

## Steel 49

### *Chapter 49: Gathering Evidence II*

While Linde was off traveling towards the Heltzer Manor, Lord Arnulf von Thiersee was currently standing in Wildsch?nau Castle with his retinue; he had just arrived and was currently paying his respects to the new Lord of Wildsch?nau who just so happened to be a small child. It was a pity that both of these two Lords had lost their fathers so close to one another. Granted, they were under vastly different circumstances, but he could understand the pain the von Wildsch?nau family was currently going through.

Though the Lord did not bow to the child known as Theobald von Wildsch?nau, he still acted respectfully. After all, they were two Lords of the same status, and as such, there was no need for overbearing formality.

"Lord Theobald, I offer my condolences in the loss of your father, Ulrich. I have come to pay my respects to your family."

Theobald was nearly 8 years old; despite this, he had been under strict tutelage by his Regent and was aware of the matters occurring across the realm.

"Thank you, Lord Arnulf, that means a lot to me. I also wish to say how sorry I am that your father passed so suddenly. He was truly a staple of the realm. You are free to stay here for the time being, and I will have my servants attend to your every wish. I am happy to see that there are still men of conscience who will not forsake my family for the foolish actions of my late father."

Arnulf smiled at the flattery. Clearly, the regent had prepared such an elaborate statement for such a small child as such, Arnulf decided to entertain the regent's efforts and returned the young boy's compliments.

"You are wise for your age, and I am happy to see that you have good counsel. I will take you up on your offer and enjoy my stay to the best of my abilities. I thank you for the hospitality you have shown me."

After exchanging pleasantries, Arnulf was lead to his quarters, where he spent the remainder of the day acting cordially with the family. During the evening, he dined with them and found that the widow of Ulrich was still grieving

heavily for her husband's passing. She had on several occasions made treasonous statements blaming Berengar for the death of Ulrich and cursing his name. She had completely forgotten that she was in the presence of a guest and had let her true feelings about the future Baron come forth.

It was not until it was late at night that he decided to sneak out of his quarters and personally investigate the late Lord Ulrich's personal study. As such, he quietly sneaked through the corridors of the castle. He was extra cautious about patrols that were ongoing throughout the night. On one occasion, he was nearly discovered by a guard who was following his route; if it were not because the man was half asleep, Arnulf would have a difficult time explaining his actions. Eventually, he found his way to the location where he desired entry without getting caught in the act.

After picking the lock, Arnulf snuck inside with a small oil lamp in his hand; it was only after the door was properly closed behind him that he lit the lamp to provide illumination in his search for evidence. After spending several hours searching through every scrap of paper in the office, Arnulf realized that even if Ulrich's treason was somehow connected to his father's death like he was led to believe. All evidence of his treacherous actions would have been seized by Sieghard's forces when they searched for proof of his guilt.

Or so the man thought; however, after stumbling over a fallen chalice, the man clumsily bumped into the bookcase where a bible fell to the ground. However, when the bible flopped to the ground, it revealed that its contents had been hollowed out, and hidden inside the holy book was a small black ledger that was unmarked. After flipping through the ledger, Arnulf could not believe his eyes. The book was a secret journal kept by Ulrich with details of his shadowy dealings with Lambert and the Count of Tyrol. Every conversation Ulrich ever had with the two men about their plans to eliminate Berengar was recorded in great detail within this ledger. The reason this book existed must have been as a form of Leverage; if Ulrich were ever caught and left to hang by his sinister partners, he would use this as a means to buy his life.

Unfortunately, the man had perished on the battlefield, and he was never able to trade such valuable information for his own security. Due to it being hidden in a bible within the bookcase, Sieghard's men who handled the investigation never even thought to open it. The most important part of this information was

that Arnulf's father was never mentioned in the book. As a loyal son who considered his father the Marshal the personification of justice, Arnulf concluded that Lambert had assassinated his father because his father had discovered the boy's plot to commit fratricide and usurp the Barony.

He had to get this ledger to the Baron as quickly as possible if this information was true. However, the more he thought about it, he figured Berengar must be aware of his brother's attempt on his life. If he handed the ledger over to Berengar to act as evidence against Lambert, Arnulf and his family would most likely be able to reap more rewards. Due to a misconception created out of ignorance of his father's moral failings, the von Thiersee family would from this day forward become ardent supporters of Berengar and all of his actions.

After tidying up the study to make it appear as if he were never there, Arnulf snuffed his oil lamp and returned to his room, where he carefully read through the entire contents of the ledger he had found. It was truly a damning piece of evidence, one that, when combined with the in which Berengar's network had collected, would allow Berengar to build an ironclad case against Lambert. The Lord had no way of knowing that he would be aiding his father's killer in his plans to ensure dominion over the realm.