

Steel 231

Chapter 231: Honoria's Journey Part III

It had been close to a week since Honoria and the galley she was on first departed from Constantinople; they quickly passed through the Bosphorus and into the black sea. During this time, she stayed entirely in the captain's quarters, where she was allotted as her personal space by Agnellus.

The man commonly brought her and her pet eagle, Heraclius, food, and water to sustain themselves. Honoria did not have much to do during this time, so she merely entertained herself by daydreaming about what it would be like when she finally arrived in Kufstein and met with Berengar face to face.

She was like a young girl who had her first crush; though she never met the man, she could already envision what he looked like. She imagined Berengar to have blonde hair and blue eyes as she mistakingly believed that all Germans had.

However, the image in her head was slightly different from the real Berengar. Her imagination of Berengar was not scarred from battle and lacked the eyepatch. He also had shoulder-length hair that was center-parted and was not quite as handsome as the actual man.

She would be greatly surprised when she finally met the real Berengar and realized he was even better looking than she thought he would be. Nevertheless, in her mind, she imagined all kinds of scenarios. Maybe he would leave his two women and marry her instead. Or perhaps he would do something scandalous like add her to his harem.

She began to blush as she imagined the thought of a lowly count keeping an imperial princess like her in his harem; it was simply too outrageous for her inexperienced mind to handle; as such, she quickly shook her head and stuffed it face-first into her pillow.

Heraclius merely gazed at the girl like she were an idiot and screeched in response. Hearing his voice made Honoria look out from above her pillow and glared at the bird. It was clear that she had taken offense to whatever the bird had said.

Whether Honoria understood the eagle's words or simply was so well accustomed with the bird that she knew his general intent by the pitch of his screech, the fact remained that she was not pleased with what Heraclius had said, and as such, she chastised him.

"I am not! You should mind your words Heraclius!"

However, her fun was quickly interrupted by a knock on the door and the voice of Agnellus behind it.

"Can I come in?"

Honoria rushed over to the door and slightly cracked it open while peering outside. Seeing the friendly gaze of Agnellus, she let out a sigh of relief before asking the question on her mind.

"What is it?"

Agnellus instantly began to scratch his chin as he informed the princess of the journey's current progress.

"We are about to pass through the Empire's borders at the Black Sea and enter the Danube. When we reach the first major town in Wallachia, we will be stopping for supplies and trade. If you wish, you can stretch your legs then and get some fresh air. If you do want to wander into the town, I suggest you stay close by my side. You never know who is out to harm you."

Agnellus's sister had reminded him to watch out for Honoria, and as such, he did not intend to let any harm befall the naive and innocent young girl. If something happened to her on his watch, the Byzantine Imperial Family would massacre his entire family in the act of vengeance if they were ever to find out.

After hearing this, a pretty smile formed itself on Honoria's pink lips. She was excited to get out of this cabin and see the world. As such, she quickly nodded her head and expressed her desire to get off the ship when they arrived.

"I look forward to it; I promise I won't cause any trouble!"

Having heard this, Agnellus sighed before muttering beneath his breath.

"Don't make promises you can't keep..."

Of course, Honoria did not hear what he said, and as such, Agnellus departed without incident. Agnellus was a practical man, and having Honoria on the ship was already an enormous risk, but bringing her into a town in Wallachia, she was bound to cause trouble. Nevertheless, he couldn't just keep her locked up for the entire journey. That would be inhumane.

Honoria quickly closed the door after Agnellus left and had a broad smile on her face; she could finally see what the world looked like! She could hardly contain her excitement and instantly began to tell Heraclius of the good news. Of course, as an Eagle, he had excellent hearing and had already figured out the details from the conversation at the doorway.

That did not prevent Honoria from repeating it, though.

"Heraclius! We are finally going to get to some solid ground! I can't wait to mingle with the local Wallachians; I wonder what they are like?"

Heraclius merely rolled his eyes at the naive girl; he could already feel a headache taking over; he would be forced to protect her from wicked men once more, or so the proud eagle thought within its mind.

An hour later, the ship docked in a medium-sized river town along the Danube in Wallachia. This town was called Br?ila and was the main harbor of Wallachia. After docking on the ship, Agnellus knocked on the cabin's door, where Honoria quickly opened it with a wide grin on her face.

Seeing the young princess was so pretty and naive, Agnellus threw a set of less luxurious clothing in her direction that featured a shawl. After doing so, he said in a severe tone.

"Wear this, and keep your face covered at all times; I don't want any trouble to occur because of your appearance."

Hearing this, Honoria was perplexed; after all, she was completely unaware of the degree of beauty she naturally possessed. If she were to walk around uncovered, it would surely attract attention.

Despite the question in her heart, she was obedient and shut the door, where she quickly changed out of her lavish attire and into something much more modest. She quickly covered her head and face with the shawl before revealing herself outside the cabin's entrance.

The shawl resembled that of a catholic headscarf, and when combined with a face veil, perfectly covered up the girl's natural beauty, aside from her glimmering mint green eyes. Seeing she was covered correctly, Agnellus began to escort her off the ship.

In doing so, the rest of the crew gazed upon Honoria with curious expressions, they knew there was a VIP staying within the captain's cabin, but they had no idea it was a woman. Some of them had more wicked thoughts in their heads, and others were merely curious, but the way Agnellus glared at his crew immediately halted any inappropriate ideas that the men might be scheming.

As they entered the town, Heraclius took off into the air, watching Honoria from above like a guardian angel. He felt cramped within the cabin since they left Constantinople and needed to spread his wings for a bit. However, he never let Honoria out of his vigilant gaze.

As for Agnellus, he made sure the young girl stayed close by so that she didn't get herself into any trouble. While his crew was out purchasing the necessary supplies for the journey, and others were paying a visit to the local brothels, Agnellus was stuck babysitting the young princess.

Eventually, the young princess spotted a store that caught her interest. It was a local tailor. She had a great interest in seeing the local designs that Wallachian women wore; she was so excited she ran ahead from Agnellus.

Upon seeing this, the man almost called out to her before realizing that he did not know what to call her, he very well couldn't call her by her first name, but if he used her honorific, it would immediately alert people to her position.

Thus all he could do was chase after Honoria as she rushed towards the tailors. However, before Honoria could enter the building, she ran into a well-dressed man and fell onto her butt; as she looked up, she saw a young man with shoulder-length jet black hair and amber eyes glare at her with a sense of fury in his eyes.

However, when he noticed Honoria's flawless mint green eyes beneath her headdress, his furious gaze disappeared. And a wicked smile appeared on his face. This young man was a mighty Boyar of Wallachia, a high-ranking nobleman, and he was quite the handsome individual.

Because of this, he was particularly lecherous, and he had enough experience to instantly realize the excellent shape of Honoria's body hidden beneath her clothing. Seeing how she was dressed as a peasant woman, the Boyar began to take advantage of the situation and scolded the girl in front of him.

"Do you have any idea who I am? How dare you ruined my expensive coat! I demand payment!"

It was only then that Honoria realized that the mud from the streets had splashed onto the man's coat, and seeing as how she had no money, she did not know how to react to this. As such, she lowered her head and apologized.

"I am sorry, but I don't have any money to repay you for the damage I have caused."

Hearing this, the Boyar was even more confident that the girl was an impoverished peasant, and thus he began to lick his lips as he imagined what form of beauty this girl was hiding behind her veil. The Boyar instantly wrapped his arm around the woman's neck and dragged her close while squeezing her chest before whispering in her ear.

"I know a way you can repay me..."

Feeling the man grab at her chest, Honoria immediately flinched and slapped the man in the face before making some distance between herself and the mighty Boyar. The moment she did, so she cursed at him.

"How dare you touch me!"

After being slapped by the woman he believed to be a peasant, the man felt his inner fury rising, and thus he pulled out his sword on his belt and began screaming at Honoria.

"You filthy peasant whore! You dare to lay a hand on my flawless face; I will have your head!"

The moment he charged at Honoria, Heralcus swept down from the sky above with a screech of fury; he had looked away for no more than a minute to catch a nearby rabbit, and yet Honoria had already gotten herself into trouble.

The eagle bravely rushed towards the defense of the princess, where his talons dug into the young man's sword hand, tearing through flesh and bone alike, forcing the man to drop the blade. Coincidentally this also happened to be the hand the man had used to assault Honoria.

The young man screamed in agony as he tried to shake Heraclius away, but the more he did, the more damage was dealt with his hand. In this day and age, the damage done to the muscles in hand was enough to make sure that the Boyar never again wielded a sword.

As such, the blood quickly flowed onto the ground before Heraclius released the man's hand, where he flew back onto Honoria's shoulder and screeched fearsomely at the wounded Boyar. The fury in Heraclius' gaze was enough to intimidate the fool who began to soil his pants. If Heraclius wanted to, he could have claimed the young man's life.

The crowd that had gathered stood in shock as they witnessed a member of the local nobility get so thoroughly defeated by the eagle. Even Agnellus was amazed at the lengths the bird would go to to protect the girl.

Though he immediately snapped out of his shock, he quickly arrived before dragging Honoria and the bird away. After such an incident with a member of the local nobility, it was best to get out of dodge as quickly as possible. Thus, Honoria was led back to the ship while Agnellus scolded her along the way.

"Goddammit! I fucking told you to stay nearby! This was exactly the kind of shit I was trying to prevent!"

On the other hand, Honoria was pouting; she was shocked and dismayed over the sexual assault that the local nobleman had done to her out of nowhere and instantly became bitter about it. If she were still within the borders of the Byzantine Empire, she would have revealed her identity to have the man executed for such a heinous act.

She made a mental note of this and vowed never to suffer such humiliation again in the future. After returning to the ship, Honoria lay down upon her bed with a depressed expression on her face. She thought a great deal as to what had happened and immediately asked a question to Heraclius.

"Count Berengar won't be such a scandalous individual, will he?"

The proud eagle merely gazed at Honoria with a frustrated expression, this girl could not help but get into trouble, and once more, he had risked his life to help her out. As such, he merely squawked at Honoria before shifting his head away as if he were ignoring her, causing the young girl to sink further into depression.

As for Agnellus, he made sure nobody had seen them enter the ship and tried to round up his men as quickly as possible. Because of this incident, they would have to finish their resupply at the next town. Thus before the Boyar could retaliate, the galley had departed and traveled further down the Danube. Hopefully, they would not have to deal with the consequences of the scene that had just transpired.

Chapter 232: Blessed With an Exceptional Child

While Bernegar's agricultural reforms were slowly but surely being implemented across the realm, the man was presented with a great sense of difficulty. Soon it would be Adela's fourteenth birthday, and he had no idea what to get the girl.

Though the betrothed couple did not live together, that did not mean that Berengar did not shower his little fiancée with presents. He would send her dresses, shoes, jewelry, and fashionable accessories that were fit for an empress every chance he got.

Of course, Adela's birthday was not the only one Berengar had to prepare for, Linde's birthday was shortly after hers, and just like Adela, he showered her

with lavish gifts whenever he got the chance. He truly spoiled his two women to a degree that a normal Duke was incapable of.

Adela's birthday was on September 9th, while Linde's was on October 15th; they were a little over a month apart. As for Berengar, his birthday was December 21st. However, he frankly did not care about his birthday; it just became another day of the year after a certain point.

Until he could get his hands on the precious substance known as chocolate, Berengar was quite disappointed with his birthday as he could not continue his yearly tradition of eating triple-layer German Chocolate Cake, which to him was a disaster.

However, that was not important at the moment; what was important was getting Adela a proper gift for her birthday. He could easily shop for Linde; he would simply have his tailor make her a luxurious, and more importantly, sexy lingerie set; however, for someone like Adela, that was not exactly something he could do without feeling like a creep.

As such, he was in a serious debate with his mind while sitting in his chair drinking from his skull chalice that was filled with beer. He was pretty troubled over the issue; he could not just give her some more meaningless jewelry or clothing. It had to be something exceptional, something the girl did not usually receive from him.

It was at this moment he thought of something interesting, something he had not considered before. What if he bought her a new horse? Something exotic that cost a fortune to import. What if he bought her a white Arabian?

To him, this idea was perfect, he never bought either of his women horses, and he knew that Adela was fond of the creatures. Linde loved cats, but Adela loved horses. Upon thinking about such a brilliant, he immediately got to task writing a letter to his old friend Arethas from the Byzantine Empire. If there were anyone Berengar knew that could get him a white Arabian in time for Adela's birthday, it would be the Strategos of Ionia.

After drafting the letter, he quickly had it sent out with a proper messenger party. It was times like this that Berengar seriously missed the modern world and its advanced communication methods. After sending out his request

Berengar returned to his office where he let out a heavy sigh before breaking out the distilled spirits.

When it came to hard liquor Berengar had opted for making whiskey, and though this batch was not aged to any serious extent, it was enough to help calm his nerves. Berengar began to reflect upon the past year and a half of his life. So much had happened in this time that he rarely had a moment like this to relax. He was fortunate to be alive, let alone making it as far as he had.

He still had no idea how he had reincarnated into this world, but he began to consider that perhaps it was some form of Diety's work, yet if that were so, what could be their motive in doing so? These were the ideas that Berengar stressed about within his spare time.

He was so busy thinking all day long that he did not know how to shut it off, so to calm down, he thought about things that could not be proven and merely speculated about them as a mental exercise. At the very least, it kept his mind healthy.

Berengar had spent so much time in his study lately that it had become second nature to come to this room and sit down, even if he had nothing to do. Linde had begun to joke around about how he spent more time with his study's leatherbound chair than he did with her.

Speak of the devil, and he shall appear; the moment Berengar thought about his lover, he heard a knock on his door, where he quickly answered it.

"Come in"

after doing so, Linde appeared dressed in another sky blue dress. When she was not wearing the colors of his house, she tended to enjoy dressing in sky blue and white, as it brought out her beautiful eyes. Seeing his handsome lover standing in front of him with a happy smile on her face, Berengar was confused; thus he asked about it.

"What has got you so happy!"

Linde approached Berengar and grabbed ahold of his hands, and began to drag him away without explanation. Curious as to what had gotten the woman

so excited, he allowed her to do so before long. He was swiftly dragged to Hans' room by the woman he loved, where she opened the door to reveal the small child standing on his two legs and walking over to Henrietta, who was nearby and smiling. Berengar was not too surprised when he saw this; after all, it was about time for the child to walk.

However, what came next greatly surprised him; the baby boy saw his father enter the room and ran over to him as fast as he could while saying, "Dadda! Mama!" This stunned Berengar; the child still had some ways to go before they should naturally be able to form words. Yet, he clearly stated the terms that were usually a child's first words at around twelve months old. Seeing such a strange occurrence Berengar could not contain his thoughts and let them slip from his tongue.

"Holy shit!"

Linde immediately glared at Berengar when he used profanity in front of their infant son, and he instantly shut his trap. Hans was close to nine months old at this point; after all, he had been born at the very end of the last year, and it was not yet September. Despite this, he was walking quite effortlessly and already talking to some degree.

Berengar could not help but believe the kid was some form of genius, and he quickly stared at Linde with confusion. The way he looked at Linde made her uncomfortable, and she awkwardly inquired about his gaze.

"What? Why are you staring at me like that?"

Berengar did not hide what he was thinking and quickly revealed his thoughts.

"What kind of super genes does your family have?"

Linde, of course, had no idea what genetics was and thus was deeply perplexed by Berengar's question. As such, she expressed her confusion.

"Genes?"

Berengar merely shook his head and dismissed the idea

"Never mind, it is not important..."

He knew the kid did not get the intelligence from his family. While his family was above average in intelligence, with some just breaking the barrier to enter Mensa, there were no legitimate geniuses in his family, at least in the classical sense.

Of course, the moment he thought about that, he realized this body did not have the same genetic composition as his original body. While pondering about such things Berengar had to admit that he did not know much about the von Kufstein lineage aside from the fact that they were a House of Warriors.

The kid might have got his intellect from Berengar's genes, truthfully he did not know the answer, but if the child turned out to be as intelligent as Berengar thought he would be based upon the signs available to him at present, then it was a good indicator that Hans might be an exemplary candidate for succeeding himself in the future.

The kid eventually ran over to Berengar, where the young Duke picked the boy up and tousled his strawberry-blonde hair. Berengar stared lovingly at his child before looking him into the eyes and saying something profound.

"My child, one day you will be a greater man than I!"

the way Hans looked at Berengar seemed like he understood what Berengar meant. However, Berengar merely hugged his son before giving him back to his mother. It would still be a long time before Hans was able to show off his true potential, but Berengar had great faith in the child.

It was nice to know that if nurtured properly, the Empire Berengar believed he would forge one day would be in good hands after his passing. Even if one of his other children turned out to be a better fit for the Monarch's position, Hans could still play a pivotal role in the advancement and development of the Empire.

This was something Berengar sincerely believed, and he was glad that he had been blessed with such an exceptional child. Whether it was his genes or Linde's that produced such a child did not matter. After all, the two of them were bound to have several more children over the upcoming years. If it did

turn out to be his own, then maybe his kids with Adela would inherit such traits as well. Only time would tell...

Chapter 233: The Hussite Representatives Arrive

After a long journey from Bohemia to Kufstein, a group of men dressed in common clothing approached the city gates of Kufstein. From afar, these men gazed upon the mighty star-shaped walls of Kufstein with awe. Such fortifications proved that their leaders had made the right choice in contacting the man behind the German Reformation.

Within the Kingdom of Bohemia, civil conflict was brewing, inspired by the great reformer Jan Hus. Both the nobility and common people within the region were up in arms against the Catholic Church for many of the same reasons that Southern Germany was.

With the unjust execution of Jan Hus in 1415, a group of his followers referred to by the term Hussites had begun to grow violent in the wake of his death. In Berengar's previous life, a war broke out in the Kingdom of Bohemia between the Hussites and the Catholic Church in the year 1420.

However, Berengar's intervention in this timeline and the rise of his German Reformation had sparked more significant conflict from the Hussites. The latter had grown emboldened by Berengar's success in his battles against the Catholic forces.

By now, Bohemia was on the verge of civil war. Thus these men, acting as representatives of the Hussite movement, had come to Kufstein, the center of the German Reformation seeking aid from the mighty Duke Berengar.

As such, these men waited in the long line that had gathered to enter the city of Kufstein. Berengar had implemented strict security measures to avoid infiltration by potentially hostile groups and individuals.

Because of this, every man, woman, and child that sought to enter the city had to undergo an inspection. All arms were required to be deposited with the garrison and would only be returned once the visitors left the town.

After waiting for some time, the men were hailed by the guards signaling that they may approach. The guard observed the men who were garbed in relatively common attire and immediately assumed they were refugees.

"If you wish to seek refuge within the City of Kufstein, you must fill out an application. I can give you a pass that will allow you to enter the city, where you will be led to the Department of Immigration. They will determine if you meet the criteria to migrate to Austria."

However, the man in charge of the group of diplomats immediately shook his head upon hearing this and declared his actual intent for entering the city.

"We are not here to seek refuge. Instead, we seek an audience with the Duke. We come from the Kingdom of Bohemia and have important matters to discuss with the man known as Duke Berengar the Reformer!"

The city guard immediately sighed heavily before giving the standard response to everyone who sought to meet with the Duke.

"There is currently a three-month wait for an audience with the Duke. Unless you represent a powerful foreign interest, the most I can do is allow you access to the city so that you may wait your turn patiently."

Due to Berengar's position and popularity, many people from all walks of life wanted to meet with him. So much so that a waiting list had been established, at the moment, it was backlogged up to three months in total.

Berengar was an incredibly busy man, and he could not afford to compromise his work to meet with every person who desired an audience with him. Unless it were some powerful foreign entity, then they would be forced to wait until Berengar's schedule was free.

Upon hearing this, the Hussite diplomats frowned; they had not intended to reveal their identity until they met with Berengar. However, it would appear they were forced to do so early in order to meet with the young Duke in a timely manner. Thus the man who led these diplomats removed his hood and revealed his entire appearance before speaking his thoughts.

"I am Luděk Hlaváček; I represent the interests of the Hussite Reformation within the Kingdom of Bohemia; as a fellow reformist, I believe your Duke will want to hear what we have to say. I would greatly appreciate it if you could relay our message to the man."

Hearing that the man was a representative of another Christian Reformation movement, the guard immediately asked for verification of their identities.

"Do you have anything that can prove your claims? If not, you will be forced to wait like the rest of the visitors."

Luděk immediately pulled out a letter that contained the seal of a Lord from Bohemia known as Alexej Kašpar as proof of his identity. Alexej Kašpar was a man known far and wide as a leader of the Hussite Movement, or one of the many groups it comprised of. After observing this the guard recognized its validity and parted ways for the diplomats to enter the city. Before doing so, he said his piece.

"I will inform his Grace, Berengar von Kufstein, of your arrival. You can wait within the city until someone leads you towards the castle."

The Hussite diplomats immediately bowed their heads respectfully and thanked the guard.

"You have our thanks!"

with this, they were moved into the city, where they awaited their meeting with Berengar.

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Berengar was sitting on his ducal throne, openly playing with Linde in a rather inappropriate manner. He tended to grope the woman of his desires in public every so often to establish his dominance. It was quite honestly one of the more primitive instincts of his mind, but it paid an important part in letting his subjects know not to covet what was his.

By now, Linde was flushed with embarrassment, but this public display of affection while sitting on Berengar's lap had made her dreadfully excited; she

was starting to exhibit traits of an exhibitionist due to Berengar's thorough training. Even though nobody was around to see her, the idea that someone could walk in on them during their intimate acts was enough to get her aroused.

Of course, it was at this moment one of Berengar's guards walked in and saw that Berengar had reached through Linde's dress and was firmly grasping ahold of one of her bountiful breasts with his left hand. Seeing that someone had intruded upon his fun, Berengar sighed before expressing his annoyance.

"What is it? Can't you see that I am busy?"

Hearing this, Linde looked around and saw that the guard was trying his best not to stare at the lascivious act, she immediately began to blush heavily, but Berengar did not stop groping her, which caused a slight moan to escape her lips. This only caused her to be further embarrassed.

The guard pretending like he had not seen anything; after all, Linde was still fully clothed; it was just that Berengar's left hand had reached through the upper portion of her dress. After looking away from the two lovers, the guard announced his reason for stopping by.

"Your Grace, there are a group of people who have arrived that claim to represent the Hussite Movement from Bohemia. They are requesting an audience with you; they say it is a matter of dire importance!"

Hearing this, Berengar's left hand immediately retracted Linde's bosom, where he licked the milk off of his fingers. One might call Berengar a pervert for his tastes, but since Linde began to develop breast milk he had greatly enjoyed drinking the substance, typically directly from the source. After all, in his mind, there were few better sources of protein and calcium than his lover's breast milk.

After doing such a lewd act, he responded with an authoritative tone as if he was completely unphased by his own actions.

"Bring them here; I very much desire to meet with these men."

After giving his commands, the guard saluted before leaving the area to fetch the diplomats. Even though Berengar and Linde were alone again, he did not resume his lecherous acts and instead addressed his lover with a gentle tone.

"Looks like we will have to wait a bit longer before we can finish what we started; you can take care of yourself in the meantime, right?"

Linde immediately blushed upon hearing this and nodded while looking away in embarrassment as she departed from the great hall and returned to the bedroom, where she would play with herself for the time being.

As for Berengar, he had guests to entertain, and as such, sat in a manner that hid his excitement. There was nothing worse in his mind than getting cock-blocked right when things were about to get interesting.

Berengar waited for some time for the Hussite diplomats to arrive; he was rather intrigued by this. Though he figured sooner or later they would come to greet him; he assumed it would be after the war had already begun. Yet, they were already present in his court, which meant that clearly, he had an impact on this timeline.

His intelligence that pertained to Bohemia was rather slim. Still, he would make sure to take advantage of the Hussite wars and annex the German-speaking regions into his territory. After all, the Sudetenland was in Berengar's mind rightful German clay, and if he were to unify the German Empire in the future, he would need these lands as his own.

Thus he began to hatch a scheme on how best to take advantage of the war in Bohemia for his personal gains, without directly getting involved in the war itself. After all, now that he had an era of peace to establish his hegemony, he intended to take full advantage of it.

Chapter 234: Negotiations With the Hussites

After some time, the Hussite representatives arrived in Berengar's great hall and knelt before him with great respect. Not only was Berengar a mighty Duke, but in the eyes of the Hussites, he was a man inspired by the teachings of Jan Hus, and as such, a brother in arms against the oppression of the Catholic Church.

The man in charge of the diplomats quickly introduced himself as not to keep Berengar waiting.

"I am Luděk Hlaváček, a humble servant of the Count Alexej Kašpar leader of the Kašparian sect of the Hussite Movement!"

Berengar had not heard of the Kašparian sect from his previous life. Then again, as far as he was aware, few important figures of the era from his past life existed in this timeline so it was only natural for some things to be changed.

Luděk was a relatively short man; despite this, he was solidly built and had a set of long brown hair, with a matching beard. His eyes were the color of amber, and he had a scar across his left cheek, adding some notion that the man was battle-tested.

The other two men who flanked Luděk wore their hoods and concealed their identities, though Berengar did not challenge them to reveal themselves; after all, they were a religious movement wanted by the Church as heretics he could sympathize with their desire to hide their faces.

Berengar quickly addressed the men who had entered his great hall

"I am Duke Berengar von Kufstein, as one of the founders of the German Reformation; I welcome you as brothers in arms. Though I am curious as to why you have made the journey from Bohemia to my humble abode."

Berengar had a rough idea of what they were here for, but if what they desired was what he thought it would be, he would, unfortunately, have to decline them. However, he made it appear as if he was genuinely confused, thus giving them the ability to explain themselves.

Luděk did not shy from the topic at hand and quickly addressed his reason for being in Kufstein.

"Bohemia is on the brink of war; just recently in Prague, seven members of the city council were defenestrated! The King of Bohemia has sided with the Vatican and seeks to suppress our movement. We have come asking for

assistance from the man who so thoroughly defeated the mighty Teutonic Order."

Berengar was slightly surprised, it was only 1418, yet Prague's first defenestration was moved up by roughly a year. This meant that what the delegate had said was likely to be true. It would not be long before Bohemia plunged into civil war, and the Hussite wars had fully begun. However, Berengar began to rest his head on his right fist as he made his stance clear.

"If you seek for me to invade Bohemia with my forces, I am afraid I am going to have to disappoint you."

After saying this, Luděk's face turned grim, and he immediately asked about the concerns on his mind.

"Why not? Did you not just say we are brothers in arms? Will you truly abandon us in our time of need?"

Berengar knew this would be brought up, and as such, he immediately replied with his reasoning.

"I have spent the last year at war with my enemies. The Bavarians have ravaged the lands that are now under my authority during their occupation. Now that I am Duke and have established a sense of peace and stability within Austria, I cannot afford to march off to war once more so quickly.

During this era of peace, I need to take advantage of this time to stabilize my reign and rebuild what has been destroyed. I can not spare the troops while there is an ongoing war just outside my borders that could invade my lands at any moment.

You are like brothers to me, but my people are like my children, and thus I need to look after them first. I hope you can understand."

Hearing this reasoning, Luděk bowed his head; what Berengar said made sense, the rest of Germany was embroiled in a bloody civil war, with only Austria maintaining a peaceful existence, and it had cost them dearly to do so. Berengar's land lay in ruins in many areas, and he needed time and effort to rebuild after the Bavarian occupation.

However, before the man could admit his defeat, Berengar's serious expression turned to a warm smile and revealed some degree of hope to the Hussite representative.

"However, just because I can not spare troops does not mean I can't send you some form of military aid!"

After hearing this, the three men who had gathered looked up at Berengar with surprise; they did not know what form of assistance Berengar could aid them with. Before they could ask, Berengar continued on his train of thought.

"I can supply you with firearms, cannons, gunpowder, and military advisors. It is the most aid I can afford to give you at the moment."

Berengar's plan was simple; he would provide the weapons and training to the Hussites to overcome the Bohemian Crown and their Catholic supporters. However, Berengar had no plans to arm the Hussites with arkebuses or 12 lb steel cannons. Instead, he planned to open up a separate production line in Vienna to make primitive cast-iron cannons and provide hand cannons to the Hussites.

Though Berengar had sold the far more advanced arkebuse to the Byzantines, his reasoning for doing was simply because his allies' interests to the East would not clash with his own for some time. Thus he did not have to worry about fighting a war with them.

However, if he armed the Hussites with Arkebuses and more advanced cannons when then the time came for him to demand compensation in the form of the Sudentenland and they refused to do so, he would be facing a force of pike and shot, rather than a late medieval army, which itself could pose some difficulties to overcome.

Of course, the Hussites had no idea what he would demand in compensation for his military aid and thus were rather excited by the prospect of being armed by Berengar's factories. However, Luděk was a cautious man and knew such exceptional assistance would not come without a price; thus, he asked Berengar to clarify what he desired.

"That is more than enough to help us win this upcoming war, but I fear we will not be able to repay you for your kindness adequately, so I must ask, what is it that you desire in return for such gracious support?"

Berengar was a shrewd diplomat and knew that the more the Hussites were in debt to him, the more likely they would be to acquiesce to his demands peacefully. As such, he responded to this question by essentially kicking the can down the road.

"Do not fret, my friend; we can discuss payment for the military aid I provide you after you win your war and are in a better position to repay me for my kindness. For now, know that you have my support so long as it remains within the boundaries of the terms that I have provided."

Though Luděk was not happy with this answer, he did not press the issue; right now, the Hussites needed to worry about obtaining Berengar's aid, and any form of payment that Berengar might demand could always be done in installments within the future.

Or so he hoped, he never would have thought that Berengar would demand the annexation of the regions referred to as the Sudetenland. Thus the representative accepted Berengar's terms.

"I thank you for your support; when can we expect your aid if you don't mind me asking?"

Berengar was quick to reply to this, as he had already calculated the time needed in his head.

"If I wish to send aid to your forces rapidly, then I will need to establish an industrial district in one of the cities closer to the Bohemian border; for that, I will need time. Give me three months at the maximum, and I promise you shall receive your first shipment of arms.

As for the military advisors, I can send them immediately to aid you in your preparations for the war."

Luděk smiled when he heard this news and bowed his head with respect once more.

"I thank you on behalf of all Hussites, your Grace!"

With this, negotiations with the Hussites over support for their upcoming war were secured. For the time being, Berengar gained an ally to take the attention off of himself and the German Reformation. By starting the Hussite Wars, the Catholic Church and its military orders would have one more war to fight before calling for a Crusade against the German Reformation.

In doing so, Berengar allowed himself time to prepare for the eventual day where he would be forced to fight the European armies at his doorsteps. A crusade was no laughing matter, and Berengar fully intended to expand his defenses, troops, and even his navy by that such an event occurred. Luckily for him, he happened to be reborn in the era where the Hussite wars were about to transpire.

Chapter 235: The Search for the Missing Princess

After Honoria's disappearance, the Imperial family of the Byzantine Empire was in a state of panic. Especially the Emperor, with his daughter missing, it meant that his alliance to France was in shambles. The French King held Emperor Vetrans responsible for his daughter's disappearance. He stated that if she were not found within a specific time, the de Valois dynasty would consider the betrothal broken.

Emperor Vetrans was currently sitting on his throne nibbling at his fingernails, a bad habit he had picked up during his youth that he commonly resorted to when he was anxious. His daughter was missing, without the slightest clue as to her whereabouts. The French Prince Aubry had returned home bringing news of the reason for her disappearance, thus causing the French Monarchy to make excessive demands of the Emperor as compensation.

If the Emperor could not find his daughter soon, the betrothal would be broken, and so too would the military and economic alliance between the two countries. As such, he was in a complete and total state of panic. Vetrans let out his frustration by cursing his daughter in the middle of his throne room.

"You fucking bitch! You better be alive and unspoiled, or I swear to God I will march through the gates of hell to discipline you!"

It was at that moment Honoria's older brother Decentius entered the room. He held onto a prostitute from the same brothel that Melissa had previously worked at. The investigation into Honoria's disappearance had led to the brothel, and this woman had seen Melissa leaving with the girl.

From the looks of it, she had been roughed up by Decentius and his soldiers; there were many bruises on her face and across her body. Decentius tossed the woman to the floor as he began to yell at her.

"Tell the Emperor what you told me!"

Hearing the screaming voice of Decentius, the woman instinctively flinched before stumbling over her words.

"Basilia... The Princess... The princess came into the brothel and then left with Basilia. That is all I know!"

Emperor Vetrans immediately pounded the armrest of his throne before raising his voice at the woman.

"Who is this, Basilia? Where is she from? Does she have any family in the city? Where can I find her?"

The woman began to curl back in fear. However, she was swiftly kicked by Decentius repeatedly until she begged for mercy.

"I don't know! I don't even know if Basilia is her real name. Lots of girls at the brothel use false names! She never talked about herself or her family. I honestly don't know anything about her other than she worked at the brothel. Maybe some of her clients might know the truth, but I don't!"

This Basilia was none other than Melissa; Melissa was a bright young woman, at least in the streetwise ways; she changed her name for work and even wore a wig; Thus her actual appearance was unknown. Now that she had left the city, it would be impossible to find out about her real identity.

The Emperor and his goons were completely back to square one; the intelligence that the prostitute had provided was practically useless. All they knew was that Honoria entered a brothel and left with a lady of the night.

Vetranis was furious that his daughter was missing, and he had no viable information about her whereabouts. Thus he quickly lashed out at the woman kneeling beneath him.

"Get this whore out of my sight!"

With that, the guards dragged the woman out of the room and kicked her out of the palace. As for Decentius, he kneeled before his father and made a solemn vow.

"I promise I will find the bitch, and bring her back to you!"

Hearing this, Emperor Vetranis tossed his goblet at his son, which smacked the young prince in the face and poured wine all over his body. After doing so, the Emperor quickly chastised his son.

"Don't you talk about your sister that way! She may have run away and caused us immense trouble, but she is still your sister and a member of this imperial dynasty!"

Decentius had heard his father call Honoria the same term not long before, and yet he was being so thoroughly humiliated for repeating the Emperor's words? Decentius gritted his teeth in rage, despite this, he choked back the vile words he had planned for his father and forced himself to be calm. He realized that nobody in his family was thinking straight at the moment. Thus despite the Emperor's outburst, the second prince of the Empire accepted the punishment.

While this was ongoing, Arethas had walked into the room; he was fully garbed in his grand armor and knelt before the Emperor next to Decentius. After doing so, he quickly announced his reason for visiting.

"Your majesty, I know these are hard times, and I do not wish to add to your concerns, but I have dire news from the city of Alexandria. The Mamlukes have retaken the city and driven our forces out past the Suez. I know your daughter is missing, and you grieve for her absence. Yet, if you do not send aid to our forces in Egypt, all of our work from these past few years will go to waste!"

Hearing this news, Vetransis nearly chipped a tooth from the intense grinding he had begun. After listening to Arethas' words, he knew he had no choice.

"Arethas you have been a good friend, and I greatly value the assistance you have provided in the search for Honoria. I understand your desire to stay behind in Constantinople and continue the search for my missing daughter.

Yet, I am afraid only you and your army, which is now equipped with the weapons you have purchased from the west, can change the tides of war. Thus it is with a heavy heart I must order you to sail your armies south and crush the Mamluke Sultanate once and for all!"

Hearing this, Arethas was dismayed; he genuinely wanted to find Honoria as quickly as possible before something horrible happened to her. Yet, at the same time, he understood the Emperor's reasoning and did not protest. He merely nodded silently before standing up and cupping his hands with a silent prayer. After doing so, he began to address the Emperor.

"I pray to God in Heaven that you can find the princess before she gets herself into trouble. I swear on my life and honor that I will do everything in my power to retake what we have lost in North Africa and send the Saracens back to hell where they were birthed!"

Hearing this, a bitter smile formed on Vetransis face; without his excellent friend Arethas to aid him during this crisis, he did not know how he would manage to hold on. Yet, he knew only Arethas' army would be able to crush the enemy in Egypt. Thus it was with a heavy heart that he sent his greatest friend and ally off to war once more.

"I pray for your victory, good Arethas, go with haste and reclaim the long-lost lands of our mighty Empire!"

After hearing this, Arethas saluted the Emperor with a grim expression on his face. After doing so, he turned and walked out of the building. Seeing that his commanding officer was just ordered to war, Decentius quickly followed in pursuit; however, he stopped at the entrance, where Arethas placed a hand on his shoulder.

"Decentius, you must stay here with your father!"

Decentius immediately felt taken aback and began to question Arethas' orders.

"What? Why? Am I not your Tourmarches!?!"

Arethas sighed heavily before comforting the youth.

"You are and are by far the greatest of the officers beneath my command. However, you are also your father's son, and the Emperor needs you and your assistance now more than ever. I fear what will become of him if he does not find your sister soon. God forbid something horrible happens to the poor girl."

Decentius wanted to protest this decision, but he could see that Arethas had made up his mind, and as such, he removed the mighty Strategos' hand from his shoulders before looking him in the eye with a serious gaze as he made a solemn vow.

"I promise, whether my sister is alive or dead, I will find her, and I will bring her home!"

Hearing this, Arethas smiled; he knew that under Decentius' command, the search for Honoria would be under competent leadership; in doing so, he could worry less as he focused on his conquest of North Africa. After hearing this, the man turned away from the second prince and marched towards the harbor.

He had a long journey ahead and a war to win. It would not be easy, but with the advantage of the arkebuse and combined with the pike and shot strategy he had devised, in large part due to Berengar's assistance, he would be able to overcome the tremendous odds before him.

As such, the search for the missing princess would continue; despite having no leads towards her whereabouts, the Byzantine Imperial Family would spend a significant expense and effort looking for Honoria. They would never guess that she was on her way to a distant country solely because she had heard good things about a certain Austrian nobleman.

Chapter 236: Honoria's Journey Part IV

After the debacle in the main harbor of Wallachia in the town known as Br?ila, Honoria had confined herself to her room. After being touched inappropriately by one of the local Boyars who threatened to take her life for resisting, the young and naive girl had much to think about. As such, she was stuck in her room with nobody for company except for Heraclius, who until recently had been ignoring her as punishment for her actions.

The galley traveled at roughly 3 knots during cruising speed, in other words, approximately 3.5 miles per hour. As such, it was a long and slow journey to Austria. The distance between Br?ila and Kufstein itself was roughly 1,008 miles. Assuming the crew rowed for 12 hours a day, it would take them approximately 24 days to arrive in Kufstein.

Honoria had been trapped in the cabin for a total of seven days at this point, and the crew had just begun to leave the borders of Wallachia and enter Hungary. She was greatly vexed by the boredom she had to suffer in the room. However, she never complained; after all, Agnellus was nice enough to help her out, despite knowing her position, for which she was thankful.

Heraclius was commonly let out from the cabin so that he could fly about and catch prey. As such, he was in a perfect mood. After all, he flew at a speed of roughly 50 miles per hour; no matter how long it took him to catch prey, he could easily catch up with the ship.

While Heraclius was enjoying himself, Honoria honestly had nothing to do except think about her life and daydream about what it would be like when she arrived in Kufstein. After encountering the Boyar, she realized that there were people in this world were not good-natured.

As the princess thought about this she realized that there was a possibility that Berengar was also a wicked man. However, she instantly put such thoughts aside because Arethas had assured her that Berengar was benevolent and kind to his loved ones, and that gave her hope for the future. Still, there was a nagging suspicion that she would merely be trading one cage for another once she arrived in Kufstein.

Despite the horrible situation, she found herself in a while in Br?ila, the brief period she spent running about as free as an eagle was enough to fill her with

wonder. She didn't want to be another caged bird; now that she had spread her wings and learned to fly, she wanted to know more about life. The Boyar's actions had spurred something inside Honoria, a belief that she should be self-sufficient, after all, if not for Heraclius' intervention she could have been in danger back in Br?ila.

However, to do such a thing in this world was not easy. Especially for a woman, thus she hoped that when she finally arrived in Kufstein. Berengar would provide her with the safety and security necessary to allow her to grow as a person. She did not wish to spend her life in Kufstein the way she had done while in Constantinople, which was confined inside the Royal Palace for her whole life as nothing more than a pretty face.

Thinking about this, Honoria concluded that she could be utilizing her time aboard this ship in a more constructive manner. After all, there was much she could learn from these sailors. Thus the runaway princess exited the cabin after putting on her shawl and walked around the ship for a bit before making her way to the helm where Agnellus was currently located.

Agnellus was currently steering the ship and noticed that the princess had arrived. Thus he put on a friendly smile as he began to chat with her.

"Your majesty, I was beginning to wonder when you would finally leave your seclusion. I hope nothing too serious happened back there in Br?ila."

Honoria gazed into the night sky above for a few moments in silence before voicing the concerns on her mind.

"I've had a long time to think, and I have decided I don't want to be a bird in a cage anymore. I want to be an eagle that soars in the sky. So there was something I was wondering that you might be able to help me with?"

Hearing this bold statement, Agnellus was uncertain where this was headed; however, since the princess had asked him for help, he could not very well turn her down. Thus he begrudgingly inquired what it was she needed help with.

"Whatever you require of me, if I can fulfill it, I swear to do so."

With this, a pretty smile formed on Honoria's luscious pink lips before she nodded her head in excitement. After doing so, her expression shifted to a pleading gaze as she made her request known.

"Teach me to sail!"

This was not a request that Agnellus was expecting, and thus it took a while for it to register in his brain. When he finally realized what the princess was asking him, he broke out into laughter. This reaction was not what Honoria expected, and thus she began to pout.

Seeing the cute look on Honoria's face, Agnellus eventually stopped laughing and agreed to her terms.

"If it is something so simple, I would be happy to teach you to sail. But we have less than 20 days to go over everything, so the most I can give you is a crash course."

To Honoria, this was good enough, and thus a charming smile formed on her lips as she thanked the jewelry merchant.

"Thank you!"

With that said, Agnellus spent the remainder of the night on the Danube teaching the princess of the Byzantine Empire how to sail a galley. The galley was not much of a sailing ship; it was more like a massive rowboat, so there were not too many things he could teach her about sailing on such a vessel.

Still, Honoria went to sleep when the dawn rose with a satisfied smile on her face. There was not much to do while onboard the vessel, but at least she could learn some valuable skills on the way to Kufstein. She slept for a total of eight hours before waking up.

When she finally opened her eyes, she noticed that Heraculies was sitting next to her, watching over her as she slept. As such, the princess rubbed her eyes before stroking the eagle's glistening feathers.

"Good morning Heraclius!"

the mighty eagle cawed in response to the treatment he received. Shortly after playing with the bird Honoria heard a knock on the door, and a familiar voice followed.

"Your Majesty, are you in there? You have been asleep for some time. I have something for you to eat."

When Honoria heard this she quickly rushed to the door and opened it to see Agnellus' smiling face. In his hand was a bowl of meat porridge. There was also a wineskin alongside it. Honoria happily took ahold of the meal and thanked the man for his kindness.

"Thank you, Agnellus; I will make sure not to waste a drop!"

For whatever reason seeing the princess happy made Agnellus happy. He had no way of knowing it, but he was starting to get attached to the beautiful young princess from the Empire. As for Honoria, she had no lingering feelings for the man; to her, he was at best a friend. After handing Honoria her food, Agnellus thought of something and spoke his mind.

"We will be docking in Gy?r soon; why don't I show you how we dock the ship?"

Hearing this, a broad smile appeared on Honoria's face as she questioned the reality.

"Really?"

Agnellus merely smiled and nodded in silence. Hearing this news Honoria had an excited expression on her face. She was eager to learn more about the functions of the ship and thus she decided to devour her meal as quickly as possible so that she could learn the docking procedure.

"I should eat this while it is still warm... I'll be out momentarily, don't dock without me!"

Afterward, Honoria shut the door behind her, and Agnellus began to laugh at the girl's over-eager nature. To him, it was just simple docking; there was not much to be excited about. However, to Honoria, the most mundane actions

seem to hold significant meaning, and thus she took joy in everything she learned how to do. It was refreshing to have such a level of optimism around.

Honorio ate the beef porridge and drank from the wineskin. To her dismay, it was not filled with wine but with water instead. Because of this, she began to pout as she hastily ate her meal. Heraclius noticing that there was food nearby immediately jumped by Honorio's side and stole the piece of cooked beef that was on her fork before he gulped it down for himself.

The act of which shocked Honorio, she was visibly outraged by the bird's actions instantly began to chastise her pet eagle.

"Heraclius shoo! This is my food! Get your own!"

To this, Heraclius responded by snagging another piece of her meat from Honorio's bowl and quickly devoured it with a smug expression on his face. The look in his eyes was asking Honorio a simple question.

"Who is going to stop me?"

Thus the gauntlet had been laid, and a contest was held between a princess and an eagle to see who could eat the meat in the porridge-filled bowl the quickest. If anyone else were to witness the sight, they would either be greatly entertained or deeply confused. One thing was sure this bird was brilliant.

Chapter 237: Revising Ship Designs

Berengar was currently within his study, sitting at his chair, and drafting new blueprints for a series of vessels he wanted to construct for his Navy. He had been at this for many hours and once more was what one would call sleep-deprived.

While the Linde-Class Ship of the Line was the pinnacle of naval vessels, at least in those powered by the sail, it was pretty frankly overkill and would require a lot of resources, particularly that of oak. Such vessels were an enormous expense, and he could only build a few of them before venturing to the Americas.

To put it simply, he had realized that the construction of such vessels was a waste of his limited resources, at least until he had begun colonization. As a

replacement, Berengar was currently drafting plans for a 38 gun fifth-rate frigate that would become the standard warship for his fleet in the Mediterranean.

The frigate was a fast and maneuverable single-deck ship. In the Mediterranean with its little wind, at least when compared to the Atlantic, such ships would be far more helpful in securing his power. They would also be fully capable of traversing to the new world and protecting Berengar's interests abroad.

These 38 gun fifth-rate frigates would be armed with a total of thirty-eight 32 lb cannons and a few Schmidt guns on their swivels. With a fleet of these ships, there would be nobody who could challenge his authority in the Mediterranean.

However, it was not simply frigates that he was designing, but also a clipper for trade and transport. The clipper was a high-speed and long-range vessel. So much so that it did not even need to be armed because there was no ship in this world that could catch it in pursuit.

Thus they were the perfect design for merchant vessels and would allow him to rapidly exchange goods between his colonies and the fatherland in the future when he had a massive Colonial Empire. For the time being, these two ship designs would allow him to rule the Mediterranean and rapidly engage in trade with the various powers in the region.

Berengar had shifted the design of the zinc-plated hull to that of galvanized steel and made it slightly thicker to protect against enemy cannon fire. These galvanized steel plated hulls would be properly lacquered with a base layer of black paint and a white stripe over the gun deck. Overall the ships would be highly effective in protecting against enemy fire and wood-eating parasites alike, thus increasing the vessels' lifespan and decreasing maintenance costs.

As for his Linde-Class Ship of the Line, it would be shelved until a time where he had the means to produce such mighty vessels in large numbers. Though it may disappoint Evio, the man was also practical, and as such, he would indeed be convinced to focus production on Frigates and Clippers.

After finishing the blueprints for his new ships, Berengar quickly got to work on designing Naval uniforms. As per usual, he focused on renaissance-era designs for the clothing. In particular, he was inspired by the outfits worn by the old English privateers known as Sea Dogs during the Elizabethan era from his past life. The uniforms were designed in the colors of black, charcoal, and gold.

Now there was only one more thing to take care of, and this was of vital importance. A Naval flag to fly would symbolize that his vessels were from the Duchy of Austria. At this point, the idea of Naval and national flags were, for the most part, non-existent.

Berengar had thought about this for quite some time and had a rudimentary idea in his head. Now that he was a Duke, he thoroughly planned to change his coat of arms, and as such, he designed that first. Previously his coat of arms was reasonably simple; it was per bend sinister with the colors of black and gold. There was also a white bend in the center separating the two factions.

Now that he was a duke, he intended on making something more elaborate. Thus he created a white field with a black eagle in the center. This eagle wore a gold crown and had a golden beak with a red tongue and white eyes. The eagle's wingspan had a visible golden ridge, and in the center of its body was his family's old coat of arms. The eagle's feet and talons were also in gold.

After designing the new coat of arms, Berengar designed his naval flag, which would one day be the basis for his national flag. It was a Prussianized flag with a white center and a thin black bar on the top and bottom. However, unlike the Prussian flag, there was also a thin gold layer below that. In the white center, there was his new coat of arms within it.

In the future, every Austrian ship, whether it be a military vessel or merchant's vessel, would fly this flag or some variant of it. It would symbolize that they were from the Duchy of Austria and were protected by its powerful Navy. Any attack on an Austrian vessel would be considered by Berengar an act of war.

With the ship, designs finished, his Naval uniforms, his new coat of arms, and his naval flag Berengar had one primary task left. He had to think of a name for the frigate and its class. He thought deeply on this issue and decided to

name the frigate after himself. The Berengar-Class Frigate. As for the clippers, they were not a warship, and thus he did not feel the need to give them a Class designation.

After taking care of business, Berengar leaned back in his chair and stretched his upper body while yawning. He had been in this seat for quite some time, and as such, desired to stretch his legs. Thus he rose from his seat and began to send the new designs to their respective builders.

The naval uniform designs would go to the garment district in Kufstein. At the same time, the ship blueprints would be sent to Trieste, where Evio was currently located, and working on building Berengar's mighty shipyards.

Berengar had already written a letter to the shipbuilder about his reasoning for why he would need to transition the work to the construction of frigates and clippers instead of the mighty ships of the line he had initially designed.

He would attach this letter to the blueprints and send it with an armed caravan to Trieste so that his rivals could not intercept the critical schematics and steal it. He attached great importance to the construction of his Navy, and had no intentions of leaking his ship designs to other nations.

After sending out the designs to the people responsible for making them a reality, Berengar entered his great hall, where he sat down on his ducal throne. It was at this moment that Linde entered the room with their young child in her arms. Hans was growing by the day, and not just in size, but brain capacity too.

The boy, who was not even a year old yet, had begun to speak more words than just "mamma and dadda," which thoroughly convinced Berengar that this child would be a genius. As Linde approached Berengar, their son reached out for his father and struggled within his mother's grasp.

Seeing this, Berengar smiled and took the boy from his mother's arms before placing him on his lap. This caused Linde to pout in jealousy as she always considered that to be her seat, especially while Berengar was on this ducal throne.

Seeing the look on his lover's face, Berengar smiled wickedly before teasing her.

"Why Linde, my dear, are you perhaps jealous?"

Linde, of course, looked the other way and pouted even further, refusing to acknowledge Berengar's words with a response. Hans looked at his mother and father and had a glimpse of understanding in his eyes. Thus he reached back out towards his mother and spoke to her.

"Mamma! mamma!"

With this, Linde grabbed ahold of Hans from Berengar's grasp and then sat on Berengar's lap herself with a satisfied expression; in doing so, she petted Hans' strawberry-blonde hair, which matched her own and praised her son.

"My baby boy is so caring and understanding!"

Berengar smirked at this but eyed the boy cautiously; this kid was too smart for his good. Somehow, he recognized that his mother was jealous that he was sitting on his father's lap and created a compromise.

This degree of intelligence was terrifying when one considered that Hans was not even a year old yet. This just reinforced Berengar's belief that the boy was destined for great things.

After sitting on his ducal throne for a while, Berengar grew tired; after all, he had burnt the midnight oil coming up with his designs and thus decided to get some rest. He made sure to kiss his lover and child on the cheek before sitting up, forcing them to stand with him.

"I am going to go get some rest; I will see you two later."

With that, Berengar departed to his bed chambers, where he fell asleep. As for Linde and Hans, they would continue their day as usual.

Chapter 238: Honoria's Journey Part V

While the galley pulled into the town of Gy?r, Honoria assisted in docking as she helped tie the ship off to the dock. In doing so, she felt a great sense of

accomplishment. It was a simple and mundane task, yet it was the first time she had done something like this.

The pretty smile on her face as she assisted the crew in docking the ship brought an atmosphere of optimism and happiness to the people aboard the vessel that they had not felt in some time. After docking in the town, Agnellus approached Honoria and gave her instructions.

"This time, make sure to stay by my side. I don't want a repeat of what happened while we were in Wallachia."

Honoria's smile faded, and she nodded her head with a solemn expression. After doing so, she followed Angellus into the town. Heraclius was flying overhead once more, watching over the girl, this time, the eagle made a mental note not to chase after prey while the princess was wandering about.

Agnellus led Honoria into the town, where they began to shop for supplies. Throughout the time she had spent locked away in the captain's cabin, Honoria had time to think for herself. She realized if she immediately revealed her identity to Berengar, he would likely ship her back to Constantinople.

The man might be a brilliant commander with a powerful army. However, he would not be able to face the pressure of the Empire by himself. Thus she had opted to look for something to disguise her appearance and identity. While she and Agnellus were walking through the town, she noticed a little shop.

This shop sold beauty products to women, and Honoria thought it would be an excellent place to check for something she could use to disguise her appearance. As such, she tugged ahold of Agnellus's arm and spoke to him.

"I want to check out that store; maybe they have something useful for me. Seeing it was a woman's beauty store, Agnellus sighed before tagging along with Honoria.

When Honoria entered the store, she was shocked to find the young woman who was selling the beauty products had sleek white hair that glistened as if it were oiled. She was pretty but in no way compared to the natural beauty that Honoria had.

Seeing the woman's hair, brows, and lashes as white as snow, Honoria quickly asked the woman how she managed to do such a thing.

"Excuse me? I was wondering, how did you get your hair like that?"

Hearing a pretty young girl like Honoria question her about the fashion trend she was trying to start, the woman smiled before answering Honoria's with a proud expression on her face.

"It is all thanks to this product right here!"

As she said that the woman pulled out a can of pomade manufactured by Berengar's industry. Berengar had long since decided to sell the product for extra profit, and throughout the river trade on the Danube, some of his creations had made their way into Hungary.

After showing off the fine wax-like substance, the woman continued her train of thought.

"I had a brilliant idea to mix the fine white powder with the wax-like substance, and in the end, it created the brilliant snow-white hair you see on my head! It is just a damn shame most women are not interested in this style! Though I would suggest giving it a try, with your natural pale skin and mint green eyes, I am sure it would enhance your beauty!"

Hearing this, Honoria quickly decided to buy a bit of both the fine white starch powder and the pomade. As such, she looked at Agnellus with puppy dog eyes signaling she wanted the items, and the man had no choice but to give in.

Thus, he handed the woman the coins necessary to purchase the products. After doing so, the woman made another offer.

"If you want your hair to be as white as mine for five extra coins, I can help you through the process!"

Hearing this, Honoria instantly agreed, and thus she sat down in a chair where the woman walked her through how to treat her hair so that it was a snow-

white color with a silky texture. By the time they had finished treating Honoria's hair, brow, and lashes, she looked like a different person.

Though her face was the same, the vast difference between her previous chocolate-colored hair and her now snow-white hair was substantial. With her ashen skin and mint green eyes, the white hair complimented her natural features better than her natural hair color.

After witnessing the transformation, Agnellus was shocked; he could not believe the young girl could be even more beautiful than she was prior. Though few people had seen Honoria in her life as a princess, it was still better to be safe than sorry, and thus her new disguise, while simple, had a significant effect.

Honoria saw the expression on Agnellus's face and smiled with her pretty pink lips before asking the man the question on her mind.

"Well, how do I look?"

The traveling jewelry merchant and sailor struggled to find the words to compliment the young girl in front of him. However, after careful deliberation, he eventually came up with the phrase.

"simply divine"

Hearing such an incredible compliment, Honoria began to blush, her naturally pale skin flushed with a slight pinkish tone, complimenting her new snow-white hair perfectly. The woman who had helped treat Honoria's hair began to pout; her most recent customer had outshone her beauty by a wide margin.

However, there was hope in her heart that Honoria could inspire her fashion trend, which should not naturally exist in this era. Without Berengar's interference by creating and selling pomade, powdering hair would not come into existence for some time. This was just another effect that Berengar unknowingly had on the timeline.

After paying the woman for her help, Agnellus and Honoria left the shop and entered the streets. Now that Honoria had a disguise, she no longer cared about covering her appearance, and her beauty attracted many eyes. Despite

this, nobody would ever guess that she was the princess of the Byzantine Empire.

Despite the young beauty walking through the streets showing her stunning appearance, not a single man approached her. This was due to Agnellus' escort, he was a tall and strong man by nature and naturally intimidated anyone who thought to interact with the young beauty by his side. Thus she walked through the crowd with a gorgeous smile on her face, attracting the glances of all men and boys alike.

Of course, Honoria herself was unaware of the lustful gazes that were cast her way and thus continued without a care in the world. Throughout the rest of the day at the town, Honoria followed Agnellus around, where he purchased the necessary supplies for the remainder of the journey. He even sold a few jewelry pieces to some of the local noblewomen, making a bit of a profit.

Before long, he and Honoria returned to the ship; the crew was still busy venturing through the town going about their business. Well, aside from the many slaves who rowed the vessel, that is, they were bound to the ship. When Honoria was alone with Agnellus, she began to thank him for paying for her disguise.

"Thank you, Agnellus. Not just for paying for the products I wanted, but for everything you have done for me up until this point."

Agents merely scratched the back of his head in embarrassment before responding to the princess.

"It is no problem; after all, you are the princess of the Empire. It is what I should be doing."

However, to this response, Honoria merely shook her head. She had decided to hide her identity, and thus she could no longer have Agnellus referring to her by her real name or her title; therefore, she began to inform the man of her intent.

"I am no longer the princess of the Empire, I ran away from home, and I have no plans on going back. From now on, you should refer to me as Valeria; I think it is best if I use a pseudonym in the future."

Hearing this, Agnellus was shocked and immediately asked the question on his mind.

"What about Count Berengar? Are you not going to reveal your identity when you arrive in Kufstein?"

To this, Honoria responded with a wry smile on her face before revealing her plans for the future.

"If I reveal my identity to Count Berengar immediately, he will most certainly ship me back to Constantinople, or at the very least inform my family that I am in Kufstein and keep me there until they arrive to transport me back to the Palace.

Instead, I will let him believe I am Valeria Zonara, a noblewoman from Antioch. After I have managed to make him fall head over heels for me, I will reveal my true identity. After all, a relationship built upon lies cannot stand for long."

Hearing this, Agnellus was surprised how much the young girl had thought through her future since they departed from Constantinople. He had to say that she was maturing emotionally with each passing day, and that was a good sign. He, too, feared Berengar's response when he found out the runaway princess had fled to his territory.

As such, Agnellus patted the girl on the head and smiled at her before saying the words on his mind.

"I think that is a smart idea; I pray that your dreams come true."

After saying that, Agnellus removed his hand and looked up at the moon in the sky before commenting once more.

"It is getting late; I think you should get some rest. We still have a long ways to go before we reach Kufstein."

Hearing this, Honoria smiled and nodded before leaving towards the allotted quarters. While doing so she made sure to thank Agnellus once more.

"Thanks again! I appreciate it!"

As she said this, Heraclius swept down from the sky and landed on her shoulder, where the two of them departed for their quarters. The eagle was not the least bit surprised that Honoria had changed her hair color and merely cawed at her while nodding his head in approval.

The last thing Agnellus heard the princess say before entering the cabin was the young girl talking to her pet.

"Thanks, Heraclius!"

With this, Agnellus merely shook his head and looked up at the moon once more before saying his thoughts aloud.

"That girl is just too cute..."

Chapter 239: Lambert's Official Death I

Since the death of Lambert, Berengar had hidden it from his family. The reason being he was afraid of the effect such news would have on his loved ones. More importantly, he did not want them to figure out that he had personally killed his brother in battle and claimed his skull as a drinking cup. This barbaric act was Berengar's final revenge on his little brother for the boy's wicked actions.

However, he could not keep the secret forever, and thus Berengar had been hatching a scheme to inform his mother, father, and little sister of Lambert's death. He had just been too busy up until this point to do so.

However, with his schedule free for the next few days, Berengar knew the time had come to announce Lambert's death and allow his family to have a good image of their lost loved one in their hearts and minds. As such, he had recently sent out a summons to his parents so that they may appear in Kufstein.

It was on this day that they had finally arrived, and when they did so, they were amazed to see the changes that had occurred to their once humble Barony. The last time they were in Kufstein, it was little more than an

agricultural town. Now it was a thriving city, protected by mighty walls made of steel-reinforced concrete bricks.

The sturdy star-shaped walls that bore dozens of cannons facing in all directions were an intimidating sight to the couple who had never thought that Kufstein would grow so rapidly in the year since their departure.

Like all visitors, they had to wait in line until the city guards could vet them; Sieghard was quite impatient as he waited within his carriage. Eventually, he and his wife arrived at the city gates, where the guards flagged them down.

The guard overseeing their arrival was a refugee from Saxony and had fled to Kufstein with his family during the initial outbreak of the war. Having no skills to speak of, he could only enlist in the Army and hope for a spot in the garrison which he was lucky to receive.

Because of this, the man was entirely unfamiliar with Berengar's parents and did not immediately recognize them. Thus he uttered the words he had said a hundred times on this day alone as if he were speaking to any commoner who wished to enter the city.

"State your names and your purpose for visiting the city of Kufstein."

While Sieghard had waited impatiently up to this point, he quickly began to scowl when the guards of the territory he once ruled did not even recognize his identity. Thus he proudly declared his position.

"I am Sieghard von Kufstein, father of Berengar von Kufstein! This is my wife Gisela von Kufstein, mother of Berengar von Kufstein."

Hearing this, the guard's eyes opened with shock; he was not aware that Berengar's parents were still alive; His first instinct was to allow them to pass quickly. However, as a diligent guard, he knew he could not allow someone into the city just because they claimed to be related to the Duke; therefore, he quickly gave them an order.

"Wait right here while I get someone to verify your identities..."

After saying that, he left the area; shortly after that, he returned with a man equipped with brass-trimmed blackened plate armor; this man was an officer in the ranks of the garrison. The moment he arrived and noticed the former Baron and Baroness sitting in their carriage at the gates with an impatient expression, the man quickly slapped the grunt who had made Berengar's parents wait upside his helmet before bowing respectfully to Sieghard and Gisela.

"Apologies, your Grace, some of the members of the garrison are new to Kufstein and are unaware of your identities... You can quickly head to the Castle; I will make sure you are unobstructed on your journey."

This officer was a veteran of Kufstein's forces, dating back to when Sieghard ruled over the region. Thus he knew the appearance of his old liege like the back of his hand. On the other hand, Sieghard was greatly bewildered when he was referred to by the honorific "your Grace" and quickly questioned the term as if his hearing had failed him.

"Your Grace?"

Sieghard and his wife were unaware of just how much progress Berengar had made in the past year; after all, they had retired to the countryside and maintained a peaceful life, they did not bother to check in on the current affairs of the realm.

The officer looked befuddled; it took him a few moments to realize that the couple was unaware of the changes made to Kufstein and all of Austria during their seclusion, and thus he merely smiled before saying.

"It appears your son has many things to inform you about. Welcome home!"

with that, Sieghard nodded in confusion before ordering the servant who drove his carriage to press forward.

"To the Castle, it appears there is much I have to speak about with my son..."

With this, the carriage rode forward and up to the Castle, where Sieghard and his wife departed; at the gates, Berengar, Linde, Henrietta, and Hans were present to greet the couple. Gisela stiffened when she Berengar's

appearance; the scar was above and below the eyepatch that covered his right eye made her feel a sense of overwhelming dread.

As such, Gisela quickly walked over to Berengar and grabbed his face into her hands.

"My poor baby! Who did this to you?"

Berengar felt awkward as he heard this and coughed as he released himself from his mother's grasp.

"I was injured on the battlefield, but rest assured, I am fine."

Though Gisela did not believe that Berengar was fine after being blinded in one eye, she accepted his words; for the time being, Berengar did not want to talk about it. Thus she quickly looked over at Henrietta, where she hugged her little daughter.

"My sweet Henrietta! It has been so long, and you have grown so much during this time!"

Henrietta was sheepish as usual and was silent as her mother grabbed ahold of her. After embracing her darling little daughter for a while, Gisela turned her gaze to Linde, where she stared at her coldly. That is until she saw the child in her arms; at that moment, the former Baronness's icy demeanor immediately melted, and tears of joy began to form in her eyes as her maternal instincts took over. She quickly reached out to Hans, where Linde begrudgingly handed her son over to his grandmother.

"Is this my grandson?"

Linde nodded with a warm smile on her face before declaring her thoughts.

"Yes, his name is Hans! He is an incredibly gifted child!"

Berengar smiled when he saw his father and mother for the first time in a year. The last time he had seen his father, the man was lean and worn; to put it simply, he was a husk of his former self. Yet during this past year, he had filled out his muscular body once more, and though he had aged quite a bit

since Berengar first reincarnated into this world, the man had a healthy aura about him, as if he had recovered his lost vigor.

Berengar approached his parents with a broad smile on his face.

"Father, Mother, it is great to see you; I am glad to see that you are both healthy! I wish it were under better circumstances that I could summon you."

Berengar had been deliberately vague about the reason for requesting their appearance in Kufstein, and when he said these words, a hint of worry flashed across his father's face. On the other hand, his mother was too enamored with her grandson to notice Berengar's words and had approached Linde, where she took Hans into her arms and spoiled the child.

Having seen this Berengar sighed before leading his parents into the Castle.

"I am sure you are both tired and would like some rest; please follow me to the Dining Hall; I will have some food prepared for you.

Siegward and Gisela nodded and followed Berengar and the rest of the family into the Dining Hall, where they shared a pleasant meal. After it was over, Berengar tapped Linde on the shoulder and spoke his mind.

"Linde, why don't you take Henrietta, my mother, and Hans away for a bit? I am sure you all have some catching up to do."

Linde immediately understood Berengar's intent; as such, she nodded politely before leading Gisela and the others to a different section of the Castle.

"If you will follow me..."

Though Gisela was hesitant to leave her husband and son, Siegward silently nodded, signaling her to follow Linde and their daughter. Once they had disappeared from earshot, Berengar asked his father a simple question to break the ice.

"Should I get you something to drink? We have made significant progress with alcoholic beverages; I am sure that you will love whiskey."

Hearing this, Sieghard nodded, and Berengar brought out a pair of glasses where he poured the precious substance into them before handing one to his father. Berengar proceeded to take a sip before expressing his thoughts to his father.

"I see you have a lot of questions on your mind. You don't need to be so hesitant; ask away."

Hearing this, Sieghard took a sip from the whiskey; in doing so, he began to cough up a storm; he had no idea that the liquid would have such a burning sensation. He had taken a big gulp and immediately began to regret it. After doing so, his cheeks began to flush, and he could feel his head spinning.

Berengar chuckled at sight, and after a few moments, Sieghard collected his thoughts before asking the first question on his mind.

"I was referred to by the term "your Grace" when entering the city. Since when do I hold such a prestigious position?"

Berengar's joyful expression came to a halt, and a solemn gaze was cast upon his father before answering the question.

"Truthfully, it was not too long ago. To make a long story short; The Austrian armies were defeated in Bavaria, where Duke Wilmar died in battle. After crushing our armies, the Bavarian troops marched into our lands, where they raped, pillaged, and burned a large chunk of it. In the process, they successfully laid siege to Vienna, where they executed Wilmar's sons and married off his daughters to God knows who.

Only Conrad escaped, where he fled to my lands. In the process, I was named Regent and helped him take back the Duchy from Bavarian control; however, shortly after, the boy fell into a deep depression and took his own life, leaving me to clean up the mess. Some nobles rebelled, which I put down with ease, and Liutbert, the closest male relative of the late Duke Wilmar, acquiesced his claim to the Duchy onto me."

After summarizing the recent events, Berengar took a sip from his whiskey once more while waiting for his father to register the news. Sieghard was in shock; all of these things had happened to Austria while he was living a

peaceful life in seclusion. He had no idea how Berengar had so adeptly moved his way up the feudal hierarchy from Viscount to Duke in such a small time frame. For the first time in his long life, he began to fear his son.

Chapter 240: Lambert's Official Death II

Sieghard stared at his son in silence for a few moments; during this time, all he did was slowly drink down the glass of whiskey. It was only after he had finished its contents that he began to speak the thoughts on his mind.

"When you were but a child, I did not believe you would live to be an adult. After all, you were so sickly back then. Because of this fact, I had focused all of my efforts on raising Lambert to be my successor. I left you to the life of a lazy wastrel, and if I am honest, I did not care; because I was sure that you would die before reaching the age of majority.

Despite this, you limped on, for years, engaging in pointless frivolities and smearing my family name. Yet, I tolerated it because I kept telling myself soon enough you would be dead, and Lambert would be my heir. When you fell ill a little over a year and a half ago, I assumed that was it, that you would be dead and in the grave and no longer be a black mark on my family's history.

Yet once more, you surprised me. You crawled your way out of the grave and brought yourself back to life. In the days that followed, you became a completely different person, driven, intelligent, and capable. It was as if you were not even my son anymore.

Within half a year, you had brought great wealth and success to Kufstein, the likes I had never anticipated. A year from then, you are now the Duke of Austria. To say that I was wrong about you is an understatement.

While I thought Lambert was a worthy successor, it turned out that I was blind to his shortcomings; rather than wait for you to naturally enter the grave, he poisoned you and made multiple other attempts on your life when you started showing yourself as a worthy member of this Dynasty.

The guilt I had for being a poor father to you and your brother forced me to concede my title and lands to you, and I now know that decision was the most excellent choice I have ever made in my life. With this in mind, I want you to

be honest with me, for no matter what you tell me; I will be able to handle it. So allow me to ask you the question on my mind... Lambert is dead, isn't he?"

Having listened to this long-winded speech, Berengar felt his emotions fluctuate throughout the entirety of it; he had initially planned to tell his father that Lambert died gloriously in battle defending Christendom from its enemies. Still, after seeing the gaze in his father's blue eyes, he knew he could not lie to the man, and thus he opted to drink from his glass. Once he had finished the contents and had a mental buzz from the alcohol, he opened his mouth and revealed the truth.

"Lambert has been dead for some time now... The fool marched an army on our lands in an attempt to end my life and that of my family. So I marched an army of my own to meet him at Oberstdorf, where it turned into a chaotic slaughter. That knave took my eye from me, and in doing so, he paid the price with his life."

Sieghard frowned when he heard this. However, his expression did not sink into despair, merely one of understanding. After sighing heavily, the man signaled for Berengar to fill up his glass, where Berengar proceeded to pour another round for himself and his father. The two men drank in silence for some time before Sieghard opened his mouth.

"I'm sorry, Berengar..."

Hearing this, Berengar was stunned he was not expecting such a reaction from his father to the news of his son's death. As such, Berengar decided to clarify his confusion.

"About?"

Sieghard had a grave expression as he continued his train of thought.

"For everything. If I were a better father to the two of you, you would not have been forced into such a situation. It pains me to know that the grudge between you two brothers was so great that Lambert sought to kill you even after a chance at redemption. If I were a better man, I could have prevented everything bad that has happened to you."

Berengar merely drank from his glass in silence for a few moments before responding. When he did so, he had a severe expression on his face.

"You don't need to apologize; everything that has transpired in my life has made me who I am; without Lambert's attempts on my life, I would not be the man I am today. I fear to think about the life I would live if I had never awoken from my naivety."

Berenger then pointed to his eyepatch with a stern expression on his face and began to continue his speech.

"This is a permanent reminder that I should never show mercy to my enemies. It is because I had a soft heart that I spared Lambert at my mother's request. I will never make that mistake again."

Hearing this, Sieghard could tell that Berengar had been through a lot, and the extensive campaigns he had fought had hardened his resolve. The man before him was not the same son he knew a year ago when he left Kufstein to seek a life of leisure and seclusion.

Sieghard could hardly recognize his son, but he was curious about what Berengar was thinking and how grand his ambitions were, and thus the former Baron drank from his glass once more. Finishing its contents, he motioned for Berengar to fill it up, where the young Duke poured more whiskey into both of their cups. After doing so, Sieghard asked the following question on his mind.

"So is being Duke enough for you? Or do you desire to be King?"

When he heard this, Berengar decided to reveal some of his plans to his father. There were a few reasons for this; first and foremost, the man was family, and if Berengar's status was elevated, so too was his.

Second, the older man had retired and given Berengar his realm. Thus even if he was against Berengar's plans, there was nothing he could do. Thirdly Berengar did not plan to reveal everything about his grand ambitions, only what would come next.? With this in mind, Berengar responded to his father's question with a smug expression on his face.

"For now, I will consolidate the gains that I have acquired throughout the past year. I will implement my reforms, expand the Army, and establish a Grand Navy. When the time comes that Austria is capable of standing on its own, I will declare myself King of Austria.

If the Emperor refuses to elevate my status from a lowly Duke to a full-fledged King, I will wage war for my independence. No matter how many soldiers the Empire brings to battle, I will be victorious. In the end, I will be King, whether it is done peacefully or through bloodshed; it is inevitable."

Hearing this, Sieghard was surprised that his son had such grand ambitions, to the point where he was willing to go to war for the right to call himself King. Then again, he understood that Berengar had the means to do so. After all, the man had retaken Austria from Bavarian occupation while at the same time preventing an invasion into Tyrol.

A wide smile appeared on Sieghard's face as he thought about such a future; in doing so, he let his thoughts escape from his lips.

"My son... The King of Austria! To think that you would reach such great heights in this life. Do not disappoint me, my boy!"

With this, the father and son broke out into laughter as they switched to beer. Berengar spent the night introducing his father to all kinds of alcohol that he had made. From fortified wine to heavy beers and distilled spirits. While drinking Sieghard gave his son one final piece of advice.

"My son, do not tell your mother or your sister the truth about Lambert's death. It would break their fragile hearts."

Berengar nodded silently towards Sieghard's words. If it were not for his father being so forthright about the topic, he would have lied to him as well. With that said, Berenga drank more from the chalice in his hands. This golden chalice was not the usual skull chalice he drank from. He felt that it would be inappropriate to drink from Lambert's skull in front of his father. Thus he had prepared a different goblet.

Later into the night, Berengar's other family members returned; by the looks on their faces, they had an exciting conversation, much like Berengar had with

his father. However, the way Gisela and Linde were getting along was a good sign to Berengar. It would appear that they were able to hash out their difficulties.

Thus with his family's arrival, Berengar garnered their attention by clanging a spoon onto his golden chalice; after the others had turned their attention towards him, he began to speak the words he had prepared long ago.

"Mother, Henrietta, I have an announcement to make. There is no easy way to say this, so I will just come out and say it. Lambert is dead; I have received word from the Grand Master of the Teutonic order that he has died gloriously on the battlefield defending the east from the heathens of the Golden Horde."

Gisela dropped the cup in her hands in shock upon hearing this, and Henrietta began to tear up. Sieghard grabbed ahold of his wife's hands to comfort her in this time. The two women broke out into tears as they mourned Lambert's death, leaving Berengar, Sieghard, and Linde as the only ones aware of the truth.

Berengar had concocted this statement so that his mother and sister would still look fondly on Lambert, even though he had continued to tread upon the path of evil well until his death. In reality, there was no redemption for Lambert; he had died in an attempt to murder his brother and ex-fiancee. If there was an afterlife, only eternal hellfire awaited him. Then again, if hell really existed the two brothers would surely be united one day.