

# Holy Roman Empire

## #Chapter 1: Reincarnation - Read Holy Roman Empire Chapter 1: Reincarnation

### *Chapter 1: Reincarnation*

It was late at night.

Li Mu was uncomfortable with the ice-cold iron bed, which stood out prominently against such a classically luxurious room.

"It's already been two years!" sighed Li Mu, who couldn't help it.

Yes. Li Mu had been reincarnated as Franz Josef, known by those throughout history as the old ruler of the Austro-Hungarian Empire as well as the great love of Empress Elisabeth of Austria.

He was the grandson of Francis II, the Holy Roman Emperor, and the firstborn of Archduke Franz Karl and Princess Sophie Frederica, the daughter of Maximilian I, King of Bavaria.

(Franz Joseph I, the founder of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the last emperor of the Hapsburg dynasty, was born on August 18, 1830, crowned on December 2, 1848, and died on November 21, 1916.)

Franz's life was like a joke between him and God: in his early years, he not only lived a fairy-tale life with a stunning queen and lovely children, but he also ruled a mighty empire.

In those early days, Franz was worthy of the title of the emperor, as he made his subjects, his nation, and his people, as well as his beloved, feel secure and proud.

However, this dream would come to an end in his later years, as the situation took a sharp turn against him and rapidly deteriorated.

He suffered one disaster after another. His brother was struck down by a bullet in Mexico, his wife was stabbed to death in Geneva by an Italian anarchist, and his son took his own life at a young age.

To add to his suffering, the successor he had chosen was assassinated by the Serbian Mafia, and then the war he began in the name of revenge saw tens of millions of people die in a sea of blood. The empire, the one he had fought for his entire life, was destroyed.

Franz's uncle, the Austrian emperor Ferdinand I, had problems conceiving an heir, so Franz was raised as heir to the throne from a very young age. Because of who he would grow up to be, Franz had to say goodbye to happiness early in his childhood--to say nothing of the intoxicating pleasures enjoyed by most aristocrats, which had absolutely nothing to do with him. Instead, his life was one of studying! Franz was raised from birth to withstand the most arduous training. *freewebnovel.com*

After getting up at four o'clock every morning from his frozen camp bed, washing up with icy water, and praying at the stand beside his bed—for he was a devout Catholic--he began his twelve hours of study.

This daily routine continued through many bitter winters and intense summers, without so much as an iota of change.

Right after Li Mu's reincarnation, the heavy snow covered Vienna. He thought cold showers in such frigid temperatures would be the end of him; he was utterly surprised to find, however, that he was too strong to even catch a cold.

Seven hundred days and nights were enough to change a lot of things, including Li Mu--or Franz, as he was now known. Reality brought out new strengths in people, even though Li Mu never thought he had such strong willpower before.

During those two years, Li Mu retained most of Franz's habits. Most of the time, he wondered if the memories of his previous life were even real.

After comparing the developments in history, Li Mu found, to his disappointment, that this world and the world he knew before were exactly the same—down to even small historical incidents, such as the potato shortage in the German region.

As an amateur historian, he had devoted himself to the study of Austrian history in his previous life, so he had known all too well that the appearance of a harmonious and prosperous Austria was far from a solid reality. Like a house of cards, it would all fall apart from a slight touch.

At the time, it appeared that the Austrian Empire was still in full swing: it was the leader of the Vienna Conference, the rule-maker in Europe after the war against France, the military might of Europe.

No one, except Li Mu, knew that the leading empire in Europe would crash down in the Great Revolution two years later, or that it would have been erased in 1849 had it not been needed by the other European powers.

Though it survived, the Austrian Empire saw its power wane.

Diplomatic failures led to a series of military failures. First came defeat in the Austrian-French war, followed by defeat in the Austro-Prussian War; finally, even the Italians took advantage of Austria in its weak and war-torn condition.

All those failures took a toll on the authority of the central government, and the Austrian Empire was forced to compromise and decentralize, becoming the dualistic Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Historically, the process of establishing the Austro-Hungarian Empire was full of contingencies, and Li Mu did not dare think he could handle things better than the original Franz. As a result, it became his goal to save the Austrian Empire.

Of course, he could abandon the claim to the throne and choose to be a happy rich man somewhere safe, as if he were a nobody. The problem was that after two years as an aristocrat, the spark of ambition had found its way into his heart.

Life was bitterly short, lasting mere decades at most. Why would he back down after having been reincarnated here as a leader of the era, standing on top of the world?

It was already late at night, but Franz was absorbed in the plan of saving his country, which he had revised countless times. f reewe bnovel

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"Archduke, it is time for your class!" the maid reminded him. Her whisper woke Franz from his dream.

"I hear you!" Franz replied reluctantly.

As Li Mu was such a good student of the period's history, Franz could pass the exams in all his dozens of subjects—politics, history, philosophy, languages, religion, among others—with average scores.

"Average" meant he could achieve the passing mark on all the scores. If not, rounding up would be the answer.

Compared to his two younger brothers with whom he studied, though, Franz was definitely a good student, even a top one.

Really, the difference between them was the result of different standards: his mother, Princess Sophie, demanded the best from him, while from his two younger brothers, she demanded only average work.

In Franz's opinion, the kind of education he was given was essentially a failure. Too much content to memorize and too little time to think.

Nothing could be done about that, however, considering the family misfortune at that very moment: both his father and uncle were lacking in brains, so the inheritance of the art of imperialism handed down from generation to generation was interrupted.

All Franz's studies were arranged by Sophie, a faithful Catholic. She was exceptionally strict with Franz because of her belief that an heir to the throne must be emotionally strong and that showing emotion could prove disastrous.

In addition to his mother tongue, Franz, who could write in French at the age of 8, learned Hungarian, Czech, and Italian at 11, and dabbled in Latin and Greek at the age of 13.

Unfortunately, Li Mu didn't get the learning capability from Franz; his performance got worse and worse as he tried to live off his past knowledge.

Franz—who, as we knew from history, was proficient in eight languages and could speak almost all the national languages of the Austro-Hungarian Empire—had gone far, while now we only had this "Franz," who was struggling to keep up.

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*Chapter 2: Striving*

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"Franz, what is going on with you recently, and why have you fallen behind in your coursework so much?!"

His mother, the Bavarian princess Sophie, burst this out impatiently before Franz could explain anything.

This was the consequence of him reincarnating as Franz—he began to go against his public image of a good boy in lots of ways as time passed, and his lower grades were a sign of that.

"I am sorry to say that this is because of you, dear mother, what with you overscheduling me with coursework to the point of overwhelming me. But more than that, don't forget I already have the heaviest class load among all the aristocrats across the whole European continent," Franz sniped back.

"Franz, are you saying that I am abusing you?" questioned Mrs. Sophie, her face was dark with anger.

"Dear Mother, I'm not blaming you for it, just informing you of the truth of the unbearably heavy workload placed on me.

I barely have enough energy and time for my courses, and yet you've imposed extra military training on me recently! Of course my performance will be affected because of such strain.

In fact, how about actually getting rid of some of these unnecessary courses so that I can accomplish something!" Franz asserted.

"So then, dear Franz; you think yourself grown and within your right to disobey your mother?" questioned Princess Sophie with a sneer.

From the look on his mother's face, Franz sensed something ominous. and believed he had severely underestimated his mother's desire to maintain control.

When a mother stood her ground on something that she assumed was good for her child, attempting to convince her to do otherwise would be most unwise.

Even so, Franz couldn't back down; otherwise, things would get tougher and tougher for him in the coming days.

"Mother, I, as the heir to the throne of the Austrian Empire, need to learn different things that the average man does not," Franz said, a serious expression formed on his face.

"Since you wish to nurture an emperor rather than a learned scholar, what will all these miscellaneous courses have to do with governing a country?"

If you think I have been slacking off, you can do it yourself then. I have 28 subjects now, not including two hours of military training every day! "

Franz's words made Princess Sophie go deep into thought. There was a difference in European education compared to others: it was quite common for children to talk back to their parents, and sometimes the parents even accepted the objection if it made sense to them.

Although nurturing obedient workers at a conservative age for the ruling class was the mainstream education model, no one dared to impose that on Franz, the crown prince.

The longevity of European aristocracy was actually rooted in their advanced concept on the education of children, even though they were conservative regarding politics because of their own interests.

Without waiting too long, Mrs. Sophie had somewhat accepted Franz's opinion, even with lingering doubts in her mind, which was why she came back with another question—"What do you plan to do then?"

"Mother, I'm already 16 years old and no longer an unthinking child," Franz reasoned severely. "I'm very aware of what I'm doing now and what I need to do next!"

Theoretical knowledge doesn't always agree with social reality, especially those in my mind, for I, who's barely stepped out of the palace since his birth, can only see or know what you want me to see or know.

And as you know, my teacher was often struck dumb by my questions because the knowledge you people fill me with is full of holes and doubts. I never really know the true colors of the Austrian Empire or what the world is truly like.

I will lack a clear vision for the country if I don't go around and surveil it; otherwise, I will become just like my uncle, an emperor who feels at ease as a puppet!"

Princess Sophie's face suddenly showed a look of fury because of Franz's implicit accusation and rudeness. Thanks to her royal upbringing, Mrs. Sophie swallowed her temper immediately.

"Franz, don't forget the fact that you are only 16 years old, which means you have plenty of time to understand this country; for now, what you need most is study."

"No, mother!" said Franz deliberately, shaking his head. "I don't have as much time as you think. When the time, as you suppose, comes for me to know this country, the real situation in this country will be beyond my grasp.

The bureaucrats have one thousand ways to blind my eyes with what they want me to see, while the real situation is too distant for me to get to!"

"Franz, you are too suspicious, and I don't believe the world is as bad as you think. Read whatever you want to in the newspapers if you would like to learn the world!" Princess Sophie's face turned pale.

"My dear mother, don't forget that suspicion is one of the most central characteristics of a qualified monarch! As for newspapers, don't you know the censorship of publication as well as I do?" questioned Franz.

Learn about the world by reading newspapers? This idea instantly reminded Franz of a man, Yuan Shih-Kai, in China's history, who got busted by doing just that, and then his name was mud.

Will the same history repeat in Austria? It's too early for Franz to draw conclusions about that; however, publishing a newspaper, like what they did in China's history to Yuan Shih-Kai, would not be a big deal for the special interests if necessary.

Both he and his mother ended up in a stalemate since no one was willing to back down.

After the deadlock lasted for a while, Franz offered to break the ice.

"Dear Mother, have you noticed the news of the failed harvest in the German region?"

"A little bit, but what does that have to do with you?" Mrs. Sophie asked.

Shaking his head, Franz said, "It doesn't now, but will in the future! The lack of food means the decline in living standards, and it will stir up the rebellion if not appropriately handled by the local government.

The rebellion will be suppressed for sure, and the passage will be blocked off from Vienna, but the tensions will be intensified between the public and government.

In the short term, everything will be fine. Then, as time goes by, the capitalists will have a cheaper labor force.

Which is why Austria will even grow more prosperous, but the conflict suppressed is increasing all along and will break out. Think about it: the French Revolution!"

"Franz, you are exaggerating!" said Mrs. Sophie pallidly.

"No, I am not!" said Franz solemnly. "Dear Mother, I studied the history of the French Revolution very well.

In 1788, a drought in France caused a fall in food production, which made the subjects live a hard life. The tension between the domestic bourgeoisie and the nobility intensified, just like between our current reformists and conservatives in Austria.

Finally, the government, on behalf of nobility, triggered the war against the bourgeoisie by increasing taxes; then, Revolution broke out, which wrecked the Bourbon Dynasty!"

"You mean there will be a revolution in Austria? Franz, do you truly expect me to believe that? " Mrs. Sophie asked in anger.

Franz shook his head and said, "Mother, this is just my rough personal judgment. Will there be a revolution in Austria? To answer that, I will need more information and intelligence to draw a conclusion.

I believe this topic is much more critical than that lousy homework. As an heir to the throne, I need to understand the real situation of this ancient empire!"

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*Chapter 3: The Legend: Archduke Karl*

Having said everything he could, Franz had barely convinced his mother to let him arrange his own schedule. Even so, his schedule went on basically uninterrupted, regardless of the fact that some things had been cut.

Courses Franz thought of as useless were trimmed down, like religion, language, and art. Even time spent studying politics would have been diminished if not for the persistent objections of Princess Sophie.

The main reason Franz thought these subjects useless was that they remain unchanged from a hundred years ago: nobility was supreme, chivalry was holy...

There wasn't much left that interested Franz save for the exaggerated might of supremacy. Work on kingcraft was shortened, and underhanded trickery was totally removed.

His studies concerning said might include lines like this: An emperor who showed his wrath could bring even warlords to their knees...

Was this meant to bring up an emperor, or to sway the subjects?

If an emperor were nurtured based on such an idea, then in the complicated situation of Austria, he would surely be sent to the guillotine before long.

If nothing got in the way, Franz would inherit the throne of this ancient empire after two years. It was 1846 already, which meant time was running out for him.

Should he take part in politics early?

This was obviously impossible. Anything that would change the big picture of history would also bring uncertainty to the future, so Franz was not going to take risks before the succession.

He could try, of course, if he insisted, but he couldn't expect to have much of a voice in important matters as a wimpy 16-year-old kid. Though an heir to the throne he may have been, Franz couldn't change his age, which appeared as a weakness in politics.

However, this didn't stop him from stirring things up. More often than not, a man behind the curtain has the edge over a soldier on the front lines. For example, Franz was about to visit a legend: Archduke Karl.

As the most legendary general, he had defeated the French army many times, and he was promoted to Marshal at the age of 25. Not to mention, he was the only general among the Allies whom Napoleon feared.

If it hadn't been = for the Viennese government's inability to make use of the good hand they'd drawn, the Napoleonic War would have been ended before the Russians stepped in, and Austria wouldn't have had to lose the Netherlands. A man who highlighted the emperor's incompetence undoubtedly led to no good, especially when that man was Archduke Karl, who came from the royal family. (f)reewebnovel



Fortunately, the Austrian Emperor Franz I, Franz's grandfather, was not ruthless, allowing this stalwart Marshal to remain active. However, ability in military science didn't equate to effectiveness in politics; after they used the Archduke to reform the Austrian army, his political opponents played a little trick to try to make him quit and return home.

Since then, Archduke Karl had concentrated on studying military theories and composing military books such as "The Tactics of Generals," "Strategic Principles of the German War in 1796," "The History of German and Swiss Wars in 1799," and so on.

A great militarist of the generation had emerged. Archduke Karl believed that military science consisted of two parts: strategy and tactics.

Strategy was the science of the supreme commanders, whose task it was to draw up a war plan and determine military operations. Tactics, subordinate to strategy, were the art of commanders at all levels.

Both strategy and tactics were composed of specific rules or principles, and the essentials were to correctly figure out the armed forces needed to achieve the intended purpose and to make sure the two components, strategy and tactics, worked in harmony. No matter what the force, it was critical to maneuver at just the right time for the best effect. Therefore, the most effective way to win was to rally the troops and correctly judge the timing.

Another point was to form an overwhelming advantage in a vital location. The strength of the forces referred not only to the number of troops but also to the morale of the army, the commanders' ability, and the terrain conditions, among other things.

Archduke Karl also divided combat into attack and defense: the attacker's role was considered to be more favorable, while the defense was only strong if it was planned in such a way that it could become an attack.

He introduced the concept of "military reserves," which were needed for battlefield emergencies, whether attacking or defending.

Archduke Karl believed the commander, whose skills were not innate but rather born of knowledge and experience, was a decisive factor in the life and death of the country and millions of people.

A qualified commander-in-chief needed a deep understanding of the essence of war, careful study of the laws of military action and their practical applications, and the ability to apply both his own experience and that of others as he skillfully handled various military principles.

It would be a shame if Franz, as a reincarnation, did not use such a talented martial artist.

As for military reform, it appeared to be the right way to go, but Franz was well aware that conservative forces in the military were often stronger than most people might imagine. Any reform was highly liable to insult the targeted parties, and inevitably, they would bite back. Franz was too weak to face such a reality.

If Franz proposed the reform, it was entirely possible that everyone would laugh at it, or maybe even say something behind his back about how such an idiotic kid should go jump in the lake.

On the other hand, if it was Archduke Karl who proposed the reform, everyone would sit down and think about it, whether they agreed with it or not.

"Archduke, please, wait a moment; my master will come out soon!"

The housekeeper spoke with polite unease in his tone, thinking it was a bad idea to keep Franz waiting like this, since he was not a duke who might pass in a crowd.

In truth, the housekeeper's worry was baseless, because Archduke Karl was like a grandfather to Franz, and he had seniority.

Beyond that, with his influence in the Imperial Army, Franz had no choice but to show respect, especially since he had come to visit with the excuse of studying the military.

"I've no problem waiting here. Also, bring me a pot of tea; I prefer it to coffee of late!" Franz said with a smile on his face.

Fran wasn't faking it—he really wasn't angry. Anyway, there was no need at all to bother about a person who would drop dead within the year.

An hour passed in the blink of an eye. Franz was still drinking tea and reading the newspaper, without a trace of impatience.

"Little Franz, long time, no see. How you've grown!"

A cheery voice sounded. Franz knew it was Archduke Karl, for no one else dared speak to him like that.

"Dear Marshal, when you call my name, can you please leave out the word 'little'? I am 16 years old already!" Franz said without much hope.

"Is that right? My little Franz has grown up? Then, how can I help today?" asked Karl, showing his concern.

So "Little Franz" it was again. It was what it was. There was nothing much Franz could do, since Karl was a brother of his grandfather.

"Sir Marshal, I come for advice today about your military work, having been deep in thought after reading your books."

"Well, let's talk then, and I'll be sure to put all your confusion to rest." Karl roared with laughter.

"It is your theory on the commandship, about which I found little has been done by the Imperial Army. A lot of problems have not been solved!" Franz said.

#### *Chapter 4: Military Stars of Austria*

Franz left the Archduke's house with a satisfied smile on his face. Their conversation seemed to have been amicable, and Franz was now a student of Karl's.

Archduke Karl's priority was the continual, significant reform of the Austrian military, and the most significant barrier he faced was his need for a strong supporter in the central government. This problem was solved by the presence of Franz.

As the successor to the throne, Franz recognized the strengths of Karl's military philosophy, and he saw fit to support his efforts towards military reform. From there, one thing led to another.

The Austrian Emperor, Ferdinand I, was not a very intelligent man, and he could not manage government affairs at all. This meant that as soon as Crown Prince Franz reached adulthood, he could begin to participate in politics.

It would not be long before many people, including Archduke Karl, became so unhappy with Prime Minister Metternich that they wanted to kick him out. Franz stepped in at the perfect time: there was no alternative for Karl but to support Franz's regency. As long as he was not too stupid, Franz could take power ahead of schedule, with the military on his side.

During the meeting with Archduke Karl, Franz inserted some of his personal opinions into the conversation, including his thoughts on the Prussian staff system, military training in the new era, and tactical commands.

Many of Franz's fresh proposals were of great interest to Archduke Karl, but it wasn't clear how many he would actually add to his own new military concept.

At the end of the meeting, Franz suggested that Archduke Karl should draw up a plan for the reform of the Austrian military.

The conversation would not have gone so well had it not been for the military uniform Franz had worn, whether he was willing to admit it or not.

After this, would Archduke Karl prostrate himself before Franz's power, giving his total support to Franz, thanks to Franz's proposal?

What a daydream!

The reason they got along well was simply that they thought alike, and that Franz was the heir to the empire, raised as a soldier from childhood.

While Archduke Karl carefully mentored Franz in the field of military knowledge, Franz catered to him, giving the Duke the impression that Franz was just another of his admirers.

If it meant his philosophy would be better implemented, Archduke Karl did not mind taking on a new apprentice, the Crown Prince. Ultimately, the two men's connection was based entirely on their political interests.

Though in his early years, Archduke Karl had been a failure in politics, by this point, he had become an experienced, clever fox, and he had figured out most of Franz's interest even before his arrival.

To Archduke Karl, it seemed that Franz wanted nothing more than to have influence over the army, and in exchange, Franz would support Karl's military reform in the future.

As for Franz's military theories, Archduke Karl saw them mainly as childish braggadocio, and only God knew who filled his head with all those ideas. He would use what he could and forget what he couldn't. Regardless, such minor details would not affect the political cooperation between the two.

Since the European Succession Act had been passed, political collaboration between a military man like Archduke Karl and an heir like Franz was not only above-board and legitimate, but even unremarkable..

Historically, Franz had been on good terms with Prime Minister Metternich as both a mentor and a friend, and no one had a problem with their relationship.

Franz had been second in line to the throne, but he became the Crown Prince because his father, Franz Karl, was soft in the head, and no one dared propose another emperor like that. They had learned their lesson from Uncle Ferdinand I.

The Austrian Empire was a nation of honor, and his father had repeatedly and publicly renounced any claim to the throne. . Although no one knew whether it was really what he wanted, these statements couldn't be taken back.

Franz was now a high-ranking member of the military, though this publicly, this was just a necessity for his learning. How could Franz, as the heir to Austria, not familiarize himself with its military?

In days following their initial meeting, Franz went to Archduke Karl's house frequently to study the military.

Nineteenth-century Austria was still a world of nobility, and among the aristocrats Franz met many important officers, such as Josip Jelacic, Wendisch Gretz, and Radski.

(Note: These were the three Saving Fathers of the Austrian Empire: Radski suppressed the Italian Revolution, Wendisch Gretz quashed the Prague Uprising, and Josip Jelacic stopped the Hungarian Revolution.)

Franz could not yet bring these people under his command, but at least he'd made their acquaintance, and maybe one day, they would play a role in his plan. freewebnovel.com

Meanwhile, everyone was happy. Who would refuse to make friends with the next emperor?

Franz's plan was to approach the highest authority of the army, because only with their support could he efficiently crush the coming rebellion.

"Franz, there will be a military meeting tomorrow. I wonder if you would be interested in making an appearance?" asked Albrecht Friedrich Rudolf.

(Note: Albrecht Friedrich Rudolf was the eldest son of Archduke Karl and the last military celebrity of the Austrian Empire, who was awarded the title of Field Marshal of Austria, Germany, and Russia.)

"Albrecht, forget it. That meeting will bore me to death! I'm not interested in hearing the arguments of a bunch of old men," said Franz indifferently.

At first, he had been very interested in such meetings, only to be disappointed after the first few he had attended. The meeting was made up of a large group of nobles who were officers in the Austrian army. Most of them just muddled along to make up the numbers, though there was some talent among a few of them.

If he followed their example, Franz would be a general in less than ten years, without even having to go through the routine of being in the army.

Apart from the Marshal, who had gold, the soldiers of the Austrian Empire were on the ground everywhere. In these chaotic days, the so-called military conference was anything but average. Aside from the most valued marshals, the generals of the Austrian Empire had their boots on the ground, and so the military meetings became much less formal. In such meetings, actual issues would never be brought up for discussion; indeed, had it not been for convention, the meetings would have even been canceled already.

"Well, since you're not interested, I will leave you be!" Albrecht said, in the same indifferent tone Franz had used.

Franz smiled at Albrecht. He didn't dare to undervalue Albrecht, who he knew would be a key figure in the March Revolution, and who had directly facilitated Ferdinand I's abdication.

Who would believe that no insider was dealing with him? It was essential that he, the man directly responsible for the events of the March Revolution, was excommunicated from Vienna, though he would return to the center of power before long.

Franz didn't mind these kinds of insider dealings, since he was the ultimate beneficiary. Anyway, he could be the emperor only after his uncle's abdication. Besides, the Austrian Empire seemed robust enough, and it would not have deteriorated so rapidly if not for the problems of the government.

At that time, the Austrian Empire, Britain, France, Russia, and Spain were still known as the five major European powers, with Prussia not far behind.

#### *Chapter 5: Autonomy in Property*

The problem for Franz was that it was costly to travel, and although the life of Austrian aristocrats was one of extravagance, he didn't have the freedom to spend much money. Franz's only income was pocket money given to him by his parents--specifically, by his mother--and that was limited.

There was property in his name, but Franz had yet to receive it. The finances of the family were under his mother's control, a fact to which his father was indifferent.

Of course, getting money could be a mere trifle, considering his status; however, Franz cherished his reputation, so something like extortion would be out of the question.

It was also not a good time to invest in industries, considering the current climate in Europe. The February Revolution was about to break out in France, and then revolution would spread quickly throughout the European continent, with everywhere but Russia suffering greatly. Historically, Franz knew, Vienna would spend time under the control of the rebels. If the rebels burned his factories down, to whom could he run and cry?

After considering all the businesses with quick, immoral profits, such as reselling arms, dealing drugs, making counterfeit money, and issuing lottery tickets, Franz decided that mining and salvaging sunken treasures might be suitable for him.

After some calculations, though, Franz reluctantly had to abandon all these attractive options. The reason was simple: he was the heir to the Austrian Empire, not just any old capitalist. Conservatives would be disappointed to see a capitalist emperor, and Franz knew he needed their support, for the revolution in Vienna was around the corner.

"Franz, are you studying again? Young people should be active, and yet you're so dull. Why don't you come hunting with me?"

It was his father, Archduke Franz Karl, a man with a very unstable mind. His favorite hobby seemed to be hunting; his second favorite was hunting with his sons. Among the members of the Regency committee, Archduke Franz Karl was the invisible one. Because of his congenital defects, his intelligence was so low that it was too hard for him to participate in political affairs. If had it not been for his high status, the Austrian Regency committee would not have admitted him at all.

"Father, why don't you go on your own? I don't have time for hunting today, as I'm going to visit Archduke Louis," Franz refused hastily.

That was the problem for a young man: he was always considered seen as a child, even though he tried to appear as mature as possible.

Archduke Franz Karl was a good father and concerned about Franz even when Franz was his normal self, but this kind of concern was too much for Franz now.

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"Mother, as you know, my expenses have increased somewhat..."

"So you want your property back in your name, right?" Princess Sophie was too impatient to wait for Franz to finish his sentence.

As an Archduke Austria, how could he be without any property? As the firstborn boy of the third generation, Franz had been enlisted as an Archduke by his grandfather. He had been happy to do so after Franz was confirmed to be of sound mind, since both his father and his uncle were as mentally capable.

But Franz's title was only a hollow one, and his appanage land was outside Austria's control, with no revenue received from it.

There were many nominal dukes like Franz, like those in Hapsburg family. One might be called the King of Jerusalem but would only ever become its true king if it was taken over by Austria someday.

It made a big difference to have a grandfather who pampered you: although his title was nominal, Franz still inherited a substantial legacy. As Franz knew, it included five estates, two mines, several small workshops, and tens of thousands of Austro-Hungarian gulden.

(An Austro-Hungarian gulden coin weighed 8 grams, and its gold content depended on the coiners, for there were no uniform standards at the time.)

Until now, Franz had had no problem relying on his small allowance for his personal expenses.

"Yes, mother! You know I am grown enough to have free reign over my own property!" Franz sharply replied.

That was another difference in cultural traditions between Europe and the East: the division of property between parents and their children was clearly defined. In the West, Franz's request was perfectly reasonable, while in the East, a child would more than likely be given a good beating if they dared speak to their parents that way.

When Franz reached adulthood, his parents would have to stop handling their child's property and let him manage it himself. This meant that now, Franz could go audit each of his estates.

"Well, you are within your rights. But given your age, I will continue to supervise you during the next year, and any large expenses must be reported to me!" Princess Sophie said, after considerable thought.

"Not a problem at all!" Franz did not hesitate for a second.

These limitations were just trifles, as long as he could get back the control of his own property. If he could spend his own money any way he wanted, then he could bear that he must report to his mother.

"Well then Franz, send your financial staff here to settle the matter with me. I will hand over all the property to you after we deduct your spending all these years and my management fees for it," Princess Sophie said calmly.

She had been prepared for this: correct accounting meant good relationships could be maintained. To avoid damaging relationships between family members over money, she had to settle accounts with her own son.

"Mother, I believe settling is unnecessary. I trust you completely!" Franz said, in a fawning manner. To Franz, money was nothing to worry about, as long as there was enough to spend, for he would have a million ways to get plenty of money in the future.

Of course, his trust was only because she was his mother. With his knowledge of Princess Sophie, Franz did not think she could possibly swindle her own son. freeweb novel. com

"Franz, I have to make it clear that this is your right. But you must be sure you won't regret this choice, for I can only settle with you once!" Princess Sophie said seriously.

"Of course, Mother; I know exactly what I'm doing!" Franz replied, without hesitation.



At the end of 1846, Franz successfully completed the transfer of property. Several of his workshops went bankrupt that year, for the workshop production rate had long lagged behind the times in the emerging industrial age. Fortunately, the estates and the mines were still earning good benefits,, making Franz nearly 10,000 Austro-Hungarian guildens per year.

High income came with high expenses. Upon checking his account books, Franz was surprised to find that his personal spending was much higher than he expected. There were, for instance the expenses for his many private tutors, not to mention the servants, maidens, guards, tailors, coachmen...All these came at Franz's own expense, and that was to say nothing of maintenance obligations. Franz decided that since he had the money, he would live on his own.

In years past, , he hadn't had much money over the years, but now, he had around 60,000 Austro-Hungarian guildens all together, including the cash from inheritance.

What an aristocratic style! For all those years, he hadn't invested in anything to earn dividends on the cash in hand. But Franz didn't even bother to place blame.

All the Austrian aristocrats at that time tended to be conservative in investment, not yet completing the transition from a great noble class to the grand bourgeoisie.

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