

Tyranny of Steel

Chapter 7

Chapter 7: A Passion for Engineering

As Berengar left the dining room and his family behind before Lambert's outburst, he could not witness the scene of his scheming brother scared to the bone. Instead, he had already headed to his room to draft new blueprints. He felt as if Ludwig could be trusted and willing to take the credit for the inventions if he asked. As such, he spent the next hour drafting plans for a Beehive Oven. Which was the best method currently available for turning Coal into Coke. Something which would prove to be vital in the functioning of the blast furnaces.

After drafting the plans, he quickly left the Castle's gates and entered the town below. The von Kufstein family's Castle sat atop a large hill in the center of the town; it was a well-fortified castle that the family had occupied for generations. They presided over the Barony with absolute authority. They answered only to their Lieges, the von Habsburgs, who ruled not only the County of Tyrol but also the Duchy of Austria.

Though at this point, a cadet branch of the Habsburg family ruled over the County of Tyrol, where Innsbruck was their seat of power. The Count of Tyrol had agreed to Lambert's proposal to marry his eldest daughter. Even Berengar was slightly envious of such a thing. Not only was she a gorgeous young woman who still had time to grow into her natural beauty, but she was also the Count's daughter, a prestige many young noblemen sought after.

Berengar had no idea what schemes Lambert had conspired to achieve such a thing. After all, it was unusual for a Count to marry off one of his daughters to a lower nobleman, let alone the second son of a lowly Baron. Nevertheless, the boy had achieved it; even Berengar had to give him props. Lambert was not even sixteen years old, yet he had conned a Count into pledging his daughter's hand to him.

Meanwhile, Berengar was single, without the slightest prospect of marriage in mind due to his feeble constitution. Though that would change soon enough, and maybe one day he too could marry a Count's daughter. As soon as he thought up of such glamorous ideals, he laughed aloud. What was he thinking? He had far more important matters to attend to. Realistically speaking, the likelihood of him pulling off such a thing would be slim, and he'd rather not bother with the politics of the nobility.

If Berengar could bring prosperity and power to his family's land through the might of industry and agriculture that was good enough for him, he truly did not care for the lavish schemes of the upper nobility. His ambitions stopped at inheriting his birthright and bringing his family's territory to a better age.

With his knowledge of military tactics and advanced weaponry, he would be able to defend his borders from any threat, though conquering other regions was easier said than done, and he had no desire to wage wars for the rest of his life. For now, his ambitions had to wait; he had yet to gain any authority over the Barony of Kufstein, and as such, had to make do with what he was capable of.

After arriving at the door to Ludwig's shop, he could overhear the old man yelling at someone else within; this was not the first time he had overheard Ludwig's temper, and if Berengar was guessing correctly, then the voice in which he was arguing with belonged to Ser Ingbert. Something which Berengar dreaded having to deal with. He was not a fan of pompous fools who overestimated their worth. Especially when the reasoning for their hubris was because of some noble title they inherited from their father. Though Ingbert could not directly offend Berengar, it did not prevent him from acting like a jerk to Ludwig.

As the heated discussion reached a degree of incivility that Berengar could no longer tolerate, he threw open the doors to the shop, making his presence known to all inside. Before the two men could greet him, Berengar barked his commands at Ingbert.

"Out!"

A devilish smirk appeared across Ingbert's face after mistaking Berengar's command as if it were meant for the lowly commoner beside him.

"You heard the Young Lord, leave us!"

Berengar glared at Ingbert coldly, he was a man with good control of his temper, but Ingbert's incapability to read the room thoroughly agitated him.

"I was referring to you!"

The wicked smile on Ingbert's face suddenly turned into a confused expression as he pointed to himself, asking for clarification.

"Me?"

Berengar glared fiercely at Ingbert in silence, as if the young Knight was trying his patience with every second he remained in the room. After a few moments of gawking at Berengar like an idiot, the young Knight finally understood what he had meant and bowed his head respectfully. Though his tone was pleasant, his eyes were furious; he had never been scolded in such a way before; he would remember this humiliation until his dying breath.

After bowing to Berengar, Ingbert left the shop behind where Ludwig was by himself, scratching the back of his head.

"You didn't need to do that..."

Berengar quickly approached the old man and slapped him on the back

"Nonsense, his presence would only hinder our plans. Besides, I have a new set of blueprints for you."

Like a child at the candy store, Ludwig's eyes glowed with excitement; he reached for the blueprints in Berengar's hands but was taken aback when the young lord withdrew his hand out of reach.

"Not so fast! I have one condition..."

Ludwig frowned as he heard the young Lord's words; for a second, he felt as if he were going to be cheated by Berengar, that is until he heard the condition.

"I need you to take credit for its invention."

Ludwig's mouth nearly fell agape as he heard Berengar's words; he had never expected the Baron's son to request him to take the glory for inventing what he knew would most likely be a critical piece in the steel industry.

After careful deliberation, Ludwig agreed; he did not need to know why Berengar shifted the invention into his hands. After all, it probably included some convoluted court schemes with which he wanted nothing to do with. If his fifty-seven years alive had taught him anything, it's that it is best to avoid the affairs of noblemen.

"Alright, that's fine by me."

Berengar smiled, partially because the man agreed to his request but also because he had not inquired why he wanted to shift the invention to Ludwig's name. The man was much more intelligent than a fool like Ingbert would ever be.

After handing over the blueprint to Ludwig, the man could no longer contain his excitement; a huge beaming smile spread across his face. Inside the blueprint was a series of notes about converting coal into coke and how coke was a more efficient fuel source for the blast furnace than charcoal. Luckily for them, the mountains that surrounded the Barony of Kufstein were not just filled with iron but coal as well.

"You are a genius milord!"

Berengar smiled at Ludwig's response. Though he was brilliant in his past life, he was far from what he would consider a genius, but here in this primitive world, he was most likely the most knowledgeable man on the planet. He was glad to see someone appreciated his intellect.

"So, how quickly can you put those three designs into production?"

Ludwig scratched his beard at the question; he too desperately desired to make the blueprints into reality; after careful deliberation, he raised a single finger.

"Give me a month, and I promise you that I will have at least one of each of these designs built within the town!"

Berengar was pleased with the news; it was much quicker than he had anticipated. He was fairly certain by the look on the old man's face that he would run himself ragged building these inventions. Nevertheless, Berengar did not stop him; he only left a few words of encouragement.

"Make sure to take care of yourself; I will drop by every once in a while to check up on your progress. If you need any additional funding, just ask my father about it. I'm sure he will manage to find the funds needed to make this dream of ours a reality. After all, these designs greatly concern the matter of the realm's future finances."

Ludwig grinned and gave a thumbs-up to Berengar; he was happy to have a partner who understood his passion for engineering. Even his own son did not express the same degree of excitement for this project as Berengar did.

"You can count on me, partner!"

With that said, Berengar excused himself from Ludwig's workshop. Now that the initial stage of the industry within his plans had been set on the right path, he would focus on expanding the agricultural capabilities of the Barony for the next month. Truly, a Lord's work is never finished...

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