

# Tyranny of Steel

## Chapter 5

*Chapter 5: a Prosperous Friendship is Born*

Berengar stood firmly in front of his father and the head engineer. The two stared at him intensely; their sharp gaze could practically penetrate Berengar's soul. Especially the shrewd eyes of the old engineer. It was as if his secret had been revealed by being inspected by those old discerning eyes.

Finally, the tension was eased as a smile broke across the old Engineer's face as he bowed respectfully to Berengar.

"Milord, I am Ludwig, a humble servant of your family. Your father asked me here to verify the authenticity of these blueprints."

Berengar nodded at Ludwig with a dignified visage

"It is a pleasure to make your acquaintance, Ludwig. I have a feeling we will see a lot of each other very soon."

though the message was cryptic, Ludwig took the statement as proof of his theory that the designs presented to him by the Baron were not from a merchant from the far east but rather drafted by the idle and infirm heir who was almost universally scorned throughout the court. It would appear the boy was more clever than he had initially estimated.

Nevertheless, the sly old man did not let his inner thoughts appear upon his face, and instead, he merely graciously returned the young Lord's words to him.

"Likewise"

Seeing that his son and Ludwig had become acquainted, Sieghard smiled; he had a feeling working with the stubborn old engineer would be of great benefit to Berengar's development. Completely unaware that his son was the true designer of those blueprints. Sieghard decided he would allow the two of them to converse for some time without his presence. He found the subject of engineering to be dreadfully boring and usually just left such matters up to Ludwig to implement as he saw fit.

"I'm quite busy with managing the realm; I suggest you answer Ludwig's questions to the best of your abilities."

Berengar nodded as he replied

"Yes, father"

Afterward, Sieghard led the two men out of the study and secluded himself inside. Once sitting at his desk, he opened a compartment and took out a wineskin, and began to engage in the age-old tradition of drinking your stress away. After dealing with that fool Ingbert, he needed it.

Outside the closed door of the study, Berengar found himself alone with Ludwig; as such, he suggested they find a better place to discuss the important matters before them.

"How about we go to the library? I will have some servants fetch us some food and wine; I promise to answer all the questions you have to the best of my ability."

Ludwig nodded his head in approval of Berengar's suggestion. The boy proved to be more thoughtful than he had given him credit for; he looked forward to inquire about the true origins of those designs.

After reaching the library and secluding themselves within, they partook of food and wine and discussed trivial matters for the first half-hour. Only after they were sufficiently buzzed did Ludwig ask about his most pressing concern.

"So tell me the truth, kid, where did those designs really come from?"

Berengar chuckled at the old man's question; he had suspected that the old man had guessed the true nature of the origin of the blueprints.

"I made them..."

A serious expression appeared on Ludwig's face, as Berengar had suspected; the old man was not the least bit surprised to hear it, nor did he find the idea preposterous. However, what came from Berengar's lips next truly astounded him.

"Though I surmise you already knew that..."

Cunning... that was the only word Ludwig could use to describe Berengar at this moment. Was this truly the weak and petty heir everyone had known? Had the boy been hiding his real intelligence all along?

After taking a long sip from his wine, the old engineer inquired further

"Do you have any more brilliant designs?"

Berengar tapped the lip of the chalice thrice and tilted his head to the side as he appeared to enter deep thought. After a moment had gone by, he responded honestly to Ludwig.

"A few..."

Ludwig nearly jumped out of his chair in excitement upon hearing the news, there was only one thing the old man truly enjoyed in life, and that was engineering. To think that the boy he and many others had cast aside believing him to be a weak and petty person was actually so brilliant.

However, before he could get out of his chair, Berengar raised his hand, signaling him to stop.

"I will give you the designs to implement in the future when they're necessary. For now, we should focus on building the blast furnace and the Bessemer converter."

Ludwig was perplexed for a moment as to Berengar's thinking before he realized the greatest concern. New designs were great in theory, but investing in them required significant financial support. Something in which the Barony of Kufstein completely lacked at the moment. After calming down his heart, he sat back in his seat and put his hands together.

"So, I assume you have a plan?"

Berengar took a sip from his chalice once more before a grin spread across his lips as he answered Ludwig's question with one of his own.

"How much do you think five tons of pure steel ingots are worth?"

Though he could not do that calculation off the top of his head, he knew it would be no small amount. One could even call it a small fortune. But that was just at first; the more steel they produced, the less valuable it would be over time. However, as his thoughts came to such a conclusion, he instantly knew what Berengar's intent was.

"You want to sell the first batch and use the profits to invest in mining?"

The smile on Berengar's lips continued to curl. Further, his assumptions about the man known as Ludwig were correct. Despite being born a commoner, the man had a quick mind and a lifetime of experience in the related fields to what Berengar wished to accomplish. He would be a valuable ally to have in the future.

"Precisely, once our mines are operating at full capacity, the raw materials that come out of the mountains will be used primarily for our own industrial purposes. Any surplus we may have will be turned into ingots and sold to the Empire for profit."

Ludwig could not believe his ears; iron in and of itself was a valuable and rare commodity that most regions were constantly in need of; steel was much more difficult to produce and was mostly used to craft weapons such as swords or in rare cases

armor for the nobility. He could not imagine having a surplus of steel, especially after taking into account their own needs.

Nevertheless, Berengar's ambitions were truly great; he intended to use his family's resource-rich territory to spring his sphere of influence into an industrial age. All while making a profit from the scraps left behind by selling them at great cost to the Kingdom. It would take years, but he was positive he would see such an era in his lifetime and still have enough time to enjoy it.

Though he did not reveal the entirety of his plans to Ludwig, as Berengar knew without seeing it for himself, the old man would never be able to dream of a world of industry. Instead, he reached out his arm in a friendly gesture to the old engineer and asked the question on his mind.

"Will you help me bring this Barony into a new age of industry?"

Ludwig could hardly believe his ears; the petty and weak lord he had always heard rumors about was asking a commoner like himself for help in creating a steel production industry within his family's land. Even though the boy's father valued Ludwig's opinion, the old man was still looked down upon for being a mere commoner.

Yet here, Berengar stood with his hand extended, asking, not ordering him to help him in his endeavors. The old man could not help but feel a small tear welling in his right eye. If only everyone knew how wrong they were about this young Lord. As such, he grasped ahold of Berengar's hand and shook it firmly.

"Aye, I could do that."

With that, a prosperous friendship would be born between a young lord and an old engineer. A duo that together would bring many innovations in the following months, which would yield great prosperity and stability to an otherwise impoverished Barony within a Kingdom filled with turmoil.