

Steel 56

Chapter 56: An Entertaining Lecture

Berengar was currently in a makeshift classroom temporarily located in the local tavern of the town square. He was currently writing the alphabet down on a blackboard he had created with a piece of chalk. As he went over the sound every letter made and how to read and write them, he gazed upon his class of laborers who had gathered to begin the process of basic education.

With the 40 hour workweek in session, there was a healthy amount of spare time for many of the laborers of his factories; because of this, Berengar had offered free drinks and meals to whoever was willing to come and learn from him and his staff for a couple of hours each day after work. It had caught on pretty quickly as people could drink light beer, enjoy a nice meal, and educate themselves with brief breaks for socializing in between. Workers, supervisors, and foremen all gathered in the town square as if it were a festive occasion.

Berengar had always found that an entertaining approach to education was far easier to learn from than a boring monotone instructor who sucked all the life out of the information. As such, he made games of learning and gave small prizes like an extra drink or dish to whoever could win his contests. It seemed to be working as the common people were quickly catching on to elementary-level language, mathematics, and science. This was a temporary solution; of course, he intended to build genuine halls of education, and one day even universities. For now, while those things were being constructed and organized, Berengar, Linde, and Adela were teaching the common population rudimentary knowledge in their spare time. No matter how busy they were, Adela would teach the children from 10 am - 12 pm, Linde would teach the women from 12 pm - 3 pm, and Berengar would teach the Men from 5 pm - 7 pm.

Berengar was still on the quest to find educated people who had the ability to teach others, but that was a difficult task considering the educated population was primarily from either the nobility, or the priesthood, neither of which were exactly fond of the idea of teaching commoners how to read, write, and do basic arithmetic. Let alone learn the concept of Science in which Berengar had begun teaching, which was basically outright heresy in the eyes of the Church.

Berengar was currently teaching a basic sentence on the blackboard and see which of the men in his class could read it. He scribbled down the German characters for the phrase "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work" This was one of the many concepts he was trying to instill in the working man and nobility alike. He truly believed people should be paid the worth of their labor. After writing down the sentence, he looked upon the crowd and gave them another contest.

"Whoever can raise their hand first and read the sentence correctly will get another pint!"

The men all quickly got to work looking over their alphabet sheets and deciphering the sentence. Eventually, a thin young man covered in soot from the furnaces raised his hand before anyone else, and once called upon, answered the question correctly.

Berengar called out to one of the women working in the tavern

"Bar wench, get this man a pint of beer!"

soon enough, an attractive young girl came over and poured the man a pint of beer in which he was happy to accept and quickly drank from the mug. Afterward, Berengar asked a question to the class to see if they understood what the phrase meant.

"Now, this sentence is fairly important to every one of you. I believe that a man should be paid an appropriate amount to the worth his labor."

Berengar began to stride around the tavern, picked up a liter of beer, and began to drink from it as he continued his lecture of economic philosophy during a rudimentary language lesson.

"As men under my employment, you are afforded payment for your labor. I also believe that the harder a man works, and the better results he gets, the more he should be paid."

After saying so, he pointed at a man in the crowd and asked him a question in front of everyone.

"You, sir, what is your name, and many hours a week do you work if you don't mind me asking?"

The man looked around before noticing he was called upon and answered respectfully to Berengar.

"I am known as Reingard, and I work fifty hours a week milord!"

Berengar then quickly pointed to another man and asked him the same question.

"And you? What is your name, and how many hours do you work a week?"

The man cleared his throat before speaking in an embarrassed tone

" I am Bruno, and I work Forty, milord..."

Berengar noticed the anxious expression on the man's face and smiled gently as he comforted the man for his choices.

"There is nothing wrong with working forty hours a week. In fact, it gives you plenty of time to spend with your family or following your passions. Both are important factors to the quality of a man's work, and society as a whole."

After saying this, the man began to smile confidently, even after Berengar said the next piece of his impassioned speech.

"However, because Reingard works ten hours a week more than you do, he is paid more than you and is more likely to be considered for a raise or a promotion in the future. We all make choices in life; we all have our own priorities. It is up to you to choose the course that would make you most happy."

Each man in the room carefully contemplated Berengar's words of wisdom as if they were a creed to live by. Ultimately Berengar concluded his lecture with a bit of humor.

"If you do manage to find the perfect balance in life, please let me know how you managed it, as I am dreadfully lacking in balancing my affairs at the moment..."

With this being said, the slightly inebriated crowd of workers began to laugh at Berengar's self-deprecating sense of humor. They could not imagine a man such as Berengar lacking a balanced life; the young man perfectly scheduled every moment of his time and was teaching them because of this. After the workingmen made a few good-natured jabs, Berengar began to chuckle and ended his class for the day.

"Alright guys, get out of here and go back to your families, we all need to be up for work tomorrow morning, and missing sleep is detrimental to your health."

After saying this, every man in the class came up to thank Berengar for the free lecture, booze, and feed. After a while, they all managed to return home, and Berengar had done the same. He still had much work to do on this night before he could get to sleep. His humorous statement was not a joke; now that he held near-absolute authority in the Barony, he was swamped with work and could barely manage the time to check in on his family, who was currently grieving over Lambert's crime and sentence. Though the boy had lived, he would never return as a member of their family. Berengar did not have time to worry about such things. Tomorrow the Inquisition would arrive, and he would have to entertain the emissaries of the church. Hopefully, he could resolve this issue peacefully now that Lambert had been dealt with.