

Steel 67

Chapter 67: Border Conflict

Ingbert was currently overseeing the transport of a shipment of steel and textiles to the Count of Steiermark, who resided in the city of Graz. He had just recently departed from the Barony of Kufstein and he was now sitting at the entrance of the town of Kitzbühel, the capital of the Barony of Kitzbühel, which was the Barony which lay directly to the east of Kufstein and shared its border. The moment he had come close to the town of Kitzbühel while flying the banners of House von Kufstein, he had been stopped by the Town Guard with who he was currently engaged in a fierce debate.

"Under whose authority do you dare to stop this trading Caravan?"

The man who had stopped him was dressed in a brigandine breastplate and wore an iron bascinet helmet on his head. He currently had several archers and spearmen nearby holding the Caravan captive. They all looked as if they were ready to unleash their fury at any moment. Clearly they were holding a grudge against the Barony of Kufstein. The man in charge sneered in disdain at Ser Ingbert as he answered the young man's questions.

"Under the decree of Baron Guntrum von Kitzbühel, anyone who enters through the Barony of Kitzbühel through its western border shall be investigated for Heresy. I hereby order you to stay within the confines of Kitzbühel until after the investigation is complete. In the meantime, we will be seizing all assets in which your caravan carries as potential evidence. If you are determined to be innocent of the charges, then all items seized shall be returned to you at the time of your departure."

Ingbert was furious at the blatant disregard for his identity and lashed out at the guard.

"This is outrageous!"

The guard grinned wickedly at Ingbert and lowered his spear threateningly as he proceeded to taunt Ingbert.

"Any resistance will be considered a recognition of guilt, and thus we will be forced to execute you as a Heretic. I suggest you hand over your weapons peacefully and come with us."

Though Ingbert wanted to fight his way out, the town guard greatly outnumbered him and his caravan guards; as such, there was not much he could do about the current situation. All he could manage was to inform Berengar's spy network set up in Kitzbühel of this matter and have them relay the message to Berengar. As such, he was placed under confinement in the local tavern, where he quickly met up with the bar wench who worked for Berengar in secret and gave her the message. It would not be long before Berengar heard of the egregious actions of the Baron of Kitzbühel and demanded a response.

...

Berengar sat upon his seat of power where Linde was kneeling before him, informing him of the events that had transpired to Ingbert and his caravan within the Barony of Kitzbühel. He slammed his fist on his armrest in a fit of fury and rose from his seat as he yelled at Linde.

"Preposterous, the Baron of Kitzbühel has no right to interfere with my trade. Clearly, he's doing this at the behest of the Church as retaliation for my execution of those fucking inquisitors. That God damn pious cunt, I swear to God I will get back to him for this!"

Though Berengar was screaming in anger, Linde did not mind; she liked this tyrannical side of Berengar. However, she kept her mouth shut and let him vent his anger. Berengar paced around the Great Hall as he contemplated on how to proceed.

"I want an envoy sent to Kitzbühel to mediate this grievance. I will not allow my business to be interrupted by that self-righteous prick!"

Linde frowned in dissatisfaction at Berengar's inaction and tried to goad him into violence as she approached his side and poked his chest tenderly.

"Why don't you send your armies? With the power of your forces, the Baron could not refuse your demands!"

Berengar knew what she was trying to do and pet her silky strawberry blonde hair before pulling her in close to her.

"You are a little vixen; you know that? No, I will not resort to violence over such a small matter. Besides, it would be just the justification your father needs to bring his armies down upon me if I did so. I would prefer to avoid war with the entirety of the Tyrolean forces if I could; there are too many of them; at best, I could withstand the siege until they yield, but by then, my businesses would be destroyed, and my people slaughtered. I will avoid violence until he gives me a proper *Cassus Belli*."

Linde pouted but ultimately accepted his decision. Not only was everything he said correct, but he knew that when Berengar made up his mind about something, there was no swaying him. As such, she rested her head on his shoulder and enticed him further.

"Hopefully, he does something to justify war; it is getting dreadfully boring around here now that I can no longer tease that little fiancée of yours."

Berengar scoffed at Linde's reaction, this girl may be a masochist now, but that did not mean the entirety of her sadistic tendencies had disappeared. Clearly, she needed more training. However, he was busy at the moment and could not entertain his little pet; as such, he gave her a task to ease her boredom.

"I won't let Guntrum get away with this, reach out the cell in his land and have my hands burn down Guntrum's granaries, let him see what happens when he dares to provoke me!"

With this, Linde smiled mischievously; this was the ruthless and domineering tyrant who had stolen her heart. She was quick to obey his commands and set forth to task the local cell in Kitzbühel to engage in sabotage against the Barony's food stores. It would not be long before this conflict escalated into an all-out war. When that occurred, Berengar would show what the thunder of a dozen 12 lb cannons could do to the seemingly mighty walls of Guntrum's castle. Years in the future, historians would come to recognize this as Berengar's first conquest and the beginning point in the rise of the German Empire.