

Part 15. Jeremiah



Quentin was rarely seen, but today he worked alongside Jeremiah, tagging and approving all the tomes the boy handled.

He was a cross man, though not without a sense of humor. So Jeremiah thought it safe, and opportune, to ask,

"Do you mind, having a woman as your assistant?"

Quentin continued tagging, but slowed to respond, "She's efficient. All that needs doing. Soon, you'll be assistant, and when I pass, archiver."

It was more words in one afternoon than Jeremiah had ever heard the man utter in weeks. He decided to try his luck again.

"Why are there so few archivers?"

Other assignments boasted dozens, if not hundreds of apprentices. Not archivers. He wanted to know why he was chosen to be an outcast.

"These tomes are valuable, cannot be had by all."

"Valuable?"

It sounded like a word the stranger might use.

"Learn boy, read." Quentin tsked in disapproval. "Valuable." He seemed to search for a comparison, then came upon one: "Valuable, not like the fativa slop you slurp e'day."

Jeremiah was treading a so edge, but wanted to continue anyway. He felt his questions had gotten him this far.

"Wouldn't God want knowledge shared? Equal?"

Quentin grimaced. Or smiled. Really, a combination of both.

"Mayhap. But in the compound, men rule, and they believe the change found in these tomes scorched the surface."

Hoping to impress, Jeremiah said, "I read a book spoke of change. If a society is stuck," here, he paused, swallowed his cowardice and forged ahead, "non-kinetic, it's unsustainable."

Utilizing so much tome terminology stole his breath. His heart slammed in his chest. Stupidly, he hopes he had used the terms correctly. From the smirk on Quentin's face, he probably hadn't.

"Which tome?"

Jeremiah feared for the tome. It boasted radical ideas, a destroyable offense. His first instinct was to hide it away when he next came upon it.

Still, he could not lie by ordinance, especially not to his master.

"Called 'A Modern Utopia'"

Wells, is it?"

"Yes."

Quentin nodded. "Thought so. Might recommend it for destruction. Don't quote it again."

Jeremiah lower his eyes at the floor, imagining the different spots where he could stash the book.

"Yes, sir."

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