

# Tyranny of Steel

## Chapter 6

### *Chapter 6: A Seemingly Civil Discussion*

Within a fertile valley, surrounded by the Alps mountains, lies the inhabited region of the Barony of Kufstein. A large tributary for the Danube river flowed through the valley, the crisp blue water providing life to all beings within the region. As the light of dawn shown upon the harmonious territory, the rooster's cries awoken the peasant class to the beginning of a long day of hard work.

Though the nobility tended to sleep longer than the common folk in which they presided over, one young lord had risen simultaneously as the peasants to get in his morning exercise. If Berengar wished to overcome his natural infirmity, then he would have to work twice as hard as the average knight in terms of physical fitness, and so he did.

The night prior, he had already discussed with Ludwig to construct a set of free weights and kettlebells to assist in his daily training. Ludwig was well respected within the local town and had contacts in every trade. Thus he did his new friend a favor and sent the designs to the local blacksmith who would craft the exercise equipment at a fair price in which Ludwig was in charge of negotiating.

Though the equipment had not been constructed yet, as the technology of this feudal world was still far from developed, it would only be a matter of time before Berengar could enhance his strength training further. Nevertheless, he still did all that he could manage with his limited resources.

After another morning of hard training, Berengar found himself bathing again; his bathing habits were starting to provoke the servants' curiosity within the Castle. He would bathe once in the morning after his exercise and once before going to sleep at night. He tried to persuade his family to adopt the practice, but they were stubborn people set in their old traditions. Though they would bathe relatively frequently for the time period, they still could not match Berengar's borderline germophobic tendencies.

Nevertheless, he had commanded the entirety of the staff to wash their hands every time they used the restroom or engaged in any activity which might dirty one's hands. He became known for especially scolding the cooking staff when he found their cleaning habits had not matched his desires. Though the Baron did not chastise Berengar for his behavior, he became concerned about the boy's newfound habits.

Henrietta was the only exception in the family; being the obedient little sister, she took up all of Berengar's hygiene suggestions. She had even begun bathing right before she

slept. This made Berengar exceptionally happy, as the likelihood of his little sister catching serious illness was significantly lower if she practiced proper hygiene.

The more he thought about it, the more he knew he would have to construct public baths. It would take quite some time on his path of industrialization for the entirety of the populace within his family's domain to be able to afford a private bath. Truly the ancient Romans were far ahead of the medieval period when it came to things like cleanliness.

After completing his first bath for the day, Berengar styled his hair to the best of his ability; he currently lacked the means to acquire pomade, which in his previous life he had made extensive use of to slick back his hair. He found it to be a dignified appearance, fitting an officer in the military and even better suited to a young lord. For now, he merely made it into a side part with his brush. The next time he visited the town, he would be sure to buy some lard which was the main ingredient for the construction of pomade.

After styling his hair and dressing in a fashionable outfit currently in style, he set forth to the Dining Hall. Truthfully he preferred the fashion of the 16th century, especially that of the Tudors in England. He would be sure to implement such culture in due time; for now, he would endure the dress of an early 15th-century German nobleman.

After entering the Dining Hall, he noticed his family was all seated waiting for him; this had become a recent custom as Berengar usually spent quite some time enjoying the bath, a considerable time for a man with memories from 21st century America. Nevertheless, in this filthy era, he never felt more comfortable than when he was bathing.

After sitting down at the table and saying grace, he noticed that Lambert eyed him with malicious intent once more. It was subtle, and if not for two lifetimes' worth of experience, Berengar would not be privy to such a gaze. Yet it was all too frequent of behavior for Lambert. He would speak gracefully with a smile on his face, all while having eyes filled with hatred and murderous intent.

Berengar was starting to suspect that the frequency of his illness had something to do with Lambert. It was not uncommon for siblings to assassinate one another for the inheritance in a time like this. The more he examined Lambert's behavior, the more he began to question his motives.

Unfortunately for Berengar, he had been isolated from the court and had no real friends among the nobility. Rather, they were all in Lambert's corner. After all, until recently, Lambert had always been the shining star of the von Kufstein family; he was talented with the sword, relatively intelligent, and highly charismatic. Lambert even managed to win the heart of the Count of Tyrol's eldest daughter and convince her father to approve of their engagement.

Berengar could think of half a dozen nobles within the County of Tyrol who would side with Lambert if he requested their help in the assassination of his older brother. The more he thought about it, the more Berengar knew he would have to be careful in the future. He decided to spend some of his time establishing ties with the nobility of the region.

However, his primary focus was winning the hearts of the people. He was confident that with his plans to advance agriculture and industry, the people would never want to see him replaced as their sovereign. While the nobles looked down upon the common folk as if they were mere slaves incapable of rising against their masters. Berengar had the memories of Julian, and the history of Julian's timeline proved that the wrath of the common folk is something all Tyrants should fear. With the military innovations he would bring with his rise to power, the era of knights would become a thing of the past.

Henrietta stared at Berengar with a hint of caution in her beautiful azure eyes. She was well aware her beloved older brother was acting strangely ever since his fever broke. She had even pondered the feasibility of possession, though he never acted malignantly; the sudden change in his personality had shocked her. Yet despite all of this, she still obeyed his every suggestion. If she were aware of Lambert's attempt on Berengar's life, she might murder the poor boy in his sleep. Luckily for the family, his treachery had not been revealed, nor was anyone but Berengar suspicious of Lambert's behavior.

As the family ate, Sieghard broke the silence; curious about Berengar's conversation with Ludwig the night prior; he decided to inquire about it.

"So Berengar, my boy, how did your discussion with Ludwig go last night?"

Berengar gracefully ate the grilled fish before him; after wiping his mouth with his napkin, he looked over at his father with a dignified expression as he recounted the events of the night prior.

"Rest assure, father, the project will break ground as soon as possible. Ludwig needs to gather the necessary labor to complete the task. I fully trust in his abilities."

Sieghard sighed in relief before a satisfied expression spread across his visage. He was relieved that his son's sudden change in behavior was not just a whim and was excited about the prospects of this new technology. The news aggrieved only one person within the room, and that was Lambert. The cunning youth quickly put on a mask of innocent confusion as he investigated the details.

"Project? What project? Is something wonderful happening?"

Everyone at the table had bought into the innocent facade of the scheming youth. Everyone except Berengar, that is, in his past life, had been cheated by too many frauds and had developed a sixth sense for detecting such falsehoods over time.

Though Lambert was a good actor, it was not enough to trick Berengar's discerning eye. This boy, who was not even sixteen, was truly devious.

Sieghard was happy that his second son was also interested in the realm's affairs and was more than happy to share the plan to construct the improved blast furnace and the Bessemer converter.

"My son, your elder brother, had brought to my attention some interesting plans for developing the steel industry within our realm. With this new technology, we will be able to develop steel far more efficiently!"

A look of pride was on Sieghard's face as he revealed the plan Berengar had come up with without a hint of discretion. Though Lambert smiled at the news, he was internally furious.

'Just where did Berengar come up with such technology? Why was I not informed of this? Damn it; I have serious plans for the iron ore within my mountains!'

These were just a few of the thoughts that had crossed the youth's mind as he stared down his elder brother, who had always been so foolhardy. Though what he did not expect was that Berengar returned his stare with narrowed eyes. The gaze was cold; though not murderous, it had a hint of savagery within it. The eyes of a man who was aware he had been plotted against and would surely return the favor at the first opportunity.

The sight of which frightened Lambert terribly, these were not the eyes of the carefree and naive older brother he had grown up with. However, before he could investigate further, Berengar had finished his meal and stood up from the table; after wiping his mouth with his napkin, Berengar shifted his gaze from Lambert and put on an equally convincing facade to their father.

"Father, may I be excused? I have urgent business to attend to with Ludwig."

A gracious smile spread across Sieghard's face as he had no idea of the rivalry that was brewing between his two sons.

"Of course, my son, go. I wish you the best of luck with this endeavor."

Berengar bowed before leaving the dining room, leaving Lambert and the family with various expressions. Lambert's right hand, which wielded the dining knife, began to tremble as his mind could not unsee the narrowed eyes of Berengar, which appeared to have seen past his facade and peered deep into his soul. The trembling of his hand did not go unnoticed by the family as his mother, Gisela, spoke up with a hint of concern on her face.

"Lambert, your hand is shaking. Are you alright?"

Lambert looked down at his hand and noticed it trembling for the first time; as he examined it, the cold sapphire eyes of Berengar once more entered his vision, and his hand instinctively dropped the knife. As he grabbed ahold of his hand to steady himself, he spoke up to assure his family.

"I'm fine; I'm just feeling a little under the weather, is all. If you would excuse me, I think I'm going to go lie down for a bit."

After being excused by his family, Lambert gracefully left the dining hall, though when he was no longer in sight, he frantically sprinted to his room and latched the door behind him. After entering the large stone room, he collapsed against the door shielding his eyes with his hands muttering under his breath.

"What devil has possessed my brother to make him aware of my schemes?"

The trembling youth could not help but feel like his plot to assassinate his older brother had succeeded and invited a demon into their midst.