my attempts at seduction, but if he keeps avoiding being alone with me, we will eventually just have to face the potential reality that your brother is too crafty to be caught in a honeypot."

A strong frown appeared across Lambert's face as he heard Linde compliment Berengar once more. It seemed she had begun to admire her prey for avoiding her womanly wiles for so long. Lambert began to wonder if there was something wrong with Berengar's head, how could a hot-blooded male in the prime of his youth possibly fail to be seduced by a goddess-like Linde? He started to suspect Berengar was a lolicon based upon how he acted towards Adela. If that were the case, it would explain how his brother showed no outward interest towards Linde as the days went on. Only on that first night was there any semblance of lust in Berengar's gaze towards the immaculate young woman.

As Lambert was deep in thought, he felt an iron grip on his shoulder and a wicked smile from Linde as she whispered in his ear.

"More importantly, it seems to me that you have gotten unruly after going undisciplined for so long. It appears I will have to teach you a proper lesson for your sins."

Immediately Lambert's expressions sank as all the doubts he had about Linde's recent behavior were washed away at that moment. How could he be so foolish as to believe the sadistic dominatrix had changed her colors so easily? It only became apparent now that she was testing him throughout the last week. To see if he would behave differently on his home turf. The young boy began to question every decision he had made since he returned home as he was dragged off to Linde's quarters to be punished severely for his actions.

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Meanwhile, Berengar continued drilling the peasant militia in the fields, which was increasing in numbers by the day; the magnificent weapons Berengar displayed had attracted the attention of the common population. Those who had survived the battlefield previously as peasant levies could see the age of knights coming to an end as they witnessed the volley fire being followed by an organized bayonet charge which Berengar had commanded his troops to enact as they stabbed their bayonets into the straw dummies.

The commander gazed at his troops respectfully; with each day, they were progressing closer to a true army. Ludwig had worked overtime to produce enough arms to keep up with the growing demands of the militia. In the last day alone, they received 50 recruits, making their numbers stand at a firm 300. This was practically half the size of his

father's army during a time of war. After all, As a Baron, Sieghard could call upon his vassals to mobilize troops of their own so that he may add their forces to his army.

Without a doubt, he now had a force the size of a small battalion. Though mostly infantry, there were still a total of three cannons, 1 for every 100 infantry. Albeit a small team of men typically operated cannons, so currently, the ratio was not exact, but it would be soon enough. He looked upon his forces as if they were his own beloved sons, knowing that as long as he did so they would stand by him even unto death. By the time the King had passed and the Kingdom of Germany descended into absolute warfare, he would have an army capable of defending his borders from any threat.

After all, the likelihood of Berengar marching to the drums of war himself was slim. Sieghard had a passion for such things, and when his liege called upon him to take up arms, he would surely lead the charge. The question on Berengar's mind was whether or not he could convince his father to appoint him as regent by then. If his plans succeeded, he would wield absolute power in his family's territory for an extended period of time, and he could get many of his more important reformations underway. If his father returned from the conflict alive, he would be welcomed to a completely transformed land.

For now, Berengar had many tasks at hand which included but were not limited to raising an army, installing his irrigation system across the fields, selling the steel stockpile to the Count of Steiermark, investing the profits into the mining industry, as well as gaining the support of the local nobility and their entitled offspring. Truly an ambitious man like himself never had time to rest...

### *Chapter 22: A Diamond in the Rough*

After observing and instructing the peasant militia, Berengar returned to the village, for now, their training was done for the day; and the young lord had business to attend to elsewhere. The Baron's son had to say goodbye temporarily to his fiancée, who would be returning to her homeland with ten tonnes of steel. Five more than Berengar had initially estimated. After all, as his plans became more ambitious, his family needed a larger treasury.

Though the count's daughter would not be gone for long, she would return with the transport containing the gold and silver bars which were the promised form of compensation for such a massive stockpile of steel ingots. A small portion of the money gained from the transaction would go towards the engagement ceremony that Berengar had planned; seeing as he was far from beginning preparations for it, he had not sent out the invitations yet. Due to unforeseen circumstances, primarily involving Linde's arrival and the things that occurred afterward. Berengar was far behind schedule on preparing for the party he had promised Adela. Currently, it was his notable lack of funds that hindered his progress in that regard.

After arriving at the Castle, the young Lord approached his fiancée, whose retinue of knights were loading the steel ingots into the convoy which Berengar had prepared for her. He trusted her to keep her father's side of the bargain intact. The cute girl who was at the cusp of her teenage years played with her twintails as she waited patiently for Berengar to arrive; when she finally spotted him, she dashed over into his arms and embraced him firmly. She had grown quite fond of her fiancé since their initial meeting. After several moments had passed, the young girl let go of her hold over her betrothed and pouted.

"Are you sure you can't come with me?"

Berengar chuckled as he patted her silky golden hair; with such a reaction, he truly wished he could travel with her to the girl's ancestral homeland, but alas, he could not. The young lord had many preparations that needed to be made, and unfortunately, he did not have the spare time to go on a brief vacation with his future wife. He spoke from the bottom of the heart as he smiled endearingly at her.

"I wish I could, yet unfortunately, there are many matters I must attend to here. But fret not; you will be back in no time."

He tried to assure the young girl that they would not be separated long, as he too had grown quite fond of his young cousin. However, the real trial would be their long-term separation after the engagement ceremony was over, and she was forced to return home. It was not as if she could stay in his family's lands until their wedding. That would not be proper. Truthfully, she had already stayed longer than what was considered acceptable in the eyes of society. It was supposed to be a short meeting of a matter of days, yet she had been in her fiancé's lands for weeks already.

The young girl eventually stopped pouting after hearing Berengar's words and smiled at him gratefully as she said in a hushed tone.

"Come closer. I want to tell you something."

Berengar thought nothing of it and leaned over so that he matched the girl's height. She quickly pecked him on the cheek with her full lips and whispered in his ear.

"I'll miss you."

Afterward, Berengar stared at her in disbelief; he did not think she had the nerve to do such a thing; as he stared at the young lady, her face became increasingly flushed until the point where she covered her face with her hands and rushed off into her carriage. Berengar instinctively placed his hand on the cheek where she had kissed him as he thought to himself.

'This girl is just too cute.'

As his thoughts began to shift back to the wonderful memories he had made with the Count's daughter over the past weeks; the convoy began to ride off into the distance, leaving Berengar standing alone in the courtyard as the sunset came to a close. It was only after he could no longer see the carriage which contained his fiancée that Berengar decided to walk back inside and take a bath.

Berengar sat in the large circular stone pool, the hot water soothing his milky white skin as he washed away the stress accumulated throughout the day. He was completely unaware of the creaking of the door and the sound of footsteps approaching. It was not until he felt the soft and bouncy mounds of his lover press against the back of his neck that he realized someone had intruded on his private time. The girl covered his eyes with her hands from behind as she asked in a playful tone.

"Guess who?"

Berengar chuckled as he grabbed ahold of the dainty hands and pulled the buxom beauty into the bath with him. Linde was not expecting such behavior and screamed as she splashed into the hot water, her alabaster skin instantly reddening as the heat began to affect her complexion. After climbing into the young lord's lap and pressing her chest against his, she looked at him while pouting.

"You got my hair wet!"

Berengar wrapped his arms around the girl and kissed her; only after a minute had gone by did he break away from her enticing lips.

"It's the bath, of course; your hair is going to get wet."

The young temptress continued to pout as Berengar lectured her, but he paid it no mind. Initially, he was worried somebody might have spotted her sneak in here; after all, people were still wide awake at this hour and roaming across the castle, and thus he could not help but inquire about the girl's recklessness.

"Did anyone see you enter here?"

She shook her head as she buried it into Berengar's shoulder. Afterward, she pecked him on the opposite cheek that Adela had left her mark and expressed the concerns that were on her mind.

"There, now there's no more space for another girl to mark her claim!"

The young lord nearly broke out in laughter as he heard such a childish remark from the young woman who had just a week prior boldly tried to seduce and enslave him. Was she jealous of his relationship with Adela? This would not do. Clearly, he had to discipline her further...

As such, he spent an unusually long and energetic bath with the naked bombshell who lay next to him. It would not be for close to an hour before the couple retreated from the confines of the bathhouse and entered Berengar's chambers where the real fun began. He spent an entire night further training his slave; after all, her jealousy was unbecoming of a proper slave. It was not her place to question whether or not her master spent time with another woman.

By the time the sun rose, the couple was well and truly exhausted. Berengar began to regret his decisions in life as he knew there was still a matter of lifting weights to attend to. Though intercourse was great for cardio, it was far from enough to increase his muscle mass further. After sending his lover back to her chambers, he spent the rest of the morning getting in his old exercise routine, which he had been slacking on lately. It did not surprise him that it took him longer than usual to complete his sets after an entire night of lovemaking.

He would need to fit power naps into his schedule if he continued to behave in this manner at night. Nevertheless, he had plenty of work to do, so after his exercise for the day was concluded, as well as the morning bath, he had once more dined with his family. The meal was uneventful and mainly included small talk. Afterward, Berengar returned to the fledgling industrial district where he checked on the progress of the irrigation pipes. Things were going smoothly, and truthfully all he had to do at this point was wait for production to be complete.

His workforce was already stretched thin on the production of arms, munitions, and irrigation piping; at this point, there was no way for him to increase their workload to produce more designs. It was not until the irrigation piping was finished that he would see more peasants enter the industrial sector. After all, with the innovation fully fielded, there was no longer a need for so many farmers to water their crops by hand, and they would need a new occupation. Most would be delegated to the mines, while others would be working in the factories.

It was not a glamorous life, but they would be paid a fair wage under Berengar's management and be allotted a proper forty-hour workweek with paid vacation time and sick days. It was best not to overwork your employees; if you were foolish enough to do so, you would see decreased productivity. These were lessons that could only be learned through experience; luckily for Berengar, he had the history of 21st century America and the lessons it could teach in the back of his mind thanks to the memories of Julian.

It seemed that for now, his days would be primarily filled with overseeing the training of his volunteer militia. At least until Adela returned with the fortune, he had obtained for his family through his many efforts. If at all possible, he would request a small portion of the profits for himself to purchase some land to grow flax on. With the inventions that dwelled within his mind, he could produce a flourishing textile industry with time and introduce the fashion of the renaissance to his population, which he vastly preferred

over the garments currently in fashion. Anything leftover could be sold for a fair price to the neighboring regions.

These were all plans for the near future; for now, nothing of significance could be achieved without the wealth to invest in it, which he severely lacked at the moment, though within a few weeks, that would no longer be a concern. He supposed he should enjoy the spare time he had available to him at the moment, but for some reason, if he did not fill his schedule with meaningful and productive activities, he felt like an idle wastrel.

After checking on the progress of his industrial sector, he returned to the peasant militia, which was currently going over basic formations. Berengar had specifically chosen some veterans from the peasant population who had served in previous wars as levies to act as the officer class. They had true experience in the horrors of war. After being personally educated in line infantry tactics by Berengar himself, they had begun to form their own ranks.

Of course, Berengar oversaw the daily training in tactics as much as possible to correct any errors; after all, these were revolutionary strategies and tactics in which had never been seen before. As such, he needed to lead the growth of his unit personally. His second in command was actually a knight-errant who had chosen to settle in Kufstein and laze about after many years of war. If one were to compare his situation to feudal Japan, he was essentially a ronin. A member of the military class whose lord had perished in battle, and with it his prosperity and land rights.

The knight-errant named Eckhard von Hallstatt had lived in Kufstein for nearly five years and essentially lived as a beggar and a drunkard during that duration. It was not until he saw the militia and its unique weaponry and tactics that he decided to clean up his act and make something of his life. He had a keen eye for strategy and tactics, and unlike the other knights and men at arms in Kufstein, he was intelligent enough to realize that Berengar's militia was the future of warfare.

As an old and grizzled veteran Eckhard had many insights to which he could contribute. He had approached Berengar earlier in the week and offered the young lord his own rusty sword in fealty. After hearing the old veteran's story, Berengar appointed him Major of the Battalion and his right-hand man. Berengar had spent many hours of the night writing a military treatise on his vision of the future of warfare and the necessary strategies, tactics, and logistics to conduct it. Eckhard had practically treated this text as a holy book, and the more he read about Berengar's vision, the more he believed the young lord to be a military genius. Though Berengar was by no means a military genius, as a long-time veteran of various strategy games set in numerous eras and a graduate of Westpoint academy, he could confidently say his skills were at the very least advanced for the time period.

Eckhard did not disappoint Berengar's expectations; the man in his mid-forties had quickly grasped everything he was taught and was not simply following the book but

effectively improvising when it was called for. If anything, Eckhard was the true military genius. It was a pity that his previous lord did not recognize the knight's talents in strategy and instead sent him to fight on the front lines. As far as Berengar could tell, it was likely to be a factor in the foolish lord's death. Truly Eckhard was a diamond in the rough.

Though the militia was entirely volunteer-based, they still received pay for their training and activity. Essentially they would act in a fashion similar to America's National Guard in Berengar's previous life. The men who comprised its ranks would go through basic and specialized training, and after they had complete it, they would be normal civilians who would meet up on weekends to continue their training. The primary difference is that Berengar wanted his militia training every weekend instead of just once a month. In a time of need, they would be called upon to fulfill their duty and be held to the same standards as a professional force, with the same penalties for desertion or other crimes.

Berengar treated the men of his militia exceptionally well. He supplied them with proper meals during their training, and soon he would give them proper uniforms. Once his textile industry was up and running, the men would be outfitted in the attire of the Landschekts of the 16th century from Berengar's previous life. The young lord was beginning to develop a flamboyant fashion sense, much like his father. For now, the volunteer militia still wore their everyday ensemble, which, truth be told, was not very professional.

After guiding the battalion's training for the day, Berengar departed back to the castle where he intended to spend the rest of his waking hours drafting the plans for his soon-to-be textile industry. Time waited for no man, and soon he would acquire the funds to make his dream a reality. Thus he had to work hard and not be tempted by any worldly desires. Of course, after several hours of drafting blueprints Berengar heard a knock on his door and could not resist the temptation to play with his favorite toy for the remainder of the night.

### *Chapter 23: A New Plot is Hatched*

A few days had passed without any major occurrence. Berengar had found himself getting dreadfully bored as his work schedule appeared to have come to a halt. Due to the trustworthy and competent people he had placed in implementing his innovations, he had recently acquired an asinine amount of free time. If Adela were still within the confines of his family's territory, then he would currently be enjoying her company. Unfortunately, she would not return to Kufstein for a few weeks. As such, Berengar recently found himself training in the art of swordsmanship with his personal retainer Eckhard. The two men were currently sparring with a pair of wooden arming swords. In which Eckhard was thoroughly beating the young lord who had never picked up a sword until a few days ago.

Swordsmanship was an art that took many years to master, and unlike the flintlock musket required a great deal of physical strength, stamina, and finesse to become

adequate. Despite its age coming to an end, Berengar still felt it a necessity to learn how to properly wield a sword. After all, as an officer leading the army that he was creating it was only proper for him to wield a sword and pistol. Though the more he trained in the sword, the more he realized he would probably break the tradition from his old world and just use a musket.

At the moment Berengar found himself parrying the oncoming wooden sword currently wielded by Eckhard before unleashing a counterattack of his own. However, just when he was about to land his strike, Eckhard dodged in the nick of time and followed up with a thrust of his own pointing the blade directly at Berengar's neck. Seeing that all was lost Berengar fully surrendered to his instructor

"I yield."

With that said The middle-aged man retracted his sword with a smile on his face and placed it back with the others.

"You're a quick learner, and you have the potential to become a competent swordsman. It's just a shame that its era will be coming to an end so soon."

Berengar placed his sword alongside Eckhard's as he sighed heavily in response to the Knight's words.

"The true shame is that I was incapable of training with the sword until now."

The middle-aged knight nodded in agreement to Berengar's statement; he had become aware of the difficulties Berengar faced throughout his years, particularly about his health. It was a miracle that he overcame such an illness and became the man he is today. This transformation of body and mind is just another part of Berengar's character, which inspired Eckhard to do his best every day.

After placing away the swords and stripping out of the training gear they currently equipped, the two men walked together back to the fields, which were being used as a training ground for the militia. The men who comprised the militia's ranks had come a long way in a short amount of time, but their training was still incomplete. It would take close to 90 days in total for the militia to be competent enough to act as a proper force; after all these men were learning how to use firearms for the first time in their lives.

Currently, the unit was split up into four infantry companies with 80 men in each. There was also an Artillery battery trained alongside the infantry, though it was not a full-sized battery. At this point, the battery had three 12 pounder cannons and roughly 40 personnel. It was approximately 1/3 the size of a proper artillery battery. Nevertheless, the numbers of the militia grew with each passing day, and a fourth gun was on the way. What he desired at a bare minimum was a small infantry battalion of 400 soldiers and a full-sized artillery battery. So at the very least, 520 men in his militia and 8

cannons. This was something that was actually quite feasible with his current progress. After all, these were not professional soldiers who would have to give up their day jobs.

The quota Berengar had set himself for a bare-bones battalion would soon be met, the most difficult part was the manufacture of the cannons; those would take time. Still, it was not as if the war would break out overnight. Though the King was in poor health, he was not in critical condition at the moment. Despite the fact that he could potentially croak at any moment, the likelihood of the old man dying before Berengar had reached his militia goals was slim.

After overseeing the training of the militia with Eckhard for the afternoon, Berengar returned to the Castle where unbeknownst to him, he found himself being stalked in the shadows. As he passed through the winding corridor of the castle, his pursuer finally revealed herself from the darkness. It was none other than Linde who had a worried expression on her face as she embraced Berengar from behind.

Not expecting such a thing to occur, Berengar instinctively struggled out of the grasp before realizing who had attacked him. Afterward, he calmed down and accepted her tight embrace. Linde whispered in his ear so low that only they could hear the words.

"Your brother is going to make another attempt on your life soon."

Immediately Berengar's expression sank; it was a good thing he had properly trained this girl; here he was walking around carelessly expecting himself to be safe from Lambert's schemes, and yet the boy had already plotted his death. He was immediately intrigued by the information she provided him.

"How does he plan to do it?"

Linde revealed Lambert's secrets without a second of hesitation; she had long since turned on the boy and her father.

"He has grown tired of my attempts to stall him and has impatiently contacted my father for aid. Apparently, Your father is planning a hunting trip; Lambert and my father have arranged for assassins to lie in wait for you in the mountains. They will appear as brigands, but they will secretly be men at arms under my father's command."

Berengar patted the girl's silky strawberry-blonde hair and comforted her. She was aware that Berengar was not much of a fighter and could not defend himself adequately against such a force. As such, she had a distraught expression across her face that soured her natural beauty, and Berengar hated to see such a thing. The young lord grabbed ahold of her chin and kissed her passionately in the empty corridors of the large stone castle. After releasing her, he whispered in her tender ear.

"You don't need to worry so much; I'm stronger than I look."

Linde's cheeks immediately flushed after Berengar had so brazenly kissed her in the middle of the hallway. Sure there was nobody around, but what if somebody nearby had chanced upon them during their little affair. It was a reckless move on his part, but she could not help but feel excited. The thrill of potentially being discovered was something that made her heart race. However, she realized now was not the moment to engage in her desires with her master. Instead, she bowed respectfully to Berengar, who had noticed the complicated expression on the girl's face.

His brain instantly connected the dots as he realized the girl might be developing a new fetish. A wicked smile appeared across the young lord's face as he pushed the exquisite young lady against the wall and began to partake of her flesh. Luckily for him, nobody came nearby as the couple engaged in scandalous behavior openly in the middle of the Castle's corridors. By the time they were finished, the sun had already begun to set, and they realized their absence would soon be noticed; as such, they parted ways until they were capable of meeting up again at dinner.

This time the atmosphere at the dinner table was quite tense, as Lambert eyed Berengar like a hungry wolf, and Berengar sneered inwardly at the boy like an all-seeing owl. Lambert had no way of knowing that his scheme had already been revealed to his most hated brother, who was already concocting a plan to deal with the plot against him. It was not until their father had spoken up that the silence was broken.

"Berengar, my son, now that you are healthy, and fit I think it is about time I take you on a hunting trip; what do you say?"

Berengar had an innocent smile on his face, like a kid at the candy store as he expressed his interest in joining up with his father as they explored the mountains which bordered their family's territory and hunted some wild game.

"Of course, father, that sounds splendid! Now that I eat meat, I can't wait to feel what it is like to dine on the flesh of my own kill."

Despite his innocent facade Berengar was inwardly snickering at his brother Lambert who had bought into the display and expected his plan to function flawlessly. On the other hand, Sieghard had no way of knowing the battle of intrigue that was transpiring at this very moment between his two sons; instead, he felt happy knowing that Berengar was so welcome to the idea. After all, until recently, Berengar was a vegetarian who had a soft spot for animals. To see the boy so excited about hunting truly brought joy to the Baron's heart. He may be getting older, and his son may be an adult now, but the two still had the potential to grow closer.

Lambert was pleased; his brother was falling right into the trap he had prepared. After all, he could no longer sit idly by and allow Linde constantly to fail at seducing his brother. Berengar was either impotent, gay, or a lolicon. That was the conclusion Lambert had come to; if he had known that his gorgeous fiancée he was so proud of

had been ravaged openly in the hallway by his brother just an hour earlier, the boy would probably attempt to claim Berengar's life on the spot.

The young lord had no way of knowing that Berengar had planned to bring a rifle to a sword fight. That's right, a rifle; in his spare time over the past few days, he had drawn designs for a barrel boring bench and presented them to Ludwig. This invention would be instrumental to the effectiveness of his army.

Currently, Ludwig was in the process of making a long rifle-style gun that was used effectively by American militias during the revolutionary war in Berengar's previous life. For now, Berengar's militia would be equipped with smoothbores; after all, he really could not reveal the effectiveness of the rifled musket without garnering suspicion about such a design. However, if he were alone and separated from his father in the mountains, he could easily kill the assassins from a distance of 200-300 yards with a long rifle. He may be useless in the sword, but in his past life as Julian, he had earned his expert marksman badge during his tenure in the army.

By the time the hunting trip began, Berengar would be well equipped to deal with the assassins, as long as he spotted them first, that is. If they got close to him for whatever reason, he had specifically designed this rifle to be capable of using a bayonet, something with which he also had ample experience training in. For now, he just had to act like he had no idea what Lambert was scheming behind his back and go along with the ploy. The two brothers had a pleasant conversation with their father about the finer details of hunting and all Berengar should know about it.

It was only after dinner that Berengar returned to his quarters to get some work done. Currently, he was drafting designs or keeping track of ledgers, the usual administrative operations he had been engaging in at night ever since his father gave him jurisdiction over the fledgling industrial sector. When he was not signing documents related to the industry, he oversaw reports of military spending and training. Everything was currently within his budget, and the troops seemed to be progressing well. So there were no immediate concerns he had to deal with there.

It was not until midnight that he heard the knock on his door that he had grown so accustomed to over the last couple of weeks; this girl was voracious; even after having fun in the middle of the day, she still came for more at night. Well, he supposed he should take a break from reports and relieve a little stress. As such, he spent part of the night training his slave before the couple fell asleep in each other's arms. It would not be until the crack of dawn where they awoke from their slumber.

1. [Home](#)
2. [Tyranny of Steel](#)
3. Chapter 24 - It is Not a Hunt if You are Properly Sober

*Chapter 24: It is Not a Hunt if You are Properly Sober*

Over the next few days, Berengar had made preparations for the hunting trip. While also working on the many other tasks he was currently micromanaging. As usual, everything was progressing smoothly, but he could not increase productivity until the irrigation pipes were fully installed and the mines were working at full capacity. Thus it was mainly just basic administrative operations he was forced to oversee every day, which began to take its toll on Berengar, who desperately needed an escape. He was actually looking forward to the hunting trip, as he would enjoy the fresh air of the mountains and take care of some pesky gnats that were conspiring against him.

The day they were set to leave the Castle, Berengar had stopped by Ludwig's shop to pick up his rifle, which should be ready by then. When he walked through the dusty old doors of Ludwig's shack which was now used as office space for the growing industrial district, he noticed the old man cleaning the rifle's barrel before a wide smile spread across his lips.

"So you've taken a liking to my newest design, huh?"

Ludwig quickly snapped to attention as he heard the Young Lord's voice calling out to him.

"Milord, it is brilliant; who knew that by cutting grooves into the barrel, you could stabilize the lead ball's flight through the air, thus achieving a greater degree of accuracy?"

It was a rhetorical question; of course, there was only one mind in this world capable of thinking of such a thing, and that was Berengar's. Ludwig politely handed the rifle over to Berengar in which he thoroughly inspected. When he saw the proof mark on the barrel showing that it had been properly test-fired, a smile crept upon his regal visage.

"Ludwig, you're an artist!"

Berengar said as he looked up and complimented the old man. By now, he had made hundreds of firearms that were used to equip the militia, yet this was the first rifle the man had ever made, and it was a masterpiece.

The rifle was chambered in .58 caliber and fired a minie ball projectile, a lead slug that was far more effective than the current lead balls used by his militia. The mini ball was matched specifically to the rifling so that it stabilized better in its flight. Thus giving it a more effective range than the traditional lead ball. With the overwhelming barrel length of the long rifle, matched with the superior minie ball, he felt as if the practical range of accuracy on this rifle was greater than the 1861 Springfield Rifled Musket used by Union troops in the American Civil War in his previous life. After clasping Ludwig's shoulder, Berengar thanked him for his service.

"You have no idea how much this means to me, my friend."

Ludwig removed Berengar's hand and remained humble

"I'm just doing what I should. Make sure to get some proper use out of this thing on your hunting trip, milord. It would be a pity if you failed to kill anything with such a beautiful weapon."

Berengar smiled at Ludwig and said farewell to his friend; it would be a few days before returning.

"I'll be gone for the next few days; make sure to keep an eye on things around here when I'm gone."

Ludwig chuckled as he parted ways with his friend while reassuring him of his competence.

"You do not need to be afraid, milord; everything will be running smoothly by the time you return."

Afterward, Berengar departed from the shop with a rifle in hand and a belt that contained his bayonet and cartridge holder for his paper cartridges. Today he had dressed in earthly colors, mostly green and brown, so that he may blend in with the environment better. He did not want the assassins who would be waiting for him in the mountains to spot him before he did them. With Linde's warning, he could now successfully stalk the assassins and take them out from hundreds of meters away. The hunted had become the hunter.

Speaking of Linde as he left the shop and rounded a corner in the village a pair of dainty hands reached out and grabbed ahold of his waist, as he felt the familiar softness of Linde's heavenly bust pressed against his back. When he turned around to face her he could see tears in her eyes as she wished him good luck

"Stay safe out there, I don't think I could live without you..."

Berengar nearly laughed at her remark, her training was going wonderfully, she was now a properly broken-in slave who would never betray him. After observing her angelic face with was covered in tears he reached out his index finger and wiped them from her sky blue eyes with his finger before kissing her farewell.

"I know"

is all the young lord said as he walked away from his lover with a confident stride; slinging the rifle on his back as he did so.

Berengar eventually regrouped with his father and a small host of men to accompany them. Their journey would be a long one, and thus they needed men to carry supplies with them. Berengar found that he had slung the rifle over his shoulder; a leather sling was attached to the steel sling points that hung beneath the rifle's stock. After many miles of hiking, Berengar was thankful to whoever came up with such an idea in his previous life. It made long marches far more bearable, and today he had hiked many miles into the mountains.

The sun had begun to set, and as such, Berengar's servants had set up the encampment for them. They had finally reached a wooded portion of the mountains, his father's favorite hunting spot. It had been a long while since Sieghard had last been here, and he took a moment to enjoy the scenery before passing a wineskin to his son who was currently cradling his rifle like it was a newborn babe.

"Drink; it is not a hunt if you are properly sober."

Though Berengar wanted to keep his mind sober as he knew there was a dastardly plot to end his life nearby, he couldn't very well refuse his father. So he took a swig from the wineskin and wiped his lips with his sleeve before returning it to his father.

Sieghard could not understand his son's fascination with hand cannons; it was hardly a proper tool for hunting. Yet the youth had brought an even larger hand cannon out than his previous one. He began to wonder what was so special about the design. Nevertheless, he would not chastise the boy for liking the weapon; he just wished his heir was as good as his second son with the sword.

Berengar, on the other hand, was thinking of the information Linde reported to him the night before. Lambert's assassins should be camping out just out of hearing range for the sound of his rifle. Which worked perfectly for Berengar as he had decided that he would launch a night raid; seeing as how the full moon was out, there was plenty of illumination for him to pick off his targets, especially if they stood by the fire. When his father finally fell asleep, Berengar would take the high ground and snipe his enemies from above. After he got rid of them, he would search for any evidence among their bodies that could be used against his enemies.

As such, Berengar spent a lot of time getting his father drunk. It was only after the man could barely stand that Berengar led him back to his tent and tucked the old drunkard in. After leaving his father's tent behind, Berengar snuck around the campsite and picked up the rifle where he absconded into the night. Along the way, he slathered mud in his hair and across his face and hands to blend into the darkness better. It was quite the trek up to the position where he wanted to take control of; however, before he arrived at the outcropping, Berengar had a sudden encounter with someone he was not expecting.

One of the assassins had left the camp to take a leak, and while Berengar was sneaking past the area, the two came face to face with one another. Though the man

could not tell Berengar's identity, it was not a good idea to allow a witness to their location to live. As such, the man instantly grabbed his sword and swung it out of his scabbard as he attacked Berengar in the dead of night. Berengar had to roll out of the way as he struggled to fix his bayonet. The fucking rifle wasn't even loaded yet, nor was the bayonet attached. As such, he had elected to hide behind a tree while he attached the blade to his rifle.

The man was just about to scream for help from his comrades when he walked by the tree Berengar hid behind and noticed a giant steel spike insert itself into his neck. Instantly feeling the sharp pain of a bayonet stuck in his throat, the man began to gargle on his own blood as he looked at Berengar in disbelief; since when did this guy have a spear? Berengar removed the bayonet from the man's throat and wiped it across his jerkin.

It had been quite some time since Berengar last killed somebody. He served as an engineer officer in the United States Army in his previous life, but he had found himself engaged in combat on more than one occasion. He even managed to kill a Taliban insurgent while he came under fire from their assault. As such, he was no virgin when it came to taking a life. After confirming the men in the camp were unalerted, Berengar snuck up to the position above the campfire where he saw three more assassins sitting in front of the fire and drinking.

After acquiring his targets, Berengar took out a paper cartridge and bit off its top before pouring its contents into his muzzle and packing it down with the ramrod. Once the round was properly chambered, he pulled back the hammer that contained the flint and aimed down the sights, which landed on the largest group member, who appeared to be dressed in brigandine armor. The man heartfully chugged down a flagon of wine completely unaware that he was in the sniper's sights. Berengar took a deep breath as he settled the sights on his target and calmly squeezed the trigger. The thunder of the explosion which propelled the minie ball projectile filled the air; having never heard such a sound before, these men at arms turned assassin thought that it had begun raining. After all, they were young upstarts who wanted to prove themselves to the count; hand cannons were not that common on the battlefield at this point.

One of the assassins looked back at the man who had an enormous hole in his brigandine breastplate with shock, blood spurted from the caved-in hole in the man's chest as he soon collapsed, the others had no idea what had just transpired, but they were beginning to panic.

As they were freaking out about the loss of their friend, a second thunder went off; this time, the head of one of the assassin's exploded. The last survivor instantly hid behind one of the crates lying about the campsite; it had become obvious after the second occasion that they were under attack from an unknown enemy and weapon. Unfortunately for the young assassin, he had chosen poorly in regards to cover. After another half, a minute or so had passed, the .58 caliber slug pierced through the wooden crate, and the contents within penetrating its way through the man's leg,

practically blasting his femur in half. He would bleed out shortly thereafter from a damaged femoral artery.

Just like that, Berengar had claimed the lives of the four assassins who were sent after him. After having sent the men to the afterlife, Berengar rushed down to the camp below and scoured it for any evidence that could be used against Lambert or Lothar. Luckily he came across the letter which contained the details of Berengar and Sieghard's hunting trip. Including the general location in which Sieghard always set up his campsite. It was signed by Lambert and in his handwriting. Berengar nearly broke out in laughter upon obtaining this letter; he finally had a key piece of evidence in which he could begin to build a case against Lambert's assassination attempts.

Throughout the remainder of the night, Berengar used his time wisely and got rid of any sign pointing towards his bloody deed. He did not want the Count's men sniffing around and finding out that he had personally dispatched his men at arms to hell. After everything was either buried or burned to ash, Berengar had left the area behind and returned to his own camp night. As if God were looking out for him, the heavens began to weep that night and washed any remaining sign of the skirmish. After a covert investigation, the Count would later assume that the men had abandoned their duties and fled Tyrol. He would later place a bounty for their heads, which nobody was ever able to claim.

For the rest of the night, Berengar slept like a baby. He had no second thoughts about murdering those men who were sent to kill him. Not even a tinge of guilt could infect his pure consciousness or lack thereof as he enjoyed the sound of the pounding rain outside of his warm tent, which slowly aided him in drifting to sleep. His last thought of the night was simply "This fucking hunting trip; I could be playing with Linde right now..."

### *Chapter 25: Returning Home*

Throughout the entire venture, Berengar's absence throughout the camp went entirely unnoticed. By the time Sieghard and the servants awoke, they saw Berengar cleaning his rifle next to the fire. Sieghard could not help but exclaim in his heart.

'This boy is too dutiful; even on a hunting trip, he awakes at the crack of dawn.'

It had become a habit for Berengar to awake at dawn, in both his previous life and his current one. By now, he was used to running on a few hours of sleep a couple of times a week. In his hands was a glass of water which he had boiled over the campfire to rid it of impurities, at least to the best of his ability. He refused to drink polluted water and had spent the morning purifying a large supply of it. Since coffee had yet to be transported to Europe, he was forced to drink water this early in the morning. He was beginning to consider expanding his territory when he came to power. It would not be easy to establish a trade route from the mountains of Austria to the near east, and if he wanted to retire in luxury one day, he would need coffee.

Berengar's plans were simple, work hard for thirty years in establishing an industrial and economic powerhouse in his family's territory, and then retire in luxury, giving the reigns to a well-educated heir to continue his legacy. As of now, he had no desire to spend the remainder of his adult life at war. Something he had managed to do in his previous life. Of course, life did not always go as planned, and the future was unknown to him. There may be a necessity for him to expand his territory in time.

As of now, he was still just the son and heir of a lowly Baron, which meant he had no authority to make such decisions even if he desired to do so. Instead, he spent the remainder of the next few days being dragged around by his father hunting stags and collecting the meat. When he finally returned home, he was exhausted and covered in grime. The first thing he wanted to do was take a bath and cleanse himself of the filth he was covered in. Throughout the duration of the hunting trip, he had never revealed the full capabilities of the rifle; despite successfully hunting a buck of his own, his father was not impressed with the limited range that was displayed, and the exceptional reload time of the rifle.

The man had a traditional mind and felt that Berengar's use of what he incorrectly referred to as hand cannons were merely the fascination of youth with the newest technology. If he had known that the previous night Berengar had taken out three targets in a matter of minutes at a distance of 100 yards in the dead of night with his rifle, then he would probably have a heart attack from the shock of such a thing. Unlike an arrow, the rifle which fired a minie ball projectile was fully capable of piercing through a knight's hardened steel breastplate, let alone a common brigandine. Even the muskets fielded by Berengar's militia were capable of such a feat, albeit at a severely reduced distance.

There was a reason that during Berengar's previous life, after the invention of muskets, body armor slowly disappeared from common use. Even with the advanced manufacturing processes of the renaissance and the surpassing era, the breastplates used by heavy cavalry were only useful against melee weapons and musket fire at long distances. At close range, the steel breastplates used by cuirassiers would be punched through by a musket ball like an arrow through a common tunic.

If the medieval knights of the current era charged on horseback against a firing line of musketeers, they would be ended up as a bunch of blood-filled sieves, and such a frightening spectacle would be sure to affect the morale of the soldiers behind them. Even Berengar's militiamen who wielded such terrifying power had no way of knowing how capable their weapons were. After all, it is not as if they tested their guns on straw dummies covered in steel plate armor. That would be ludicrously expensive. Only Berengar was aware that his militia was capable of such an incredible achievement.

After arriving in the village with his father and the servants who followed them into the mountains, Berengar noticed a familiar sight waving towards him in an alleyway. It was his loyal slave who currently had tears of joy in her eyes that he had safely returned. The entire time he was away the pitiful young lady was in constant fear that her lord and

master whom she had pledged her life to had perished in the ambush set up by her dastardly fiance. When she saw him covered in the dirt and grime of the mountains, she could not help but smile; there was not even a scratch on him. Truly she had worried too much. Without arousing suspicion, Berengar approached the alleyway where she was currently alone; as he finally fell out of sight, Linde rushed over into his embrace and nuzzled her porcelain cheek against his chest, dirtying it in the process.

Berengar accepted her embrace as he petted her sleek strawberry blonde hair in an attempt to calm her down. He had only been gone a few days and felt that she was overreacting. Nevertheless, he did not scold her, as he actually felt happy that she cared enough to worry so much about him during his absence. After all their relationship was complicated, to say the least. She was his concubine, and brother's fiancee whom he had forced himself on, and practically brainwashed into being obedient to him. Though he did not feel remorse for such actions, ultimately in Berengar's mind such actions were justified, and the young lady deserved her fate.

After stroking her luscious red-gold hair for several moments Berengar responded kindly to the young woman

"See, I told you I would be fine"

Though she still continued to sniffle, the buxom beauty wiped the tears from her eyes and began to smile. Everything turned out fine, and she could not be happier. However, Berengar could not abide the muck that had spread across her doll-like face and heavenly body from their brief intimate moment as such he whispered into the girl's ear

"Meet me in the bath"

The girl nodded her head and smiled as he departed before her. Things would not bode well for the couple if she was caught following him into the bath, as such they had to be extra cautious about how they moved from here on out.

And with that being said Berengar took off and headed towards the bath. Linde waited a few moments and did as she was commanded; not long after the young vixen found herself enjoying the company of her master in the warm water of the bathhouse, which proved to be a worthy investment. By the time the two were finished getting reacquainted with one another, it had already turned into evening. Dinner would soon be approaching, and he knew his father would have his chefs cook their gains during the hunt into a lavish feast. As such, the two left the confines of the bathhouse and separated; it would not look good if they arrived at the dining room together.

When Berengar finally entered the Dining room, he saw Lambert with a wicked smile on his face, he was the first to arrive, and the teenage youth was certain he would be enjoying the feast without his older brother this night. However, when he saw the handsome features of his older brother walk into the area, the young boy instantly went

pale, with the expression that he was witnessing a ghost. How could it be possible that his brother had survived the ambush he had set in place?

Nevertheless, Berengar sat down across from Lambert and snickered at the boy, savoring his distraught expression to the fullest. He was beginning to think he might have become a true sadist after his many nights with Linde, as he now enjoyed the suffering of his enemies on a deeply personal level. The expression on Berengar's face told Lambert all he needed to know about the fate of the assassins he sent. However, Berengar would never admit to it. If he bragged about killing four assassins, nobody would believe him, and those who did would instantly question how a young man with no combat training whatsoever had managed to defeat four brigands by his lonesome. Eventually, the effectiveness of his rifle would be discovered, and his weapon designs would no longer belong to him alone.

Eventually, the rest of the family arrived, and Lambert had heard the tales of his father and brother's exploits from the Baron himself. Yet, there was not a single mention of the men who were supposed to ambush them.

'Is it possible that the Count's men were unreliable and deserted? Then what was with Berengar's smug grin earlier?'

Eventually, Lambert concluded that the men could have deserted and decided to write a letter to Count Lothar informing him of the operation's failure. Secretly Count Lothar would send a party to investigate the last known coordinates of his men-at-arms and come to the same judgment.

For now, Berengar could relax and enjoy the new dishes, which used the venison of their hunt as the meat of choice. Berengar savored the taste of venison; truly, it was one of the best meats a man could dine upon. After finishing his meal, he returned to his quarters. He needed to brush up on his history of this world. After all, it had been some time since he read about the many changes in the timeline from the world he once knew, and he would need to become accustomed to his surroundings if he wished to prepare for the upcoming war.

Berengar arrived at his chambers and quickly latched the door behind him. He opened up a scroll and spread it across his desk, the oil lamp in the corner providing the proper illumination necessary to view it. Truly it was different from his own timeline. The year was 1417, yet the Holy Roman Empire was at the height of its power; on the map in the Center of Europe lay the Holy Roman Empire, whose borders stretched beyond their peak in 1138 to encompass all of Italy aside from the papal states, as well as all of the regions that would one day consist of the Netherlands, and Belgium.

The Empire had also annexed the Teutonic State as a Vassal territory extending into the Baltic. The Teutonic State was still a force to be reckoned in its own right, as it was victorious in the battle of Grunwald in this timeline; the victory sparked an extended campaign that lasted five years. During this Campaign, the Teutonic Order had

conquered all of the coastal regions of the Baltic from Pomerania to the borders of Finland. Though the Teutonic State held the authority of its own Kingdom, it was essentially a theocratic Vassal State of the Empire and a puppet of the Pope; as such, its Grandmaster was not afforded the ability to vote upon the next Emperor, unlike the Kings who presided over the other kingdoms.

The feudal system of the Holy Roman Empire in this timeline was far more streamlined. Splitting into a very linear vassal system instead of the complex and convoluted semi-autonomous regions of Berengar's previous life. The Holy Roman Empire was comprised of several kingdoms including the Kingdom of Germany, the Kingdom of Italy, the Kingdom of Bohemia, the Swiss Confederation, and the Kingdom of Burgundy. The leaders of these territories were Kings in their own right and held varying control over the vassals beneath them, which were split into Duchies. These Dukes ruled over the various Counts whose land comprised the territory of the Duchy, and the Counts presided over the Barons, who in turn presided over minor lords and their knights.

Berengar currently resided in the Barony of Kufstein, a Vassal region of the County of Tyrol, which was a Vassal of the Duchy of Austria, the southernmost Duchy of the Kingdom of Germany. The Duchy of Austria in this timeline was far larger than in Berengar's previous life at this point in history. The size of the Archduchy of Austria included the Counties of Tyrol, Vorarlberg, Salzburg, Carinthia, Trient, Lower Steiermark Karnten, Upper Austria, and Lower Austria, and finally Steiermark which was the region ruled by his fiancée's father, Count Otto von Graz. Seeing as how Graz was the seat of power of the County and where his family derived its name from.

Aside from the changes with the Holy Roman Empire and its vassal states, Western Europe, Scandinavia, and the British Isles held the same territory in this timeline as they had in Berengar's past life. Even the Reconquista was going exactly as it had in the other timeline. The only other major change to the geography of Europe was the Balkans being held by the Byzantine Empire, which had over the centuries since the Crusades to the Holy Land recovered much of its lost territory. Extending from the Balkans, through Greece and Anatolia, all the way into the Levant. Though it has not yet been able to reclaim its former North African regions, it was currently doing so. Despite it being the late Medieval Ages, Europe had begun to take its place in the world as a powerhouse. However, they were far from reaching their full potential.

Berengar gazed at the changes of the map with a growing sense of ambition. He was beginning to get the suspicion that being a Baron was not his destiny; in the back of his mind, the thought of reaching greater heights began to manifest. He did not know what the future held for him, but now was not the time to think about it. He had plenty of work that needed to be done, and much of it could not be accomplished until he held absolute control of his family's lands. For now, he had to be patient and play the long game. Soon enough, the Kingdom of Germany would find itself embroiled in civil war, and he had to convince his father to declare him Regent before that happened. The hunting trip had not been a complete and total waste of time; he was capable of stopping his

brother's wicked plans and grow closer to his father. Gaining his father's trust would be paramount for his plans to acquire power.

With that being said, Berengar heard a knock on the door and decided to end his studies for the day. He initially thought the knock on his door was most likely going to be Linde, and he could spend some time relaxing with his favorite toy. However, when he opened the door, he saw little Henrietta looking up at him with a frightened expression. The young girl held her favorite doll in her hands as she looked up at her big brother with tears in her eyes.

"Big brother, I had a nightmare. Will, you read me a story?"

It had been a while since Berengar had told his little sister a bedtime story; after all, he had been occupied with other things during the night as of late. As such, he let out a sigh and pet her silky blonde hair as he led the little girl to her room. Where he spent the next hour telling her the story of the Battle of Castle Itter during the Second World War in his previous life, where German and American forces came together to free prisoners of war from the Waffen-SS days before the end of the conflict had occurred. His fantastical telling of Machine guns, tanks, and cannons, as well as the brotherhood forged between former foes, enthralled the little girl who thought her brother was making up such an incredible story. In the end, Henrietta fell asleep from over-excitement, and Berengar kissed her on the forehead before leaving her room and returned to his own quarters.

When he returned Berengar had found Linde lying naked on his bed, waiting for his arrival with a pouting expression on her lips. Damn this girl; she was just too sinful. The young lord immediately closed the door to his chambers behind him and enjoyed the company of the beautiful young woman for the night.

#### *Chapter 26: The Count's Daughter Returns*

Days turned to weeks as time flew by; during this time, Berengar had been primarily overseeing the growth of the militia. By now, he had met his minimum infantry goals four companies of 100 men each. The Artillery Battery was properly taking shape as well, with 80 men and 5 guns. It would not be long until he had reached his minimum goal, but in his mind, that was not good enough. He now desired a full-sized Battalion and two artillery batteries before the war began.

Though their training continued, it was done in such a manner that, when observed by outsiders, highlighted the limitations of the weapons. As such, Lambert never once felt the need to report the mass use of hand cannons and field guns to his allies, and Sieghard had no desire to conscript Berengar's forces into his standing army, which all played perfectly into the young lord's hands.

Berengar was in a perfect mood today, as today was the day in which Adela returned from her trip to her homeland. Not only did he miss the company of his little fiancée, but

he also desired the gold and silver hoard she would bring with her in payment to the ten tonnes of steel he had sold to her father. With it, the next phase of expansion could begin to take place. Berengar, alongside his family and Linde, had stood outside in their courtyard to greet the young lady's arrival.

After a long while, the banners of house von Graz appeared in the distance. Her family's coat of arms was a divided field of azure and sable in per bend division. On it, an or swan with argent beak, feet, and eyes was emblazoned. It was a truly magnificent and detailed coat of arms, unlike that of the house von Kufstein. Their coat of arms was rudimentary in comparison. It consisted of a per bend division in sable and or, with an argent bend across its center. It was remarkably similar to the black, white, and red shield decal seen on German helmets in World War I and II during Berengar's previous life; with the exception of the red being replaced by gold. Despite House von Graz's far more complex design, Berengar felt a certain sense of pride in his own family's banner. It reminded him of his great grandfather from his previous life, who served in trenches of the Great War as a soldier in the Kaiser's army. After the German Empire's collapse, his family fled the fatherland for greener pastures in America.

As Berengar reminisced about his past life, Adela's caravan had arrived inside the courtyard, the moment her luxurious carriage stopped in front of the family, its doors swung open, and the little girl jumped out of the carriage and into Berengar's arms, wrapping around his waist like a spider monkey. The young lord barely had enough time to stabilize himself as he caught ahold of his fiancée, who pecked him on the cheek with her precious lips.

"I missed you! Did you miss me?" was the first thing the girl said as she clung to her fiancé in front of his family. While the family was stunned by the outburst, Linde had a pouting expression on her face. Now Berengar's fiancée had arrived, she would have less time with her lord and master to herself. Luckily everyone was too stunned by Adela's actions to notice Linde's sulking guise. She would have a hard time explaining the look on her face if her fiancé had caught wind of it.

After Berengar had pried himself away from the young girl's grasp, he asked her the question which was on everyone's minds.

"So, is it all here?"

Adela quickly recovered and realized the degree of affection she had just showed Berengar in public; as such, her cheeks quickly flushed with embarrassment. Nevertheless, like a proper noble lady, she calmed her heart and pointed to the servants carrying large crates filled with silver and gold. It was not until all of them piled up did she boldly declare

"My father is a man of his word; the agreed amount of our transaction is in these crates in the form of gold and silver ingots. Count Otto von Graz wishes to express his thanks for supplying such a large amount of steel and looks forward to future cooperation."

Berengar smiled as he ordered a few of his family's servants to check the authenticity of the crates. Though he trusted Adela's words, he was still a cautious man and had each ingot inspected; only after its worth was confirmed was the mass of gold and steel transferred to the treasury. He now had the ability to invest in the textile industry, expand the capacity of the mines, and by extension, his steel surplus, which would come in handy for the many inventions he had planned. Once the irrigation system was fully in place, he would have many unemployed farmers who could begin work in the mines or the factories. Things were truly going according to his plans.

After Adela's arrival, the family threw a feast to celebrate her return; she thoroughly enjoyed the lavish cuisine she had so desperately missed during her absence. Berengar found the young girl's appearance as she devoured the food with a satisfied expression on her doll-like face to be incredibly cute. However, Linde could not help but glare at her rival. Even if she would never be the wife, Linde still did not like to see Berengar show his young fiancée such a different side of himself that he showed to her. Her menacing gaze did not go unnoticed by Adela; she could not understand why Linde disliked her so much. It must be the fact that the two brothers were feuding; after all, it's not as if they were currently fighting for the affection of the same man.

After the meal was over, Berengar immediately got to work; though he wanted to spend the day with Adela, pockets needed to be filled with coins to ensure his engagement ceremony was well supplied, his forces well equipped, and his factories manned. His father would normally handle the investiture into the mines, but the Baron had been delegating more and more responsibility to his son and heir recently. As such, Berengar quickly found himself managing the mines, which worked perfectly for his plans. It also meant that his father was testing him; if he could handle such a monumental task efficiently, he might be able to earn the title Regent. Maybe his father was also aware of the upcoming war and was beginning to make his preparations.

For now, Berengar could not know the truth of the matter. Thus he handled his business as best as he could. Supplies were brought in to improve the mines, and blueprints were drafted by mining safety standards and improvements from the industrial era. The last thing Berengar wanted on his hands was a collapsed mine. As such, he practically overhauled the system in place overnight in which the mines had used for centuries.

One of these critical inventions was the safety lamp which would provide adequate lighting in volatile areas where other lamps and candles could be hazardous. Mining was dangerous and backbreaking work; the least Berengar could do was apply safety standards and equipment and an adequate paycheck to compensate the workers for the work hazards that may appear. What would really speed up the process of mining was dynamite. Though he knew the chemical equation to create such a thing, he lacked a knowledgeable chemist and a production facility to manufacture it. He seriously needed to get his hands on an alchemist which he could personally tutor in chemistry, but unfortunately, there was none within a small region like his family's.

However, he decided it was better to have a chemical laboratory he could utilize within his spare time than to have no ability to produce chemicals whatsoever. As such, he put aside a small portion of the mining funds to construct a chemical laboratory and the equipment necessary to outfit it. As long as he requested the funding under the guise of "Miscellaneous Mining Innovations," his father would approve it. Thus the young lord quickly drafted the plans necessary for such production. Though he had limited spare time nowadays, he needed to produce supplies that required basic chemistry. It was better to have a system in place before he had a proper chemist than a proper chemist and no means of production.

While he was in the middle of his work, he heard a knock on his door, which he quickly responded to; after opening the door, he saw his darling little fiancée dressed in a pastel pink velvet gown and a tray of snacks in her hands. She knew her fiancé was busy with work, but she still desired to spend some time with him, even if it was just watching him a snack while he was hard at work. A large German Cheesecake sat on the tray which the young girl had begun to divide up into pieces for the couple to consume.

After taking a bite from the delicious cheesecake, Berengar could feel a tear forming in his eyes; it was exactly as his mother used to make. After all, it was her recipe that he remembered; nevertheless, he could not help but feel a sense of longing for his old home. He started to wonder how his family reacted to his death. He had been too busy with work and school in his adult life to visit home often. Eventually, he drifted apart from his family; he began to lament that he had not spent more time with his parents before he passed. It was a shame he was an only child and had perished in Afghanistan; his parents were sure to regret that he had never produced grandchildren for them. As he began to think about his grieving parents with no grandchildren to comfort them, the tears in his eyes began to produce more rapidly, which did not go unnoticed by his loving fiancée, who sat next to him.

Adela noticed the tears streaming from Berengar's eyes and tried to comfort him; she had no idea what would cause such a strange reaction.

"What's wrong? Are you okay?"

Berengar wiped the tears from his eyes and smiled; he felt ashamed of himself for crying in front of a little girl like Adela.

"Yeah... I'm fine. The taste brings back memories."

Adela did not know what memories he could be referring to; as far as she was aware, these recipes were his inventions; they had never been seen before. At this moment, Berengar finally realized he had not answered the girl's question from when she first returned and looked softly into her eyes as he spoke truthfully with her.

"I did miss you, Adela; I'm sorry I wasn't able to say so earlier."

The young lady immediately began to blush as she heard his words; she was not expecting him to say such a thing. For the next half hour, she shared the snacks with Berengar, and by the time they were finished, she was satisfied with the small-time she spent with her fiance. She was finally able to figure out if he felt anything during her weeks of absence. The young girl thought that she was lucky to have such a loving fiance; if she knew he was cheating on her with his brother's fiancee behind her back, she probably would not have such thoughts. However, she did not know, and Berengar intended to keep it that way; it was best not to have your wife find out about your concubine if you could avoid it. Who knows what reprisal he might face if she were to become aware of his complicated relationship with Linde. So he continued to lie to his little fiancee, and she continued to believe him.

After some time, Adela had left Berengar's chambers, and Berengar focused on his work. All of his plans for the mines and the industry he had drafted were either delivered to Ludwig for implementation or sent to his father's desk for approval. The engagement ceremony's plans had been put into action by competent people beneath his father's command, and the family's coffers were filled to the brim. With it, another day's work had come to an end. He sighed heavily as he sat back in his comfy leather chair and watched the moon in the sky above. Any minute now, Linde would knock on his door and beg for attention, and he would spend the rest of his waking hours disciplining her for being so obviously jealous at Adela's arrival. It was good to be a noble scion, even if he was merely a Baron's son...

#### *Chapter 27: Visiting the Mines*

As the rise of dawn awoke Berengar from his slumber, he quickly got dressed and left Linde by her lonesome in his quarters as she still slept. Today would be a hectic day for Berengar as he personally visited the mines to oversee their expansion. He did not even have time to work out this morning. For the next couple of weeks, Berengar would be at the mines near the village of Wildsch?nau. Wildsch?nau was currently under the direct control of one of Sieghard's Vassals, known as Lord Ulrich von Wildsch?nau; it was a perfect chance to leave a favorable impression on the minor lord and his family. After all, the rumors of Berengar being a petty, indolent, and sickly young lord were still prominent outside of the town of Kufstein and those who have had direct contact with him.

After grabbing a quick snack in which the chefs woke up early to prepare for his journey, Berengar left his family's Estate while only leaving a letter to inform them of his absence. He was a man of action, and since he had decided to oversee this venture personally, he would not waste time with parting words, especially since he would only be gone for a few weeks at most. As he stepped into one of his family's carriages and looked back at the window to his room in the tower up above, he could see Linde's heavenly figure gazing down at him as she waved goodbye. Evidently, his absence had awoken the beauty from her precious sleep. Berengar's parting gift to her was the kiss he blew in her direction before stepping into the carriage which swiftly took off from the

castle and regrouped with the supply Caravan down in the town below. He would travel for several hours before reaching the Lordship of Wildsch?nau.

When his Caravan arrived, Berengar stepped out of his carriage to greet Lord Ulrich and his family; he had sent a letter in advance to inform the Lord of his arrival. As the Baron's son and heir, he still had to follow the proper etiquette when approaching his family's vassal territory. After stepping out of his carriage, the expressions on the family's faces went from forcing a gracious smile to deep shock. Berengar had appeared far different from the last time they had met. Though they could not see the extent of his fitness beneath his fine doublet, they could tell that his skin had a healthy glow and that his cheeks were no longer sunken. Evidently, the sickly boy they once knew had recovered from his childhood infirmity.

Berengar approached Lord Ulrich, who bowed before him; after all, despite his preconceptions about Berengar as a person, the young lord was still the son of the Baron and, as such, held a higher position than him.

"My Lord, it is a great honor to host your stay at our humble abode."

Lord Ulrich was a man in his early thirties, and his wife was nearly ten years younger. They were a young couple, and Ulrich had recently acquired the title of Lord from his late father. He was not exceptionally handsome, nor was he sufficiently strong. He was truly an average guy all-around, at least from an aesthetic perspective. The man had mid-length dirty blonde hair and ocean blue eyes with a trimmed beard to match his hair color. His skin was not as fair as Berengar's, nor was it as tanned as the commoners. His wife shared a strikingly similar appearance to Ulrich and Berengar began to wonder if they were related in some way. In her hands, she held an infant boy, which was the third son of Ulrich. Kneeling next to the couple were another two boys who were in their formative years. The little tykes gazed up at Berengar's with a sense of wonder. This was the first time they had met a family member of the Baron, and they were well aware of the position he held in the household.

Berengar motioned for the family to rise as he put on a charming smile

"You honor me with your kind words, Lord Ulrich. I'm merely here on business and will be spending most of my time at the mines. However, I will not turn down the hospitality you have shown me; be aware that I may otherwise be preoccupied to become acquainted with your fine household fully."

Berengar's words were chosen wisely; he did not wish to offend Lord Ulrich or his House, but he also needed to make it clear that he would be swamped overseeing the expansion of the mines. Thus he would not be able to entertain his hosts properly. On the other hand, Lord Ulrich nearly sighed in relief as he heard those words, the last time he had met Berengar, the young lord had acted like a spoiled brat of lower intellect. He wanted to avoid wasting time with such a wastrel if at all given a chance. However,

Ulrich was quite shocked by how Berengar was behaving; it was quite different from his old self.

Ulrich quickly dismissed his family when Berengar made it clear he wanted to head to the mines as quickly as possible. He personally elected to guide the youth to the mines; if this petty young lord was overseeing the expansion of the mines in which Sieghard had ordered, it was best for him to stay close by and prevent any mishaps. As the two noblemen got into the carriage and departed for the mines, Ulrich could not help but ask about the project.

"So, what are the plans for expanding the mines?"

A smile appeared on Berengar's face as he began a long discussion about the new safety standards which included a more robust support system to prevent mine collapses and the safety lamp. He also demanded proper work hours and sufficient payment, which the Baron would personally take care of. There was also the ban on child labor in the mines in which Berengar had gotten approval from his father. Eventually, Berengar informed Ulrich that he would be using gunpowder to blast certain areas of the mine open, revealing new veins to extract the ore from. Because he did not have dynamite, Berengar had to use gunpowder and lots of it to expand the mining shafts rapidly. It was a risky move, but he was willing to take it. As long as it was done properly, he could mitigate the risks of the mine collapsing on the workers. Luckily for him, he had been stockpiling black powder for use in his militia. He had an overabundance of it which he felt fearful leaving lying around in his own territory. Thus Berengar had opted to bring quite a lot of it with him to aid in blasting open the mines.

After hearing all of Berengar's plans in great detail, the man could not believe that the petty, dull, and indolent young lord he knew years past had come up with such an extensive plan to overhaul the mines. It would take weeks to implement, but if it were done successfully, the productivity of the mines would skyrocket, especially since Berengar brought with him some of the unemployed farmers to act as the additional workforce. Until Berengar could build steam engines and a proper rail system, he would be forced to relocate families to the territory ruled by Lord Ulrich to increase mining productivity.

Berengar Also handed the Lord a set of documents that contained all the details of his four field system. He would also supply the Lordship's fields with enough fertilizer to last the season. However, Berengar had no plans to inform Ulrich about the irrigation system at the moment. Until the fields of Kufstein could properly field the irrigation system itself, he would not lend the knowledge behind its implementation to Ulrich. For now, he wanted to increase crop yields in his Vassal's territory, and gifting the four-field system to his vassals posed no major disadvantage. Even if Ulrich leaked it to other regions, the increase in food production throughout Europe as a whole was a good thing. His plans to be the breadbasket of Austria would still come true even if everyone else found out about the four-field system, as that was not his only agricultural innovation that would result in massive growth.

When Ulrich looked over the designs of the four-field system, he could not believe his eyes. He had to ask the question on his mind at that moment.

"You... you came up with this?"

Berengar smiled gracefully when he responded to Ulrich.

"I came up with the theory, but I had some help from a good friend testing it. We won't know how effective the results are until this year's harvest. However, I myself and many others are fairly certain there are at the very least no disadvantages to this system."

The man could not believe what he was hearing; Berengar had gifted him this information without asking for anything in return. This knowledge would greatly affect his crop yields, and in turn, the income his Land would garner. Why would Berengar give this tremendous knowledge away for free?

"What do you want in return for this information?"

Berengar continued to smile as he assured the Lord that there was nothing he wanted from exchanging information.

"There is nothing I want in return for these designs. The more food we produce in our lands, the better it is for everyone and the fewer farmers we need. The unemployed farmers can then be put to work in the mines. I have great plans for the resources those mines contain, and I will need every hand I can get in producing it."

Ulrich struggled to believe Berengar was so benevolent; he was truly gifting him this knowledge free of charge, merely so that his commoners were more productive? The Lord had a hard time grasping such a concept, of course, he had no way of knowing how grand Berengar's plans were for the industrialization of the Barony and its vassal territories. As such, he could hardly think of the need for a massive workforce.

Ultimately after some time to think for himself, Ulrich accepted the plans and promised to have the four-field system and the use of the phosphate fertilizer he had been gifted implemented as soon as possible.

"I humbly accept the designs and will do my very best to implement them as quickly as I can."

Berengar smiled graciously at the man's humble demeanor; Lord Ulrich truly knew his place in this world. A quality he could not say everyone had. After a long conversation about the ongoing changes in Kufstein, the supply Caravan finally arrived at the mines where they saw a camp set up outside of its entrance. Many of the miners had a difficult time returning to their families with all the work they were required to do, and as such, had built a shantytown outside of the mine's entrance which the miners referred to as "Miner Village."

Berengar found himself disgusted by the conditions these poor peasants were forced to live in and vowed that he would at least make some improvements to their temporary housing. After all, with the forty-hour workweek being introduced as one of Berengar's many safety and wellness innovations, they would no longer be forced to work until they dropped from exhaustion. After getting out of the carriage in which the two noblemen had ridden, the miners stood at attention as they noticed the arrival of their Lord, who ruled over the territory they found themselves dwelling in. It was sporadic for him to visit the mines, and many men did not react. Berengar, however, was the first to speak.

"As you were"

he had many things to handle in the upcoming weeks and did not have the time to mingle with the locals. Eventually, dozens of men started getting out of the caravan and bringing supplies over to improve the mines. Seeing the handsome and well-dressed men standing next to their lord and giving commands, the miners with more common sense took it to mean that Berengar was their boss's boss and swiftly obeyed his orders and got back to work. Only asking each other and the newcomers about who the man was with the slicked-back golden hair.

After several hours the miners became used to Berengar giving commands as he stared at a map of the mines and their current excavation process. It would be a long and arduous journey to get these mines up to code. However, Berengar would be damned if he failed to return in time for his engagement ceremony. As such, he once more burnt the midnight oil. It was not until the whistle blew and the miners returned to their shacks did Berengar finally get some rest. He would work as long as the miners did and lead by example. That was always how he had handled things when in a leadership position and would not change now just because he faced the dangers of the mines. Berengar lied down upon in a makeshift cot under a lean-to shelter as he gazed up the moon and stars above, thinking about his past and present life. Eventually, he fell to sleep thinking about the two lovely girls waiting for his return.

#### *Chapter 28: Cave In*

By the time dawn arrived, Berengar was already awake and hard at work overseeing the mines' construction. He acted like a true overseer as he issued orders left and right. If one way within the vicinity, he could feel the ground shaking and the sounds of explosions as he commanded the workforce he brought with him to blast their way through the solid portions of rock with gunpowder caskets. The debris was rapidly cleared, and support beams were put in place to prevent a collapse. This was how Berengar spent the entirety of his time during the initial week after his arrival. He would personally go into the mining shafts to inspect the progress several times a day at regular intervals.

Berengar had personally led these men through the current overhaul of the mines and had championed their cause for better working conditions. As such, he felt as if he was safe among these hard-working men, for in their eyes was a level of genuine respect

rarely afforded to someone of Berengar's status by the common people. It was the same gaze the people of Kufstein gave Berengar every time they laid eyes upon him. Berengar felt happy knowing that he had made a positive impact in the people's lives under his family's dominion. He did not think for one second that the people whose lives he had improved would turn on him. After all, who would harm their benefactor?

Ulrich had visited the mines several times throughout the week and was amazed by Berengar's progress. If things continued as planned, Berengar would be able to complete the project in a total of three weeks, which was slightly over his initial projection. Nevertheless, it gave Berengar ample time to prepare for his upcoming engagement ceremony, in which he had personally handed Ulrich his invitation. Everything seemed to be going as planned, that is, until three days after the second week of the project had begun. One afternoon while Berengar was going through one of his regular inspections, he was led rather deeply into the mine by the foreman he had placed in charge. Despite this, he initially did not feel any sense of danger; after all, this man was one of many who had directly benefited from Berengar's labor reformations.

By the time Berengar had reached the end of the mine shaft, he had begun to feel a bit suspicious. He had not encountered any miners for the last three hundred yards aside from the foreman he traveled with. After coming to a volatile section of the mine shaft, the supervisor turned around while holding onto his safety lamp; the bright flame illuminated the eery smile that spread across the man's lips as he mouthed the words.

"Your brother Lambert sends his regards."

As soon as the man said those words, Berengar instantly realized he had been led into a trap. He had been surrounded by allies for far too long and had forgotten a valuable life lesson from his previous life. Greed and avarice will always prevail over good and virtue; as long as the price was right, even the most honorable of men would do the most despicable things. He had no way of knowing it at the time, but this man who under Berengar's guidance had seen his life, and that of his family's vastly improved had been paid an extensive sum by Lambert to lead Berengar to his death. Before Berengar could react, the man sprinted behind him towards the exit; a second after passing him by, a blast went off, collapsing the tunnel upon the young lord, then everything went dark.

Hours passed before Berengar regained consciousness; he was pinned under a giant stone and had difficulty breathing. His body was aching, and he could feel blood dripping from his forehead. There was no light nor sound, only the feeling of pain reverberating throughout his body. Debris filled the air causing the young lord to choke as he cursed himself for being foolish enough to follow the man alone into the mine shaft.

"God fucking dammit! This is what I get for trusting people so easily..."

After venting out his frustration, Berengar attempted to lift the stone that was lying across his chest. The large stone must have weighed 150 pounds, and under the circumstances, he had a hard time lifting it off of his chest. Luckily for him, he had been using his bench press extensively over the past few months and had made significant gains in that time. Through much effort, he could lift the rock off his chest and slide it to the side. Allowing him ample space to breathe.

As the young lord looked around to get his bearings straight, he could see very little; however, a few yards away, he could see the light shining through the cavern, which gave him hope. At least there was fresh air circulating through the cut-off region. Hopefully, the others would notice he was missing and send a rescue party. The biggest problem he currently faced was that he had nothing to drink, which meant if the search party could not find him within three days, then he was destined to die again, and so shortly after, he had reincarnated in this world. That, of course, was assuming that a search party would be sent after him; after all, if the foreman betrayed him, who's to say the others weren't in on it as well. Things were not looking good for Berengar at the moment; as such, he spent the next thirty minutes looking for an escape route. When he found out that he was well and truly trapped, he could only rely on the grace of God for his salvation.

...

The night after Berengar was trapped in the mineshaft, Lambert opened a letter in his chambers addressed to him by Lord Ulrich von Wildsch?nau. The contents of the letter were as followed.

"Dear Lambert son of Sieghard von Kufstein and the rightful heir to the Barony of Kufstein. With great pleasure, I inform you that your brother has been trapped within a mineshaft and currently has no means of escape. It will only be a matter of days until you are officially recognized as the heir to your family's lands. I congratulate you early on succeeding your father and gaining the title Baron of Kufstein. I will make sure to be at your wedding in the coming months. I trust you know what to do with this letter after you have finished reading it.

Sincerely, Ulrich von Wildsch?nau"

After reading the letter, Lambert lit a candle and was about to set it ablaze when Linde walked through the door to his bed-chamber; seeing what the young boy was about to do; she felt as if something had gone terribly wrong and immediately inquired about the details of his latest scheme.

"Is that a letter from my father?"

Lambert pulled the letter away from the flame and handed it over to Linde with a deeply satisfied smile spread across his lips.

"Better, it is a letter from the Lord of Wildsch?nau informing me that has taken care of our little problem."

Linde hardly listened to Lambert's little narration as she studied the contents of the letter. When she read about Berengar's precarious situation, she could not prevent herself from breaking into tears, which Lambert immediately noticed. Confused, and suspicious Lambert got up and grabbed approached his fiancée with a concerned facade.

"What's wrong? Are you alright?"

Finally noticing that she was choking back tears with her free hand over her mouth, Lind began to wipe the tears from her eyes and did her best to reclaim her calmness, despite the wavering of her heart.

"Yes... Of course, these are tears of joy. We are one step closer to our goal!"

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Lambert though initially suspicious, ended up believing the heavenly beauties act. However, before he could further advance their relationship, she tossed the letter and pushed Lambert aside.

"If you'll excuse me, I need to write to my father about our success."

With that said, Linde rushed out the door; it was only after she was out of sight that she began to break out into tears, which crashed down around her as she ran to the only person she knew who could save Berengar, if he was still alive that was.

...

Ludwig stood in his shop, operating the trip hammer as he pounded an ingot of high carbon steel into the form of a sword. Though it had been many years since he last built a sword, it was something he would never forget how to do. The masterpiece's design he was working on was referred to in Berengar's many records as a side sword. A design that would usually not be made for the next hundred years, yet due to the many projects Berengar had spent time designing existed solely in the form of blueprints until now. Initially, when Berengar was started learning swordplay, he wanted a proper sword designed for himself. Though he later scratched the idea, the designs still existed within the confines of the old engineer's shop.

Ludwig and his team of smiths, engineers, and metalworkers had all banded together to create a wedding present for Berengar; though it was years away, they rarely had downtime, so after hours, they would spend a little bit of time each day working on their masterpiece to present the young Lord as a token of their appreciation for everything he had done in their lives. Here in Kufstein, Lambert had no allies among the common

population, and the level of respect they had for Berengar was beyond the means of simple bribery.

Everything was calm and quiet on this evening, and only Ludwig was currently still in the shop working on the design of the production of the exquisite sword. Just for Berengar, he had made the weapon out of crucible steel; due to Berengar's innovations, he created a small crucible furnace solely for the production of fine crucible steel to be used in presentation grade swords. Crucible steel was not common in European countries in either timeline but was largely used by eastern civilizations. The variations of which had different names, such as Damascus or wootz steel. Berengar had always mentioned how beautiful crucible steel swords were and had much desired one for himself, even though he felt the sword would soon become largely ceremonial.

While Ludwig was in the process of creating the sword blade, he heard the doors to his shop swing open and immediately looked up at the disturbance. Linde, the heavenly beauty, Lambert's fiancée, was standing in the doorway with tears streaming down her face and a nervous expression as she shouted at Ludwig in a pleading tone.

"You have to help him! You have to save Berengar!"

This perplexed Ludwig, as the man had heard on several occasions when drinking with Berengar that there was a cabal of nobles conspiring against him to remove him from his inheritance, and it was all lead by Lambert. He could not understand why Lambert's fiancée would say such a thing and was immediately suspicious. He instantly stopped what he was doing and back away from the girl who had a crazy expression in her eyes.

"Help him how? Save him from what?"

Linde struggled to find the words to say and tried to calm herself down. After several seconds she was able to articulate her thoughts properly.

"Lambert, he got the Lord of Wildsch?nau to collapse the mines on top of him; he might be dead already..."

Ludwig could see the genuine look of concern on the beautiful girl's face and was deeply confused by this. He accidentally let his thoughts slip through his tongue.

"You're Lambert's fiancée; why do you want to save Berengar?"

Linde instantly became aware that Ludwig knew about her fiancée's intent to assassinate Berengar and could not come up with an excuse for her actions. As she stared at the old man who was waiting patiently for her answer, she had no choice but to tell the truth; after all, Ludwig was Berengar's dear friend and could be trusted, right?

"Because... because I love him!"

Ludwig heard this and could not help but mumble beneath his breath

"Fucking Nobles..."

However, he could tell from the look on her doll-like face that she was telling the truth, and as such, he sighed heavily.

"Alright, I'll go gather the boys. If he's still alive, we'll save him; if not... well, let's not think about that."

With that said, Ludwig rushed off to gather the men and supplies he needed to mount a rescue expedition. If the Lord of Wildsch?nau was on Lambert's side, then there was no way his own men, the miners, would help in the search for the young lord. He had no hope but to gather as many people as he could as quietly as he could. His first stop was to Eckhard Berengar's second in command of the militia. They needed to be rallied and quickly. If Ulrich were really on Lambert's side, he would not allow excavation to occur, and the rescue force needed an army loyal to Berengar to protect them in case things turned bloody. If he reported this matter to Sieghard, he would need proof to obtain his help; even if he could convince the Baron, it would become a political battle between a Baron and his vassal, by the time help arrived, the young lord would be dead.

When Eckhard heard the news from Ludwig, he did not hesitate to muster the militia; by midnight, an army of 600 men and 6 cannons were on the march to the Lordship of Wildsch?nau, alongside the hundreds of volunteers whose aim was to rescue Berengar. Just as the young lord was about to lose faith in the bonds he had sewn with the commoners, they would reward him in a greater capacity than he could ever ask of them.

1. [Home](#)
2. [Tyranny of Steel](#)
3. Chapter 29 - The Age of Knights has Already Passed

### *Chapter 29: The Age of Knights has Already Passed*

Under the cover of night, the army in which Berengar had formed rapidly covered the distance between Kufstein and Wildsch?nau; by the time the dawn had arrived, they had occupied mining town and detained Ulrich's workers. The sappers in the field began to construct fortifications surrounding the mining towns; by the end of the day, the makeshift town would resemble a miniature version of fortifications used during the Siege of Petersburg from Berengar's previous life. The volunteer militia manned the fortifications while others interrogated the workers that had been detained.

Eckhard personally oversaw this effort. He began by speaking to the workforce Berengar had brought with him, which was far more loyal to the people of Kufstein where they had grown up. However, they were unaware of the assassination plot, but when they heard that Berengar might be stuck in the mines; they quickly revealed the only information they knew. Which was that the foreman had led Berengar into the

mines during a routine excavation and that they were oddly ordered to withdraw. Nobody saw Berengar again after that, but a large explosion was heard, which they had assumed was regular construction. When Baerengar's workers had asked the foreman about their Lord's whereabouts, the man claimed that Berengar had left to visit Lord Ulrich.

After hearing such information, Eckhard immediately seized the foreman who had already been detained and violently tortured the man for the information regarding the exact location where Berengar had been trapped. After some good ol' medieval justice, the man sang like a canary, and the rescue operations had begun.

Meanwhile, Berengar was trapped inside the confines of the collapsed shaft. He had no food or water and was slightly injured. It was a miracle that no serious injury had occurred; he was slightly concussed and possibly had a broken rib, luckily it had not punctured his lung, or else he would long since have passed from this world. His throat was dry, as he had not quenched his thirst since before the cave-in, and while stuck in the darkness with no way out, he began to become deeply paranoid about the forces conspiring against him. He swore that if he survived this ordeal, he would personally lay siege to Ulrich's castle and drag him to the dungeons by the throat. There was simply no possibility the Lord of Wildsch?nau was not involved in this attempt on Berengar's life.

Shortly after having such thoughts, he had heard a muffled voice behind the rubble, which he could barely recognize as belonging to Ludwig.

"Milord, can you hear me? Are you alive in there?"

With a hoarse voice caused by dehydration and breathing in the fumes of the debris, Berengar managed to converse with the man behind the wall.

"Ludwig? Is that you? How the hell did you find me?"

Ludwig had an enormous smile spread across his face when he heard that the young lord was still alive. He began to speak awkwardly as he confessed to how he found out about his current predicament.

"Aye, it's me... Though I'm not one capable of judging the actions of the nobility such as yourself, your brother's fiancée erm... revealed your current situation to me as she begged me to save your life."

Berengar could not help but chuckle but groaned in pain as he did so, he had definitely fractured a rib, and it made breathing difficult and laughing agonizing.

"Dear Lord, do I love that woman! She came through for me once again! I'm seriously going to need to reward her this time!"

Ludwig could tell by the tone of Berengar's voice what the young lord was implying and could not help but sigh.

"It is good to be young..."

After getting out those words, he decided to inform Berengar of what was transpiring.

"Just hang on; I've got hundreds of the villagers to come to your rescue; you should be out of there in no time."

Berengar quickly realized the problem with this; there was not the slightest possibility that their actions would go unnoticed by Ulrich; after all, this was his land that they were currently standing upon. When the Lord found out that there was an ongoing attempt to rescue the target of his assassination, he would undoubtedly send his army in an attempt to cover his tracks. As such, he began to give orders to Ludwig.

"Ludwig, my friend, you need to get Eckhard to muster the militia; when the Lord of Wildsch?nau finds out what you are doing, he will surely send his army to eliminate you all."

Ludwig could not help but chuckle; he knew what Berengar was thinking and had already acted accordingly.

"Please rest assured, milord, Ser Eckhard, and his men are already here fortifying the position as we speak. All 600 men and 6 guns are currently in a position to defend this mine with their lives"

'600 men, and 6 guns? Fucking Christ, I need to give these guys a raise; they are working way too hard!'

Berengar thought to himself as he laid down and waited for rescue. For now, he had no choice but to wait for the excavation to be complete. If Ulrich showed up with his meager army during this time, he would be in for a rude awakening. The might of his militia was not to be underestimated, though the feudal forces of this world were sure to do so.

...

A soldier in the field was in the process of cleaning his musket. This musket was personally designed by Berengar and was named the 1417 Land Pattern Musket, and it was quite an anachronistic design. It utilized a 46-inch barrel much like the infamous "Brown Bess" used by the British Army for a length of time and a similar flintlock design. Yet, the stock was closer in design used by the early doglock muskets utilized by English forces during the English Civil War. As such, the firearm maintained quite the renaissance aesthetic. The primary difference in the design of the stock was that it had been cut off shorter at the end of the barrel to allow for the attachment of a socket

bayonet. The stock also had sling swivels, and each musket was equipped with a leather sling. The 46-inch barrel was bored in a 58 caliber and had iron sights similar to the 1861 Springfield Rifled Muskets used by Union forces during the American Civil War. The reason for these two things was that they were all manufactured with the intent to be rebored and rifled for the use of the .58 caliber Minie ball projectile when the factory could handle such an extensive workload.

It was truly a unique design blending components of three eras of musket development from Berengar's past life. This was a weapon designed with two purposes in mind waging war in the most efficient manner available and looking good while doing it. The soldiers who wielded this mighty weapon were using their downtime to clean their muskets and ensure everything was functioning properly. It would not be long before Ulrich, and his armies arrived. Though they had quite the defensive position, as well as a numerical advantage, most of these men had never seen a battlefield before, those who had been in the field were now officers and NCO respectively and formed the veteran backbone necessary to lead their men properly. Against a professional and experienced force, things might not go so smoothly.

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As the sun began to set, The soldier cleaning his musket pointed into the distance as he saw a scout on horseback riding off towards the Castle.

"A scout! Where's the marksman? Take him out now!"

Berengar had implemented tactics from modern doctrine and installed a designated marksman with a long rifle into each platoon to engage targets a larger distance. The marksman was already aware of the target and had loaded his rifle in the meantime. When he finally was able to get a shot off, the scout was at a distance of roughly 250 yards, though that was not a problem for the rifle he wielded, which was a replica of the one Berengar had used to take out the assassins during his hunting trip.

Slowly but surely, the dirty peasant, clad in earthly linen clothing, lined up his sights, took a deep breath, and squeezed the trigger. After a thunderous explosion and a puff of smoke, the minie ball projectile was sent down range and pierced the back of the scout who was riding off to report to his master to inform him about the occupation of the mining town. A massive hole appeared in the man's torso as the minie ball pierced through his brigandine breastplate as if it were made of single weave linen. Ultimately, the horse was frightened by the blast, and with no concern for the rider which had fallen of its back bleeding out into the dirt below, rode off towards the castle from which it had come.

When the horse returned without a rider, it immediately invoked suspicion. As such, Ulrich knew something had happened to the scout he sent to oversee the rumors of an occupying force at mining town. He had no idea how large the force was or who it belonged to, but an enemy force had seized the land right under his nose. This was an

insult to his authority, and if he could not handle it himself, he would only lose the trust in the Baron who's son and heir he had just assassinated. His first course of action was to muster his troops. As a lowly Lord, he only had a dozen or so knights under his command and at most a hundred men at arms; still, his warriors were well experienced, and he had little doubt what he was facing was merely a pack of brigands. When he finally arrived with his army, he was shocked to see many peasants armed with what appeared to be oddly shaped spears. He was unaware of the invention of the musket, or the earlier hand cannon for that matter. It was an especially rare piece of equipment during this time. As such, he vastly underestimated the forces in which Berengar's allies had brought to aid him.

Lord Ulrich approached the fortifications and inquired about the identity of the peasant rabble who dared to offend him.

"I am Lord Ulrich von Wildsch?nau; under whose authority do you trespass on my territory and occupy my mines?"

Eckhard stepped out in front of the defensive line and approached Ulrich; unlike the rest of his troops, he was properly equipped with the munitions grade half-plate armor prototype. Adorning his head was a sturmhaube, or burgonet, a type of helmet that would normally not be developed for the next century or two. Ludwig was able to sneak a few sets into production for the officers and NCOs of the militia. In Eckhard's hands was a musket with its bayonet attached, which he rested on the ground as he chatted with Ulrich.

"I am Ser Eckhard, retainer to Lord Berengar, son and heir of Sieghard von Kufstein, the Baron who presides over these lands. It is under his authority that I am here"

Ulrich's face instantly turned ugly; this meant Berengar was still alive and somehow could muster such a force to come to his rescue; things were not going well. Luckily Berengar would only know that Lambert was behind this plot and had no proof of his involvement. As such, Ulrich tried to play it cool; after all, the forces he was up against were practically six times the size of his own, even if they were unarmored peasants armed with sticks and spears; such numbers still posed a threat.

"As far as I'm aware, Berengar left back towards his home a while ago without paying proper respects. Why would he order you here?"

Eckhard spit in the general direction of Lord Ulrich, which was an enormous slap to his face

"Cut the crap, my lord; we know you are responsible for the cave in. I suggest you lay down your arms and surrender to justice. If you confess to the actions of the real mastermind behind this plot, I promise in the name of my liege, Berengar von Kufstein; you will be granted leniency."

This response shocked and outraged Ulrich; there was no way of knowing that he was involved in this plot unless Lambert turned on him or someone in his employ did. Though why Sieghard would send this rabble to bring him to justice instead of his own army, Ulrich could not understand. The truth that he was incapable of understanding was this was Berengar's private militia and was fully capable of bringing down the Lord and his Army; hell, they could even lay siege to his Castle if they wanted to.

Ulrich threatened Eckhard further in an attempt to strike fear into the hearts of the peasants who followed him.

"When I return with my levies, I will teach you a thorough lesson in the art of war."

Eckhard chuckled at Ulrich's comments which thoroughly provoked the lord

"What's so funny?"

Eckhard stared at Ulrich with a look of contempt as he spoke the blatant truth.

"My Lord, you could attack this position with tenfold the numbers you currently possess, and the result would still be the same. If you march on this position only death awaits yourself and those who are foolish enough to follow. If you run and hide in your Castle, I promise that we will follow you, and when we tear down those mighty walls in which you cower behind, I will personally see to it that Berengar is the one who rips you from your seat of power by the throat!"

Eckhard was clearly the victor in this war of threats that was currently ongoing between a fallen knight and the Lord of Wildsch?nau. The more Eckhard spoke, the more Ulrich was enraged by his words and made foolish comments.

"Really? How do you expect to accomplish this without any knights or men at arms?"

Ulrich felt with this statement; he would make the militiamen under Eckhard's command back down. Still, when he looked in their eyes, he was shocked to find the same look of determination and disdain Eckhard had so boldly displayed in his presence. Were these peasants mocking him?

Eckhard's final words to Ulrich before he retreated was this.

"If you do not surrender, I swear to show you that the age of Knights has already passed."

With that statement spoken, Ulrich snorted at the remarks and returned to his holdings. While the excavation for Berengar's rescue was ongoing, the Lord of Wildsch?nau called upon the peasants in his territory and raised his levies with 1500 men. Even if the cost of the battle was the death of all his levies, he made certain to take Berengar's life.

### *Chapter 30: Symphony of War*

It took the entire night for Ulrich to raise his levies and properly equip them with what little equipment he could spare. It's not like their lives mattered to him in the slightest. Of course, the levies had no idea who they were fighting or why such a significant number of them had been conscripted. Most of them had never held a spear before in their lives. If they had known they were going against Berengar, the son and heir to the Baron of Kufstein, and were essentially acting in open rebellion; they probably would have taken a stand against Lord Ulrich. Unfortunately, they did not know their opponent and merely did what they were told in fear of persecution.

As the sun rose on the next day, the sound of excavation could be overheard by the forces resting in their trenches. The rescuemen worked day and night to free Berengar, and now they had finally achieved their goal. As the wall of rubble collapsed around Berengar and the light of their lamps shone into the room, he shielded his eyes, as his eyes were not adjusted to such brightness. Then he felt a hand clasp on his shoulder, and he looked up, barely making out the haggard old face of Ludwig, who was covered in soot.

"Milord, I'm glad to see you're okay!"

Berengar began to chuckle and cough from the debris particles which filled the air.

"Apparently, I'm hard to kill," he said with a wry smile on his face as Ludwig dragged the young lord to his feet and began walking him out of the mine shaft.

"Aye, now let's get you to a field medic and see if we can do anything about those injuries of yours."

After exiting the cave, Berengar saw the hundreds of volunteers and the militiamen cheering for him as if they were watching a general return from triumphant conquest. In either of his two lives, he had never witnessed such a scene before. Maybe he was a little too rash to lose his faith in the common people. Some fresh air did wonders for the clarity of his head as he sat down on a stool and had a field medic disinfect his wounds, which stung horribly as the distilled alcohol killed the bacteria that had begun to fester.

The moment Berengar founded the militia, he was sure to start up a production line for first aid supplies and medic kits that those who became field medics could use to save lives on the battlefield. It was by no means a surgeon's kit, but it got the job done. He would never send an army to war without medics alongside them to aid the wounded. As such, the medics received both infantry training and basic medical training, or at least to the best that Berengar could remember. He never was trained as a proper medic; he just knew some basic first aid from his time fixing himself up after some scraps in his old life. After all, in his old life, the American health system was atrocious, and he'd sooner suture himself than go to the emergency room and shell out hundreds if

not thousands of dollars for it. What he learned in his old life he passed on to his field medics so; at the very least, they could save some lives from minor injuries.

After being treated by the medic, Eckhard approached him, who patted him on the shoulder and informed him of the situation.

"Lord Ulrich has conspired against you with your brother to bring your demise in these mines. The foreman we captured spilled everything he knew about their plot. Last evening Ulrich approached us and demanded we leave; of course, we refused, and he vowed to return with levies. How should we proceed?"

Berengar was currently shirtless with many bandages wrapped around him. His body was covered in soot, grime, and dust, which blackened his otherwise flawless milky white skin. The pomade in his hair had collected the filth of the cavern, like moths to the flame. If one was not familiar with the young lord, they might have mistaken him for someone else. Berengar took a sip of water from the canteen he was provided and exhaled deeply. He felt like his entire mouth was filled with dirt and iron after inhaling the debris particles for the past few days. After gargling the water and spitting out the filth, he looked up at Eckhard with his reply.

"How should we proceed? We kill them all, of course! Every man who marches on this position is guilty of treason; I do not care if they simply follow orders. Let us show these traitors what happens when they march upon a trench line filled with 600 guns and the brave men who wield them!"

Berengar shouted his command loud enough for all the nearby militiamen to hear; once more, the cheering began, but this was not the cheer of men thankful that their lord and commander was safe. This was the cheer of men who were about to lay waste to their enemies and who reveled in it. Though when Berengar stood up and raised his hand, silence quickly followed as he began his speech.

"I look around me, and who I see are not peasants, nor serfs, nor commoners; but the people of Kufstein, brothers, fathers, and sons. Under my leadership, we have made great progress towards a new era, where a man's worth is not determined by the class he was born into, but by the hard work and effort, he puts into his community.

Many of you have been raised from the life of a serf, breaking your back every day in the fields so that you may grow crops for your masters. Now you work in factories and are afforded good wages and proper living conditions.

The men out there want to take my life, but more importantly, they want to take away the life you have made for yourself, which I have worked alongside you all to implement.

I ask you not to put your lives on the line for some petty grievance in which I, your lord and commander, have suffered, but to preserve the way of life that we have all built and

continue to work towards! Today is the day we stand up to those who would oppose the dawn of a new era, the dawn of the industrial era!"

Though it was not some epic speech of a lifetime, it was more than enough to rally the men who had begun to question their position in the line of defense and bolster their courage. As soon as Berengar had finished his speech, the enemy's horn roared in the distance, and with it, an army of 1600 men came marching towards the fortifications. However, by now, the defenders were fully enthralled by the rallying cry of Berengar and would defend this position with their lives if need be. The militiamen rushed to their positions and began to load their muskets, rifles, and cannons.

Berengar could not stand idly by; and walked over to Eckhard, who was busy commanding the forces to their positions.

"Major Eckhard, I require a musket!"

Berengar said in an authoritative tone to his second in command, which baffled the old knight. Berengar had not eaten in days; he barely had enough time to hydrate before the enemy showed up; he was covered in cuts and bruises. He was slightly concussed and had a fractured rib. Yet the filth-covered young lord stood there demanded a musket so he too could join the action. Eckhard, of course, could not help but voice his complaints.

"My Lord, do you really think that's a good idea?"

Berengar glared at Eckhard with a tyrannical stare as he boldly declared in front of his forces lined against the trenches with their muskets raised.

"I will not sit idly by while the men under my command put their lives at risk in the face of the enemy; now tell somebody to fetch me a musket!"

Eckhard could not help but admire Berengar's spirit; even in his condition, he chose to fight and die alongside his troops. He was truly a young lord worth following. Before Eckhard could even bark the command, a man came over with a musket and paper cartridge box tied to a belt and presented them to Berengar while kneeling.

"My Lord, I have acquired what you asked."

Berengar grabbed ahold of the equipment and attached the belt shortly after. He bit open a paper cartridge and began to reload his weapon; while he was in the process of it, he barked at the soldier who had brought him his weapon.

"Rise, I do not need every soldier to kneel at me every time they are in my presence; a salute is fine enough. You should have learned this in your basic training."

The man quickly snapped to attention and saluted

"Yes, My Lord!"

Berengar returned the man's salute before giving him commands

"Good, now take me to the frontlines. I want to be among the first line that gets a shot at these bastards!"

The militiaman was assigned to a support unit. He was initially thankful, but after seeing his Lord and Commander's enthusiasm for battle, he could not help but feel sorrow that he would not get to fight at the front line by the side with the young lord. After leading Berengar to the frontline, the man returned to his support unit with a gloomy expression. Berengar as the highest-ranking officer, had seized direct command of the front line, something in which the troops were pleased.

...

Meanwhile, Ulrich stayed behind his troops with his house guard; he was a cowardly man who refused to get his hands dirty on the field of battle. Alongside the house guard were the knights and men at arms. Essentially the entirety of his professional force. Ulrich's plans were simple; he would have the peasant levies charge at the enemy's defenses; after all, they completely outnumbered Berengar's militia. When the levies had removed the cavalry traps placed in front of the trench line, his Knights and Men at arms would ride through mining town and slaughter Berenagar's remaining forces.

While Berengar was covered in dirt, grime, and filth from the mines and had no proper armor, nor even a doublet to wear, Ulrich was covered head to toe in steel plate armor in the style which was common during this time which would later be referred to as the Churburg style. Currently, the visor to his great bascinet was open as he watched his peasant levies march towards the fortifications. He had very few archers. However, once they were within range, they would rain a volley down upon the unarmored defenders allowing his levies to rush towards the trenches.

His plan was all supposed to go smoothly, it would allow him to defeat Berengar and his militia and cover his tracks successfully. So when his archers advanced into the 400-yard range, which was still far beyond their capabilities, he did not in the least expect the cannons that were hidden undercover would begin to rain fire upon them. When the six cannons echoed with thunder as the canister shot flew out of their bores and rained upon the archers piercing their gambeson and mail armor as if it were made of tissue paper and scattering their limbs across the field, Ulrich nearly fainted from fright. He had never before witnessed cannons, let alone muskets. Instantly what little archers he had were decimated into piles of mincemeat, their bodies no longer recognizable. The first part of his plan was completely and utterly destroyed.

However, the cannons did not stop there; they quickly reloaded and fired a second bombardment of canister into the peasant levies, reaping the lives of dozens, if not hundreds, in the process. Their blood flowed onto the fields like a river and fertilized it in

the process. At this point, the morale had already been broken among the levies, and they began to panic; even the warhorses of the Knights and Men at Arms began to become frightened. As Lord Ulrich saw his ranks breaking, he swiftly commanded the knights and men at arms to hold the line at any cost.

"If those peasant bastards start breaking ranks, ride them down! They will move forward or they will face the consequences." The knights and professional soldiers heeded their Lord's command and rode down their own routing levies. Very quickly, the peasant levies began to understand where they stood and were pushed forward out of fear into the line of fire. Though the cannons continued to sound off, taking the lives of dozens if not hundreds with every step, the levies rushed through it, knowing their only way out was forward and into death. Even Ulrich figured once they got close enough, those frightening thunderous weapons would have no effect.

...

Berengar, on the other hand, was making sure his men did not fire in panic; instead, with each bombardment of the cannons, their morale grew rapidly; many even stared dumbfounded at how effective their weapons were.

"Hold your fire! Hold your fire! Do not fire until you see the whites in their eyes!"

This was a phrase Berengar continued to repeat to his musketeers as they held the line with their fingers firmly on the trigger. Despite the cannons blasting the ranks of the levies and the hundreds of losses, there were still close to a thousand troops who rushed towards their position. The number was staggering and frightening. Nevertheless, they knew Berengar would not steer them wrong as they waited until they were given the command to fire. Finally, when the first line of Ulrich's levies were within 25 yards of the trench line, Berengar shouted at the top of his voice.

"Fire!"

With that, the echo of close to 500 muskets went off in unison, each musket ball finding its way into the body of an enemy. Limbs were torn apart, holes the size of a fist were punched through chests, and the blood-curdling screams of those unfortunate enough to survive filled the air as the militiamen rapidly reloaded their muskets. By now, the average militiamen could reload their musket within 20 seconds after all were reloaded, including Berengar's he would give the commands of "ready", "aim" and "fire" as the symphony of war continued to rage upon the battlefield.

Despite losing hundreds of men with each volley, the peasant levies pushed on as their escape route was cut off by Ulrich and his professional soldiers, who by now would not dare move forward. Ulrich finally understood the absurd comment Eckhard had made to him the day prior, "The age of knights is already passed," as he gazed upon the horrendous destruction wrought upon his army by Berengar's volunteer militia. Luckily he was out of range of these crazy weapons; he began to feel as if the wrath of God

was reigning upon him as his army collapsed and began to route, no longer fearing the men at arms behind them that were essentially acting as soviet commissars and reaping the lives of those who fled.

Right as Ulrich was about to give the command to retreat, he once more heard the thunder of the cannons and the whistle of the shot in the air, however this time, it was not a canister that was fired, but a solid ball. The 12-pound cannonball flew in his direction and punched through his chest blowing his body apart. The Lord who supported Lambert in his attempt to assassinate Berengar's life was completely and utterly dead.

Berengar laughed as he saw the man's body torn apart by the massive cannonball, as he thought to himself.

'Getting shredded by artillery fucking hurts, doesn't it?!'

Instantly conjuring up the scene of his death in his previous life. Nevertheless, Ulrich was now dead, and his forces were routing. The knights and men at arms knew better than to stay in the confines of Kufstein, where they had just acted in rebellion. As such, they took off on their horses, fleeing the Barony and Tyrol altogether. Nobody would ever believe what they claimed to have witnessed on that battlefield, and it would be a long time before such a scene resurfaced.

Meanwhile, Berengar could not get rid of the orchestra of war that had filled his ears throughout the battle; despite the loud cheers of his men celebrating a battle that was won without a single casualty. Berengar had an epiphany, and would one day in the distant future, be quoted saying as follows.

"It was on that day when 600 men defended their position with their guns thundering in the dawn that the Grim Reaper was conjured. When I saw his ugly face, I recognized that I was not a dealer of steel and textiles but thunder and death. At that moment, I came to a sudden realization about my fate. One day I would be Emperor..."