

The Olde Tyme Quest

The Peasant

Wherein the Reader Embarks on a
Journey of Their Own Choosing

By Jan Lionsnest

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Prelude

The sages say our paths, one and all, are determined by Fate.

Fate, that Divine power to which we shall all one day succumb. Fate, which turns living into dead, and rich noblemen into even richer noblemen, and poor peasants into even poorer peasants, but never rich noblemen into poor peasants or vice versa, for that is not the proper order of things.

But every now and again, Fate casts its gaze in another direction – or maybe takes a smoke break – giving us the freedom to blaze our own path through this strange and uncanny world of ours. And today is one of those days, for Fate's gaze hath been lifted from *thee*, humble reader.

The path upon which you now set is not one of Fate, but one of Choice. Many Choices are in thy hands, and thy hands alone.

Who am I to be so deserving of such luck? you might ask. Well, don't speak of luck so soon. As it turns out, Fate hath made the first choice for you, and it hath caused you to be born a peasant. This is terribly unfortunate, at least as far as you are concerned, for your journey is certain to be short and full of misery.

Nonetheless, there are now Choices to make. You must make them with haste and mettle, before Fate's smoke break ends and it returns you to a life of toil. Because in the end, somebody needs to toil in the fields, and it's not going to be us.

Thus, we begin.

Thy Journey Begins

You awaken many hours before dawn on a bed made of straw and ox dung. You roll over to kiss your wife and find she has died in the night from an ague.

You call to your daughters, “Daughters, thy mother hath died in the night from an ague. Dispose of her body in the typical way we dispose of our family members’ bodies whence they die in the night.”

“Yes, papá,” they say. Then they take her body away to the disposing place.

Time to get to work.

You have nothing for breakfast because you can’t afford food. You walk outside to the fields. It is still dark, but already it is hot. At the same time it is also freezing cold. It is pouring rain and the wetness chills you to your bones, but it is somehow also so dry that your throat is parched. #PeasantProblems.

You pick a turnip and put it in the basket.

You pick another turnip and put it in the basket.

You keep picking turnips and putting them in the basket. When the basket is full you deposit it into your turnip cart. You return to picking turnips and repeat the process.

This continues for many hours. So many hours.

The sun is now beginning to set. Your back aches and your fingers bleed from all the picking, but there is still more picking to be done because it never really ends. You see in the distance that peasants from the other fields are retiring to the tavern for the day.

What do you do?

[If you keep picking turnips, go to page 4.](#)

[If you call it a day and head to the tavern, go to page 6.](#)

Keep Picking

You have decided to keep picking turnips. A most loyal serf you are! Your liegelord will be proud, but not proud enough to pay you or acknowledge your existence in any way whatsoever.

You pick a turnip and put it in the basket.

You pick another turnip and put it in the basket.

This continues until the sun has set and you have picked more than your daily allotment of turnips and deposited the baskets into your turnip cart.

Your fingers and back have gone numb now, and the last of the peasants have already retired for the day. By now, your friends Bogumil, Dugo, and Chleb will certainly be waiting for you at the tavern, perpetual drunkenness being your only reprieve from this miserable life. Your children also probably await your return back at the hovel. They desperately need you to cook and care for them now that your wife is dead, but that's no fun and you cast the negative thought from your mind. There's already enough negativity in this world to have to worry about familial responsibilities, too.

It is getting dark and the wolves have begun to gather on the edge of the wood. They will surely begin prowling for peasant flesh once the moon has risen.

What do you do?

[If you keep picking turnips, go to page 5.](#)

[If you call it a day and head to the tavern, go to page 6.](#)

More Picking

Your mindless work ethic knows no bounds! You will surely be rewarded for it one day. But not in this life.

You pick a turnip and put it in the basket.

You pick another turnip and put it in the basket.

You continue picking until you collapse from exhaustion right there in the fields.

You lie there in silent pain and gaze up at the stars. They remind you how small and insignificant you are, even though as far as you know they're just holes in a big dark blanket that God throws over the Earth every night so the Kingdom can sleep.

You hear footsteps coming closer. Or don't so much hear them, but sense them in your bones. It's the wolves. You are filled with a sense of dread, but also of relief as the wild dogs close in around your tired body. They are panting, and as they grow closer you can feel their hot dog breath on your neck.

You reflect on your life. You can't seem to remember anything except picking turnips, but those are good memories.

The wolves begin picking at your flesh. They are drawn first to the blood on your bleeding fingers. They eat your hands. Then your feet. They start working their way towards the middle. Your body is numb from the day's work, and as they rip apart your flesh you feel no pain other than the typical pain you feel everyday from toiling so much.

In your last dying breath you see that the wolves are eating the cart of turnips. Your entire day's work, gone to feed the wolves. Your family will surely be punished when your liege lord realizes you finished the day empty-handed. Oh well, that's their problem now.

You feel the end coming. The darkness closes in. It isn't a graceful end to your life, but it's the journey, not the destination, that counts. You die in peace knowing that your journey was filled with turnip picking and just about nothing else.

You are dead. The End.

[Go back to the previous step to continue thy journey, if thou art so bold.](#)

Call it a Day and Head to the Tavern

You give in to your worldly desire for comfort and decide to call it a day. You wipe the dirt and sweat from your brow with the back of your hand, but the back of your hand is so dirty and sweaty that it only makes it worse. No matter, you're too tired to notice or care anyway.

You do a routine check of your turnip cart to make sure everything is in order. Yup, there's turnips in there. You check again just to make sure. You confirm that the cart is still filled with turnips. Some people think checking the turnip cart twice isn't necessary, but you take pride in your job. After all, your liege lord isn't paying you to do sloppy work. He also isn't paying you to do good work because he isn't paying you at all, but he's not paying you to do sloppy work, either.

On your walk back from the fields you come across your liege lord's man, G'bain, out for an inspection. G'bain has been the lord's man on this fief for many years, but he still approaches the task of inspecting turnip carts with the same fire and aplomb he did on his first day on the job. He can be cruel, and merciless, and condescending, and occasionally he'll outright murder someone, but he isn't too bad as far as lord's men go. Some lord's men will just kill or torture peasants for no reason at all with no indication of when or why it's coming. G'bain will at least tell you why he's killing you.

"Lo, there! Peasant!" he calls to you. "I am out here for an inspection. Showest me thy turnip cart so I might inspect it."

Even though you checked it twice, you never can be too sure. G'bain has an eye for turnip carts. He one time spotted a spoilt radish in a turnip cart from over a furlong away at dusk. You respect his high turnip cart inspection standards, but sometimes you wish he'd just chill.

Nervously, you present your cart to G'bain.

"Tell me, peasant, how didst thou enjoy thy turnip picking today?" G'bain asks you as he inspects your turnips.

You answer:

["The King's light shines upon us all. Every day is a glorious one when passed in service to one's liege!" Go to page 7.](#)

["All my days are pain." Go to page 9.](#)

The King's Light Shines Upon Us All

“The King's light shines upon us all. Every day is a glorious one when passed in service to one's liege!” you say.

“Hmm, very well,” says G'bain. “Your pathetic over-enthusiasm for toil makes me suspicious, but that was nonetheless the correct response. You may retire for the day.”

You breathe a sigh of relief at another day of work complete without being tortured or killed. You deposit your turnip cart in the turnip pile and head to the tavern.

After a brisk four mile walk in the rain, you arrive at your favorite tavern, Ye Threadbare Coif. It's known simply as “Ye Coif” by locals, and as “Dear Lord I Can't Believe This Vile Establishment Is The Only Inn In Town” by travelers. It's your favorite tavern because it's the only one in town and the only one you've ever been to. But even if you had been to others you're pretty sure it would still be your favorite. It has that old, damp, earthy smell of large numbers of filthy men who have been working hard and drinking harder literally everyday for their entire lives without bathing. The walls, floor, and ceiling are so covered in grime that it's hard to tell if the building is made out of wood, stone, dirt, or something else. (You have found bones in the wall before, so you know it's at least partially made out of bones.)

For a local joint it gets its fare share of assassins and rogue knights looking for an adventure or a place to cool their sabatons while they lay low to avoid whoever is looking to assassinate them back. The barkeep Ketspittuin lets patrons pay for the ale in turnips, which he then turns into more turnip ale and sells back to them for more turnips. It's a good thing, too, because nobody has any money and everyone likes the ale.

You order a flagon of ale and join your fellow peasants Dugo, Bogumil, and Chleb at a table.

“My wife died last night,” you tell them.

“Ye don't say?” says Chleb. “Mine too.”

“Such is life,” says Bogumil.

“Such is life,” you say.

The four of you continue drinking until you have nearly forgotten the pains of the day, both physical and emotional.

The peasant named Sambor approaches your table. He is quite drunk. Every time Sambor gets drunk he tries to recruit other peasants into starting a rebellion, and tonight is no different.

“Oy, I'm startin' a rebellion. Down with the lords and ladies!” yells Sambor, slapping you on the back. “I already got all the fishmongers and potatomongers joined to the cause. If we gets the turnipmongers on board, this whole fief could be ours for the taking! Who's with me?”

You look around the table. Everyone seems indecisive. The fishmongers are always on board for a little rebelling, but it's hard to believe he has recruited the potatomongers this time, too.

“I don't know. It sounds fun and all, but I've got a lot of work to do this week,” says Dugo.

“Yea, it sounds good in theory, but my wife just died so now I have to do her work, too,” says Chleb. “Are there any single women going? I'm in the market for a new wife.”

“Well, it is supposed to be nice rebelling weather tomorrow,” says Bogumil.

With everyone on the fence, they turn to you. Your decision will sway the other turnipmongers.

“Oy, what d’ya say?” says Sambor. “Will ye join the rebellion?”

[Rebel! Go to page 13.](#)

[“Nay, I am a servile coward who is loyal to my liege.” Go to page 50.](#)

All My Days Are Pain

“All my days are pain,” you tell G’bain. This causes him to fly into a rage. He slaps a turnip out of your hand in anger. There goes your dinner.

“Fie! So thou art not grateful for the wondrous life thy liege provides for thee?” says G’bain. “Mayhaps a fortnight in The Pit shall suffice to make thee reconsider?”

The Pit is where your liegelord throws peasants to make them reconsider their ungratefulness. Most who are thrown into The Pit never come back. The few who have returned say it is a cold deep hell filled with skulls and snakes and sad country music and many other horrors. Although these days it is not used as much as it used to be due to a large number of Human Resources complaints.

But G’bain seems serious about this threat. If you are thrown into The Pit for a fortnight your family’s productivity will dwindle, especially since your wife just died. On top of that you will most definitely die there. How do you respond?

“M’Lord, please! Anything but The Pit! Mine words were taken out of context. The pains I suffer are merely pains of sadness at the thought that I cannot produce more turnips for M’Lord.” Go to page 10.

“Givest me thy worst, G’bain! I fear not The Pit!” Go to page 12.

M'Lord, Please! Anything But The Pit!

“M'Lord, please! Anything but The Pit!” you beg G'bain. “Mine words were taken out of context. The pains I suffer are merely pains of sadness at the thought that I cannot produce more turnips for m'lord.”

You grovel on your knees before G'bain, pulling at his checkered stockings for forgiveness.

“Well, thy grovelling is certainly pathetic. But weeping tears of sadness because thou couldn't produce more turnips for thy lord *is* an authorized type of pain to feel,” says G'bain. “Very well, you can retire for the day. But I shall have mine eye on thee.”

G'bain departs to inspect some other turnip-related things. You breathe a sigh of relief at another day of work complete without being tortured or killed. You deposit your turnip cart in the turnip pile and head to the tavern.

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You order a flagon of ale and join your fellow peasants Dugo, Bogumil, and Chleb at a table.

“My wife died last night,” you tell them.

“Y'don't say?” says Chleb. “Mine too!”

“Such is life,” says Bogumil.

“Such is life,” you say.

“How'd thy inspections go with G'bain today?” you ask.

“Oh, the usual,” says Dugo. “Knightly posturing. Mild threats of torture. But my turnips were all there. And here I am.”

“Another day, another turnip,” says Bogumil. You all drink to that.

The four of you continue drinking until you have nearly forgotten the pains of the day, both physical and emotional.

The peasant named Sambor approaches your table. He is quite drunk. Every time Sambor gets drunk he tries to recruit other peasants into starting a rebellion, and tonight is no different.

“Oy, I'm startin' a rebellion! Down with the lords and ladies!” yells Sambor, slapping you on the back. You try to hush him down in a friendly manner. Everyone knows he does this every day,

but fomenting rebellion is still a crime punishable by death, whether it's Sambor or not. After some guffawing, you finally convince him to take a seat at the table and speak more quietly.

"I already got all the fishmongers and potatomongers joined to the cause," he whispers. "If we gets the turnipmongers on board, this whole fief could be ours for the taking!" Sambor slams his fist on the table. "Who's with me?"

Sambor rises from his seat and a dull roar passes around the bar. It's not so much a "let's start a rebellion tonight" roar as much as a "there's Sambor-being-Sambor, let's at least show him some nominal support" kind of roar, but it's louder than usual. You manage to calm him back down and he takes a seat. You look around the table. Everyone seems indecisive.

"I don't know. It sounds fun and all, but I've got a lot of work to do this week," says Dugo.

"Yea, it soundeth good in theory, but my wife just died so now I have to do her work, too," says Chleb. "Do you think it could succeed?"

"Well, it is supposed to be nice rebelling weather tomorrow," says Bogumil.

With everyone on the fence, they turn to you. Your decision will sway the other turnipmongers.

"Oy, what d'ya say?" says Sambor. "Will ye join the rebellion?"

[Rebel! Go to page 13.](#)

["Nay, I am a servile coward who is loyal to my liege." Go to page 50.](#)

Givest Me Thy Worst, G'bain!

“Givest me thy worst. G'bain!” you shout, much to his surprise. “I fear not The Pit!”

G'bain looks upon you, a bit taken aback.

“Wow, okay. I'm gonna be honest with you, that's a terrible choice and you are most definitely going to die,” he says. “Are you sure you don't want to reconsider? Like, at this point you're definitely going to be tortured, but I'm willing to do something a little less extreme, like a hundred lashings with a cat o' nine tails or dragging you behind a horse for a couple hours or something.”

[“Nay, send me to The Pit!” Go to page 53.](#)

[“Yea, actually give me one of the milder torture selections.” Go to page 62.](#)

Rebel!

So you've chosen to rebel. It should be obvious at this point that your decision will end in death for you and your fellow rebels, and probably a good deal of torture first, too. But, hey, circle of life.

Sambor sits down at your table and orders a round of turnip mead to imbibe while you plan out the rebellion.

“So, I was thinkin’ we’d just, you know, grab some pitchforks and torches and stuff and march as an angry rabble down to the Lord’s house demanding...demanding...” Sambor pauses, thinking. “I don’t know, what should we demand?”

[Freedom. Go to page 14.](#)

[Money. Go to page 29.](#)

[Better Pitchforks. Go to page 43.](#)

Demand Freedom

“Oh, that’s right. We’ll demand freedom,” says Sambor. “So we’ll get the mob together with our pitchforks and torches then march down to the Lord’s house demanding freedom. Sound like a plan?”

This is by far the most planning anyone at the table, including yourself, has ever done. Usually, you just wake up and toil until you can’t physically move anymore then fall asleep and repeat the next day. You don’t even really know who the Lord is. You thought he was some kind of abstract concept that G’bain refers to just to keep you in line, but it sounds like he might be a person. It’s kind of unclear how this whole social system is constructed, but you’re pretty sure you’re at the bottom of it, and it sounds like the Lord is somewhere near the top. You agree the plan sounds good.

Everyone at the table raises a mug and toasts, “To Freedom!”

By the time the next round of ale is served, everyone in the bar has agreed to join the rebellion. The turnipwine and turnip ale are flowing freely now, and everyone is having a rollicking good time. A thought hits you that getting outrageously drunk just hours before a rebellion is probably not the best idea, but you quickly cast the thought from your mind.

After everyone has drunk a cobbler’s dozen beers or more, Sambor finally gives the marching orders. He stands atop the bar, hiccups a few times and nearly stumbles off the edge before you catch him, then he calls the rebellion to action.

“My fellow men of the fields, our rebellion starts now!” he yells. “Depart to thy homes to gather thy pitchforks and torches, and we shall meet at the typical rebelling place at the hour of Matins. Then together, hand in hand, we shall march on the Lord’s house and declare our freedom!”

The bar lets out a roar and everyone pours out the door, drinks still in hands. Many also agree to gather the peasants from nearby hovels on their way.

It is well past dark now. You exit the bar with the rest of the rabble. At the intersection where your liegeland sticks the heads of his enemies on pikes, you break from the group and turn to the south towards your hovel. Chills of excitement run down your spine. This is it. This is the night you fight for your freedom. Many peasants have dreamed of this day, but you are living it.

As you draw within a furlong of your hovel, G’bain suddenly jumps out from behind a hedge and orders you to halt.

“Halt there, turnipmonger!” he shouts. You shuffle nervously and hope he doesn’t notice in the darkness. “Where goes thee at the wee hours of the noct on a work night?” Every night is a work night. “Not off to start a rebellion demanding freedom are thee?”

[“Nay, m’lord, just drunk and stupid because I’m a peasant.” Go to page 15.](#)

[“As a matter of fact...” Go to page 23.](#)

Nay, M'Lord, Just Drunk and Stupid Because I'm a Peasant

"Halt there, turnipmonger!" shouts G'bain. "Where goes thee at the wee hours of the noct on a work night? Not off to start a rebellion demanding freedom are thee?"

"Nay, m'lord, just drunk and stupid because I'm a peasant," you say.

"Hmm, indeed. Peasants are so stupid and you reek of stale mead," he says. "Get thy filthy self out of my sight. I've been hiding behind this hedge all night, surprising peasants and ordering them to halt, and I don't want thee to give away my location. Be gone with ye!"

You hurry away and G'bain disappears behind the hedge. That was close. Does he do that every night? G'bain is a cruel and sinister fellow, but you have to admire his persistence.

You finally arrive at home to get your torch and pitchfork. Your children are sweeping the floor and doing other monotonous chores because fun hasn't been invented yet, and peasants wouldn't be allowed to have it if it had.

"Hello, papá," they say. "Have we food upon which to sup this eve?"

You tell them to stop being so spoiled as to expect food every day, and to go get your torch and favorite pitchfork because you're going on a rebellion.

"Yes, papá," they say. They bring you your torch and pitchfork and you set off into the night. You reflect that maybe you should have told them you love them, seeing as you'll probably be dead by morning. But as far as you know love is illegal for peasants, too.

You meet Sambor and the rest of the rabble at the typical rebellion meetup spot. You rabble together down to the Lord's house, which is in the village square. It's a pretty solid rebelling crew and the odds he'll arbitrarily decide to give you all freedom seem pretty promising.

The rabble gathers in the square outside the Lord's house. Sambor faces the facade and shouts forth, "Come thee down, o' Lord, for we be rebellin' and demand ye give us our freedom!"

"Freedom!" the crowd cheers in unison.

Some time passes without a response from the Lord, and the crowd grows anxious. Sambor shouts again, "Hark! Ye lordly coward, come thee hither and give us our freedom or else we'll burn thy house to the ground!"

Still no response. A few peasants toss potatoes at the house in annoyance.

After a few dozen potatoes, a candlelight appears in the upstairs window. A fair lady leans her head out and says, "Good eve, lowly peasant filth. I am the Lord's wife, the Lady. I understand thou art rebelling. I wish I could be of some assistance to thee, but I'm afraid the Lord is not home right now. He hath gone to the city on business and shall not return for a fortnight. I recommend ye go back home and resume thy rebellion when he returns. If thou would like to leave a message, I can pass it to him upon his homecoming."

Sambor pulls you aside. Bogumil and Dugo emerge from the crowd as well and join you. Chleb didn't come because he was too busy mourning his dead wife or some other lame excuse.

"What do ye think? It could be a trick. What should we do?" says Sambor.

Once again, they look to you for a decision.

She's lying. Burn the house down and smoke out the Lord so he can give you freedom. Go to page 17.

She's telling the truth. Leave a message and resume the rebellion once the Lord returns. Go to page 20.

Burn the House Down

“She’s lying,” you say. “The Lord must be in there. He is playing his lordly tricks upon us. Let’s burn the house down and smoke him out.”

“Great idea!” says Sambor. “I can’t see how this could possibly turn out poorly for us!”

The rest of the rabble agrees. You swarm the house and set it aflame with your torches. Surely the Lord will come running out in shame and meet your demands!

The rabble waits, but still nothing happens. The house is now engulfed in smoke and fire.

“Should be any minute now,” you say.

“Yea, seems pretty hot in there,” says Dugo.

A flaming figure suddenly bursts forth from the upstairs window. Like a burning sack of wheat it falls to the ground with a thud. It writhes in pain for a few seconds then stops moving altogether.

“Uh oh,” says Sambor. “Is that the Lord?”

“Definitely hot in there,” says Dugo.

“Maybe ‘tis just his wife, or one of his servants. Let’s just wait, he may yet be alive in there,” you say. Five seconds later the roof collapses. The walls cave in, and what used to be the Lord’s house is now a smoldering rubble. The rabble looks on in silence. “Okay, he’s probably dead now.”

“Well, if he’s dead, then I guess that means we’re free, right?” says Sambor.

“I don’t know what the laws are,” you say. The Lord was the only one who knew about all the laws, and you all pretty much believed whatever he told you.

“Well, there’s got to be a law about rebellors getting their freedom if the Lord happens to die during the rebellion, right?” asks Sambor. This seems to make sense, but you’re not used to thinking about things so much.

“I guess so,” you say.

By now the fire has spread to the neighboring houses. The wind is picking up and spreading the inferno rapidly around the town. Townspeople are running through the streets screaming. Some of them are on fire. The rabble is growing anxious.

“I think maybe we should disperse,” you say. “We’ll just assume we’re free until we hear otherwise. But we all need to get back to work in the fields first thing tomorrow. Wouldn’t want anyone suspecting we were involved in this.”

“Good idea,” says Sambor. He gives the orders for the rabble to disperse. The crowd grumbles but obeys. Some go back to the tavern. Most go home.

You go home. On your walk back you wonder if anyone will find out it was the peasants that started the fire. You hope not. Pretty much the whole town is burning down so you’ll be punished pretty harshly if they catch you.

You arrive home and your daughters are awake to greet you.

“Hello papá,” they say. “How was thy rebellion?”

“I don’t want to talk about it,” you say. You throw your torch and pitchfork on the floor and your daughters take them away to the shed to clean them. There’s a woman you don’t recognize sitting in your only chair. It’s your new wife.

“Hello dear,” she says.

“Hello new wife,” you say. She’s looking a bit ague-ish, but you’re too tired to worry about that right now. “I’m tired. See you in the morning.”

You cuddle into your stinking bed of straw and ox dung. It’s still three hours before you have to be up for work. A solid night’s sleep.

You pass the night in typical fashion, with dreams of picking turnips and digging holes, punctuated by your daughters’ wailing night terrors.

You awaken many hours before dawn. You roll over to kiss your new wife and find she has died in the night from an ague. You reckon you should have addressed that last night, but what’s done is done.

You call to your daughters, “Daughters, thy new mother hath died in the night from an ague. Dispose of her body in the typical way we dispose of our family members’ bodies whence they die in the night.”

“Yes, papá,” they say. Then they take her body away to the disposing place.

Time to get to work.

You head out to the fields.

You pick a turnip and put it in the basket.

You pick another turnip and put it in the basket.

What a crazy night, you think. Surely someone must have noticed that an angry rabble of peasants burned the entire village down. But so far so good.

At midmorning your basket fills with turnips, and you head over to the turnip cart to deposit them.

“Lo there! Turnipmonger!” G’bain calls to you from a distance. Two henchmen are following behind him and he approaches at a saunter from a half furlong away. You use this time to arrange the turnips in the cart in the manner that G’bain likes them, just in case he decides to do a midmorning inspection.

“G’day, m’lord,” you say.

“I don’t need peasants telling me the quality of the day in which we are present, but since thou mentions it, ‘tis actually a rather unfortunate day,” says G’bain.

Uh oh, you think. He knows. You and the rest of the rebels are done for.

“The entire village burned down last night,” he says. “Apparently one of the Lord’s servants knocked over a candle and the fire spread all ‘round. Servants are so clumsy. Almost as clumsy as you filthy peasants.”

“Most unfortunate, m’lord,” you say.

“Yea, whatever. Save me the feigned condolences,” says G’bain. “Anyway, lots of people died and the Lord’s manor burned down. Luckily, he was out of town on business and doesn’t know yet.”

Whoops. Turns out he wasn’t in there after all.

“All the carpenters also died in the fire, and we need to rebuild the Lord’s house before he returns, or else we’re all in trouble. Peasants especially. So congratulations, thou art getting a promotion. Thou art a carpenter now. Thy work starts at once.”

A carpenter! This is by far the biggest and only promotion of your life.

“Thank ye, m’lord! I shall not disappoint,” you say.

“Oh great, I made a peasant happy and feel all warm inside,” says G’bain. You are not familiar with the concept of sarcasm and G’bain’s words make you feel warm inside, too. “Just go, like, get a hammer and some nails or whatever and make sure the Lord’s house is built again before he returns in a fortnight.”

“Yes, m’lord,” you say. “I shall be the most loyal carpenter this village hath e’er seen!”

“Sure you will,” says G’bain.

You’ve never built a house before and aren’t really sure what a hammer is, but you’ll figure those things out in due course. This newfound social mobility has filled you with a joy you haven’t known since the day you picked your first turnip at age three. This is a kind and just world indeed, and you feel bad for ever stooping so low as to rebel against it.

You start walking towards town to begin your carpenter work, whatever it may be. On your way, you cross paths with Dugo, Bogumil, Chleb, and even Sambor, all heading the same direction. You walk five abreast down the dusty road.

“I’m a carpenter now!” you tell them.

“Ya’ don’t say?” says Sambor. “I’m a mason!”

“Wondrous! I’m a priest!” says Dugo.

“I’m a schoolteacher!” says Bogumil. It seems the fire has killed most of the skilled laborers and educated folks in town, and new careers are being handed out all around.

“What’s a ‘school?’” you ask.

“I have no idea!” he says.

All are in high spirits except Chleb, who seems dispirited.

“What’s the matter, Chleb?” you say. “What job did they give thee? Butcher, baker, wizard stick maker?”

“Someone told G’bain they saw me in town last night so I’m going to be executed,” says Chleb.

“Oh, that sucks,” you say. Especially since he was the only one among you that wasn’t there. “Sorry.”

Can’t just have the village burn down without someone being executed, you guess.

“Such is life,” says Chleb.

“Such is life.”

The five of you continue walking towards town. The air is crisp and pleasant. Crisper and pleasanter than it’s ever been, you reckon. You walk towards town, where new and promising (except for Chleb) futures await.

Congratulations! You’re a carpenter now! Better go figure out how to use a hammer.

The End.

Leave a Letter for the Lord

“She be telling the truth,” you say. “The Lord really did go into town and is not home.”

It’s a tough break after all the hard work you did to put the rebellion together, but you can’t really have a rebellion when the Lord is out of town on business.

“Well, what d’ya s’ppose we do, then?” says Sambor.

“I say we leave a letter for the Lord. It’ll say we’ll return in a fortnight to resume the rebellion, and that he darned well better give us our freedom at that time,” you say. “Who’s got a pen?”

“What’s a pen?” asks Sambor. That’s a good question. You don’t know either. Asking for one just seemed the natural thing to do when trying to compose a letter.

“I don’t know, but that raises a good point,” you say. “None of us knows how to read or write, so we need to hire a scribe.”

“A scribe!” cries Dugo. “But none of us can afford a scribe. Chleb, you know some letters, dontchya?”

“I know a few, yea,” says Chleb.

“Great!” says Sambor. “Then Chleb will be our scribe. What scribing tools do you require, Chleb?”

“I suppose a sheet of parchment, something sharp to write with, and a quantity of dark liquid shall suffice,” says Chleb. “But I’ve only done it once or twice so I may be forgetting something.”

“It’ll have to do,” says Sambor. He dispatches some of the other peasants to retrieve the writing materials. They return some time later with a patch of cloth, a rusty old nail, and a pint of ox blood.

“How’s that?” you ask Chleb. “Will these materials suffice for writing the letter?”

“I can make it work,” he says. You suddenly see a change come over Chleb as he takes up his writing materials. He looks intelligent and confident as he dips the old nail in the ox blood. Bogumil bends over and Chleb aligns the letter smartly on his back. He no longer looks like a peasant, but like a true scribe, learned and wise. “What should the letter say?”

“It needs to start with a formal greeting, I know that much,” says Bogumil. “Something like, ‘M’humble Lordship’ or ‘Oye, Lord Guy’ or some such.”

“Yea,” you say. “Start it, ‘To Our Humble Lordship the Lord Guy.’ That sounds right. Then it can go on, ‘Twas upon the eve of the half moon whence the honorable peasants of this fief fell upon thine house demanding...’”

“Whoa whoa whoa,” says Chleb. “You’re goin’ way too fast. I only know like nine letters and this rusty nail-ox blood combo doth not write too smoothly.”

“Okay, okay. Let’s keep it simple,” you say. “How about, ‘Oye Lord, We people of the land do stand together on this night...’”

“How about I just write ‘Freedom?’” says Chleb. “I think I know that one.”

“Sure,” you say. Short and sweet. Chleb knows how to get the point across.

Chleb gets to work. It takes him twenty minutes of intense concentration to get the letters just right. The rest of the rabble is tense as they look on in silence. Finally, Chleb pulls the letter from Bogumil’s back, blows on it a few times to dry the ox blood, and holds it aloft.

“There,” he says. “There be our letter to the Lord demanding freedom. What do ye think?”

You look closer at the letter. It looks like a bunch of random blotches of blood to you, but you’re no expert on these things.

“Looks great,” you say.

“Yea, well done, Chleb,” says Sambor. “Now, let’s tie it to a brick and throw it through the window at the Lord’s wife.”

“I thought she said we could just bring it to her,” says Dugo.

“Nay,” says Sambor. “We’re doing this rebellion in style. Bricks through windows, that’s how freemen deliver their letters.”

Somebody brings over a brick and you tie the letter to it. With a mighty heave you throw it through the window from which the Lady previously appeared. It is well thrown and falls into the room. You wait a minute or two for a response from the Lady, but hear none. She must be asleep, but she’ll find it in the morning.

“I suppose ‘tis done then,” says Sambor.

“I suppose ‘tis,” you say.

Sambor gives the orders and the rabble disperses. Now it’s a matter of waiting. It will be a fortnight before the Lord returns, and everyone will return to normal life until that time. You walk home, feeling good. For the first time in your life you feel like you’ve stood up to the powers that be. You get a sense that good things lie ahead.

You return home and try to ignore your daughters who are asking about dinner or some such nonsense. You go to sleep and dream sweet dreams of picking turnips as a free man, with no lords or ladies or G’bain to worry about. Well, G’bain will probably still be around, but no lords or ladies.

The days pass in the typical manner, long hours of painful toil punctuated by brief moments of drunkenness and an occasional lashing. Things seem so normal that you almost forget about that fateful night before the Lord’s house. But one day, as you’re in the field picking turnips, you hear G’bain call to you.

“Lo there! Peasant!” he says. “Come hither and lend me thine lowborne ears.”

You do as he says and walk across the farm to him. He’s accompanied by two henchmen. He reaches into his man-pouch and pulls forth what appears to be a patch of cloth. He holds it in front of your face.

“Knowest thee what this says?” he asks.

You look closer, but it seems to be an ordinary piece of cloth smeared with blood.

“Nay m’Lord, I don’t believe I do. And anyway, I know not how to read,” you say. “It appears to be an ordinary piece of cloth smeared in blood.”

“Well, thy knack for observation be keen, for that is exactly what it is,” says G’bain. “It appears some peasants a fortnight hence took it upon themselves to storm the Lord’s house and throw a brick through the window of his wife’s bedroom. The brick struck her upon the brow and killed her instantly.” Oops. “The Lord is not all that upset over it, but he did demand the head of whoever threw the brick. This cloth was found tied to the brick and no one can determine what it means.

“The smudges of blood seem to approximate letters, but are otherwise total gibberish. This word appears to be a misspelling of ‘geese’ with an upside-down ‘g’, but other than that it is totally

incomprehensible. We thought maybe ye could help us decipher it so we could behead whoever threw it. Perhaps there is a gang of rebels who call themselves “The Geese?” he says. You look at the cloth again and shrug your shoulders. “Well, if this letter is completely incomprehensible to thee, methinks ‘twas just standard drunken peasant revelry killed the Lord’s wife.”

G’bain looks at the letter himself, then sighs and returns it to his man-pouch.

“Oh well, mineself was hoping to find the perpetrators of some grand plot demanding freedom or something, but I guess I shall just have to pick a few peasants at random to torture,” he says. “Thank ye for nothing.”

G’bain scoffs, then turns on his heels and departs.

So the whole letter idea didn’t work, but that certainly could have gone worse. Thankfully, the Lord isn’t too upset that you killed his wife with a brick, and they don’t seem to suspect anyone’s involvement in the rebellion, or even that there was a rebellion at all. Someone else will be tortured at random, but you seem to have escaped unscathed.

When the day’s work is done, you head to the tavern to discuss it with your fellow peasants. You sit down at a table at Ye Threadbare Coif with Dugo, Bogumil, and Chleb. Chleb’s face is pretty badly beaten, and he appears to have some broken ribs.

“G’bain tortured me at random today as punishment for the brick that killed the Lord’s wife,” he says. “I don’t think he suspects we were involved in the rebellion, though. So I suppose things could have been worse.”

At least Chleb is a good sport about it. No need to tell him G’bain approached you about the letter and kill the mood.

“Aye,” says Dugo.

“So what about this freedom business?” asks Bogumil. “Do we rebel again? Or maybe send another letter?”

“I don’t know,” you say. “I’m pretty tired.”

“Yea, me too,” says Chleb. “And they broke my writing hand today, so I won’t be able to write for a while.” He holds up his hand to show you. “Broke” is an understatement. It’s completely mangled, but honestly you’re not convinced that Chleb really knew how to write in the first place.

“Back to life as usual, I guess,” you say. “At least for a while.”

The rest of the group agrees. Being a peasant is hard – and painful, and dirty, and exhausting, and sad, and belittling, and borderline inhuman at times, and it doesn’t pay much or really anything – but other than that it’s not too bad.

So, like you’ve done pretty much every day of your life up to this point, you get stumbling drunk with your friends then head home to get ready for work the next day. You don’t have your freedom, but you’re still a peasant, and a darn good one at that. And that’s something to be proud of.

You live a short and forgettable life as a peasant then die. But all things considered, it could have been worse.

The End.

As a Matter of Fact, We *Were* Starting a Rebellion Demanding Freedom

“Halt there, turnipmonger!” shouts G’bain. “Where goes thee at the wee hours of the noct on a work night? Not off to start a rebellion demanding freedom are thee?”

“As a matter of fact,” you say, “we *were* off to start a rebellion demanding freedom.”

Just as the words leave your lips you realize your mistake, but it’s too late.

“Okay, well, that was easy,” says G’bain. “So, like, obviously you’re gonna be tortured and killed and stuff, but, like, give me all the names of your fellow rebels so we can torture and kill them, too.”

Two hulky henchmen emerge from the hedge and apprehend you.

[“I shall take their names to my grave!” Go to page 24.](#)

[“Okay, their names are...” Go to page 27.](#)

I Shall Take Their Names to My Grave!

“I shall take their names to my grave!” you shout.

“I mean, probably not, because we’re going to torture you pretty bad and everyone cracks eventually,” says G’bain. “But go ahead and think that if you want.”

One of the henchmen hits you over the head and you’re knocked unconscious.

When you awake you’re lying in ankle-deep water at the bottom of what seems to be a deep well. It smells of mold and death and is freezing cold. It is very dark, but there’s just enough light to make out two figures seated next to you, and another lying face down in the water on the other side.

“Lo! Who goes there?” you say to the two figures.

“Hark, my friend ——!” says one of the voices. “We thought you were dead. It’s Dugo and Bogumil. We’re all in The Pit. G’bain threw us down here when he found out it was us who planned the rebellion.”

The Pit is one of G’bain’s favorite places to throw those condemned to death. It’s reserved only for criminals of the worst type, like rebels and witches and Frøenchmen. It’s used for non-capital punishment sometimes as well. He’ll often throw prisoners in The Pit for a few days or weeks as a form of leisurely entertainment, although not so much recently due to a number of human resources complaints.

“But how did he find out?” you say.

“Sambor was drunk and told him,” says Bogumil. “Gave up all our names, the bastard. But I can’t really blame him, I guess. Everyone knows he always tries to start a rebellion when he’s drunk, so it would’ve come back on him eventually.”

“Also got us out of being tortured,” says Dugo. “Since they knew it was us, they just threw us down here to die instead.”

“What about Chleb?” you ask.

“That’s him over there,” says Dugo. He points at the body lying face down in the fetid water. “Landed on his head when they threw us down here and died.”

“Ouch,” you say.

“Such is life,” says Dugo.

“Such is life,” you say.

“So, what do we do?” asks Bogumil.

Good question. What is there to do at the bottom of a horrid pit in which you’ve all been cast to die?

“We could tell a story,” you say.

“That sounds fun,” says Bogumil. “Anybody know any stories?”

“I know the one about the peasant who picked turnips his whole life then died,” says Dugo. “But everyone knows that one.”

“Yeah, and it’s too sad for our current circumstances,” you say. “It’ll make me nostalgic for picking turnips.”

That was the only story you knew, too.

“I guess we’ll just have to wait and hope things turn out all right,” you say.

The hours and days pass while Bogumil, Dugo, and you sit in The Pit and talk about good times picking turnips and getting drunk. The company of friends keeps you in good spirits despite your dire situation. Even when the rains come and fill The Pit to waist height in water, so that Chleb's body becomes bloated and floats about, the three of you remain positive.

Then one day – you estimate about four days into your captivity based on how famished and ill you are – a voice calls from above.

“Oye, ye filthy peasants!” It’s G’bain! “Ye wretched bastards still alive down there, are ye?”

“Yea, m’lord!” Your throat is parched and your voice is weak from starvation and the cold, but you manage to call out so that he hears you.

“Well, thy sentence ist complete and ‘tis time for thee to get back to work,” says G’bain. “We’re throwing down a rope ladder. Grab ahold so we may pull ye up.”

‘Tis a miracle! Just as you think things couldn’t get any better, Chleb awakens as well! It turns out he wasn’t dead at all, but just unconscious and almost dead. He opens his eyes and looks around groggily.

“G’morrow, m’fellows,” he says. “Wherefore are we? I feel awful.”

“Oh Chleb!” you say. “We’ve been thrown in The Pit by G’bain. We thought you were dead, and that we were soon to follow. But now our stay in The Pit is over and we shall trod upon the golden turnip fields once more!”

A smile comes across Chleb’s face.

“That’s nice, I guess,” he says.

It’s good to see him smile after four days of watching his limp bloated body float around in the muck. It seems impossible that he’s still alive, seeing as he was lying face down in the water for multiple days. But peasants are a hardy lot.

The rope ladder is thrown down. It strikes Chleb upon the head and he dies.

“No! Chleb!” you yell.

“Such is life,” says Bogumil.

No point in lingering. You decide you must escape The Pit, leaving Chleb behind. It takes all the strength you can muster to climb the rope ladder. Rung by rung you struggle to the top, your limbs burning and lungs heaving. When you reach the top you collapse on the ground before G’bain’s feet, the hot sun shining upon your face and nearly blinding you after many days in the dark.

“Ugh, ye peasants are so dramatic,” says G’bain. “*Ooh, poor me, I’ve been thrown in The Pit for four days without food or water.*’ Thou shalt find no pity from me. Nevertheless, ‘tis thy lucky day. That scoundrel Sambor started another rebellion yesterday and we were forced to crush it violently. Now we’re short on peasants and need all the free labor we can get. So congratulations, thou art peasants again.”

You look to your left and right as you lie on the ground in the warm noon sun. Bogumil and Dugo have collapsed beside you, and they smile back. You’ve made it through some trying times together, and you’re still going.

“Ok, enough with that sentimental ox dung,” says G’bain. “Ye have five minutes to eat a spoonful of hoof stew and drink a pint of ale to regain thy strength, then it’s back to work with ye. I expect full turnip carts come sundown.”

If there's one thing you know how to do, it's how to fill a turnip cart.
Challenge accepted.

You return to life as a peasant, and it's about as good a life as a peasant can live. Which is to say, it's terrible. But it's better than dying in The Pit. Who knows, maybe you'll even start another rebellion someday. Although that's unlikely because G'bain shall have his eye on you for the rest of your short pathetic life.

The End.

Ok, Their Names Are...

You proceed to divulge the names of all the peasants involved in the rebellion to G'bain. You feel kind of bad about this, but it will probably make the torture you receive as punishment a little more bearable.

"Drat! Sambor! I should have known that knave would be the ringleader," says G'bain. "That scoundrel is always stirring up trouble amongst the fishmongers."

G'bain pulls a notepad from his man-pouch and scribbles something down. Then he gives orders to one of his henchmen, who quickly departs.

"'Twas wise of thee to give up thy co-conspirators," says G'bain. "'Tis better for everyone when we catch these things early. Now, if ye don't mind, my henchman Ghilwaith here will take thee away to be tortured."

Ghilwaith is a hulking brute with massive hands and a patch over one eye. He grabs you by the back of the collar and drags you away to a dungeon somewhere. The torture lasts a day or two, but it's all pretty standard stuff. Definitely would have been worse if they caught you later in the rebellion, or if you didn't give up your friends' names. After the last hot-poker-in-the-anus session, Ghilwaith gives you your clothes back.

"Okay, all done here," he says. "Thanks for being a good sport about it. I always feel bad about torturing you peasants, because your lives suck so bad already. But, hey, gotta pay the bills somehow, am I right?"

He throws you outside into an alley with your clothes in your hands then says goodbye. You get dressed slowly. Your body hurts from all the torture, but it's not too much worse than the normal pain you feel from toiling all day everyday. You walk home to find your daughters sweeping the floor and looking all sad like they always do.

"Oh, papá!" they say. "Wherefore hast thou been? We were worried thou might have perished."

"I was getting tortured," you say.

"Oh, how awful!" they say.

"It wasn't too bad," you say. "Bring me a fresh tunic. I'm going to the bar."

They do as you say, and you change into your other tunic and head to your favorite tavern, Ye Threadbare Coif. Your friends Dugo and Bogumil are already there, but no sign of Chleb. You order an ale and sit down with them.

"Hark," you say.

"Hark."

"How're you guys feeling?" you say. They also look like they've been tortured, about the same amount as you.

"Not too bad," says Bogumil. "Got tortured for plotting the rebellion and such, but it could have been worse."

"Yea, same," says Dugo. "And I have to admit, I'm really sorry, lads. When G'bain came to question me about the rebellion, I gave your names up instantly."

What a relief! You're not the only one who snitched.

“Really? I gave your names up too,” you say. “Sorry about that.”

“So did I,” says Bogumil. “So I guess we’re all even.”

“I’ll drink to that,” you say. You all drink to that.

“By the way,” you say, “where’s Chleb?”

Chleb would never miss a chance to get drunk after a torture session.

“Fie. He didn’t give our names up so they killed him,” says Dugo. “Probably for the best. He never did enjoy torture much, anyway.”

“Too bad,” you say. “I would’ve liked to have another ale with him.”

“Such is life,” says Bogumil.

The three of you proceed to get drunk. Sambor is there, too, drunk as usual. But for once he’s not trying to start a rebellion. Probably just tired from the torture.

You all admit it’s been a long day and decide to turn in early.

“Plenty of work to do tomorrow,” says Bogumil, as you shake hands before parting ways. And there *is* plenty of work to do tomorrow. There is *always* plenty of work.

“Yea,” you say. “And I need to find a new wife.”

You return home and go to bed. Life continues as normal. You work, you get drunk...That’s pretty much it.

You find a new wife and get married a week later, but she dies of ague, too. Then you find another wife and she surprisingly doesn’t die of ague. You both live relatively long and happy lives as far as peasant lives go, which is to say they are not long or happy at all. But they’re something. Yea, they are something.

The End.

Demand Money

“Oh, that’s right. We’ll demand money,” says Sambor. “So we’ll get the mob together with our pitchforks and torches then march down to the Lord’s house demanding money. Sound like a plan?”

This is by far the most planning anyone at the table, including yourself, has ever done. Usually, you just wake up and toil until you can’t physically move anymore then fall asleep and repeat the next day. You don’t know what “money” is but it sounds like something you want, and the others seem excited about it. They say it’s sort of like the trinkets and turnips and such that you give to the innkeeper in exchange for ale. You agree the plan sounds good.

Everyone at the table raises a mug and toasts, “To Money!”

The leaders of the rebellion depart the tavern to get their pitchforks and torches and to gather the other peasants from nearby hovels.

It is dark now and you begin walking home alone. As you draw within a furlong of your hovel, G’bain suddenly appears from behind a hedge and orders you to halt.

“Halt there, turnipmonger!” he shouts. You shuffle nervously and hope he doesn’t notice in the darkness. “Where goes thee at the wee hours of the noct on a work night?” Every night is a work night. “Not off to start a rebellion demanding money are thee?”

[“Nay, M’Lord, just drunk and stupid because I’m a peasant.” Go to page 30.](#)

[“As a matter of fact...” Go to page 39.](#)

Nay, M'Lord, Just Drunk and Stupid Because I'm a Peasant

“Halt there, turnipmonger!” shouts G'bain. “Where goes thee at the wee hours of the noct on a work night? Not off to start a rebellion demanding money are thee?”

“Nay, m'lord, just drunk and stupid because I'm a peasant,” you say. “And I hardly even know what money is, anyway.”

“Hmm, indeed. I forgot we don't pay you idiots anything,” he says. “Peasants are so stupid and you reek of stale mead. Get thy filthy self out of my sight. I've been hiding behind this hedge all night, surprising peasants and ordering them to halt, and I don't want thee to give away my location. Be gone with ye!”

You hurry away and G'bain disappears behind the hedge. That was close. Does he do that every night? G'bain is a cruel and sinister fellow, but you have to admire his persistence.

You finally arrive at home to get your torch and pitchfork. Your children are sweeping the floor and doing other monotonous chores because fun hasn't been invented yet, and peasants wouldn't be allowed to have it if it had.

“Hello, papá,” they say. “Have we food upon which to sup this eve?”

“Nay, and stop being so spoilt as to expect food every eve,” you say. “Although I may be coming into some money soon, so our fortunes may change. We're starting a rebellion demanding money, and we very well might be rich by sunrise. But until then, go grab me my torch and pitchfork then get back to sweeping.”

“Yes, papá,” they say. They bring you your torch and pitchfork. “If we acquire some monies, wilt thou buy us a goat? I've always wanted a goat.”

“M'dear, if this rebellion succeeds, I'll buy thee *two* goats,” you say. Their faces light up at the thought. The possibility of living out the rest of your lives in luxury with not just one, but two goats, is a comforting thought.

But for now there's rebelling to do. You set off into the night with your torch and pitchfork. You reflect that you never explicitly told your daughters you love them, but you figure the promise of two goats got the point across just fine.

You meet Sambor and the rest of the rabble at the typical rebellion meetup spot. You rabble together down to the Lord's house, which is in the village square. It's a pretty solid rebelling crew and the odds he'll arbitrarily decide to give you all money seem promising.

The rabble gathers in the square outside the Lord's house. Sambor faces the facade and shouts forth, “Come thee down, m'lord, for we be rebellin' and demand ye give us money!”

“Money!” the crowd cheers in unison.

Some time passes without a response from the Lord, and the crowd grows anxious. Sambor shouts again, “Hark! Ye noble coward, come thee hither and give us money or else we'll burn thy house to the ground!”

Still no response. A few peasants toss potatoes at the house in annoyance.

After a few dozen potatoes, a candlelight appears in the upstairs window. A fair lady leans her head out and says, “Good eve, lowly peasant filth. I am the Lord's wife, the Lady. I understand thou

art rebelling and that 'tis money thou demands. The Lord is currently out of town on business, but I can make such arrangements in his stead. Name thy price.”

Sambor pulls you aside. Bogumil and Dugo emerge from the crowd as well and join you. Chleb didn't come because he was too busy mourning his dead wife or some other lame excuse.

“I'm gonna be honest with ye fellas, I don't know anything about money,” says Sambor. “How much is a lot? 10 golden coins? 20 golden coins?”

“Do they even make golden coins?” asks Dugo. “I've never seen one.”

“What even is our system of currency?” says Bogumil.

Everyone is confused. They look to you for guidance.

[Demand ten Golden Coins. Go to Page 32.](#)

[Demand ten million Golden Coins. Go to Page 34.](#)

Demand Ten Golden Coins

“Don’t worry, fellas,” you say. “Turns out I know a thing or two about money.”

You don’t.

“We should demand ten golden coins,” you say. “That’s enough to pay for drinks at Ye Threadbare Coif for everyone in the rebellion for at least a month, if not two. But it’s low enough that the Lord probably won’t even punish us for taking it. ‘Tis a win-win.”

“Yea, but I thought the whole point of this rebellion was that we get rich and don’t have to be filthy peasants anymore?” says Bogumil.

“Shut up, Bogumil!” says Sambor. “We’ll always be filthy peasants, and here we have an opportunity to get free drinks for a month. I say we take it.”

“I concur,” says Dugo.

Bogumil agrees reluctantly. Sambor approaches the house once again and shouts up to the window.

“Oye, Lord Lady, we’ve decided on our price!” he says. The Lady comes to the window.

“Well, then, say it aloud,” she yells down.

“We demand thou gives us ten golden coins, and make haste!”

“Oh, that’s it?” a smirk briefly crosses her face, but she comports herself. “Well, just wait right there a minute.”

She disappears into the house for a moment, then returns with a leather satchel.

“Within this satchel are ten golden coins,” she says. “Take them and let this be an end to thy rebellion. Don’t spend it all in one place.”

“Don’t tell us how to spend our newfound riches, wench,” Sambor yells up to the window. “We’ll spend it all at the tavern if we see fit.”

“Whatever,” she says. “‘Twas just a figure of speech.”

“A what?” Sambor yells back up.

“Just shut up, take the money, and be gone with ye,” she says. “Mewants to return to bed.”

She tosses the satchel down and Sambor catches it. He pours the coins out, and you all try to count them to make sure everything is there. It is increasingly obvious that nobody knows how to count.

“Looks good, I guess,” says Sambor. Then he turns to address the rabble. “Okay, lads, rebellion’s over. Back to the tavern. Drinks on me!”

The crowd lets out a loud cheer and they rush back to Ye Threadbare Coif. It’s a rowdy celebration and everyone’s spirits are generally high, as far as peasants’ spirits go. Even Chleb comes down to the tavern to celebrate. Turns out his daughters all got jobs as servants in some lord’s castle, and his sons were all levied into the army, so he doesn’t have to waste his time taking care of them anymore.

“They grow up so fast,” says Chleb. “Seems like yesterday my eldest was just turning eleven.”

“That was two days ago,” Bogumil says. “Remember, your wife threw a birthday party for it. You were quite drunk though, and I think G’bain had given you a pretty good beating that morning so you were pretty out of it.”

“Oh yeah, that’s right,” says Chleb. “Whatever happened to my wife, anyway? I haven’t seen her all day.”

“She’s dead, Chleb,” you tell him. “She was killed by an arrow yesterday. You just told me this like five hours ago.”

“Oh, that’s right,” says Chleb. A sad look comes across his face. “How time flies.”

You can tell Chleb needs a drink. “Here, buddy. Ale’s on the house.” You slide him an ale, and it lifts his spirits considerably.

After the celebration life generally returns to normal, except that everyone drinks for free every night on account of the golden coins. Your calculations were correct. Those ten golden coins are enough to pay for everyone’s drinks for a month.

And a wonderful month it is, all things considered.

Congratulations! The rebellion earned you free drinks for a month! You’re still a peasant and otherwise your life still sucks though.

The End.

Demand Ten Million Golden Coins

“Don’t worry, fellas,” you say. “Turns out I know a thing or two about money.”

You lied.

“We should demand ten million golden coins,” you say. “Then we’ll all be rich enough to buy our own fiefs and noble titles and become lords and have our own peasants to do our work for us.”

The other peasants consider this.

“That sounds great and all, but do you think they’d actually give us that many coins?” asks Bogumil. “I mean, I don’t know how to count past twenty, but ten million sounds like it’s almost twice that.”

“It’s a lot more than that, Bogumil, my friend,” you say.

“Ok, I like the idea,” says Sambor. “Ten million golden coins it is.”

Since nobody else even has any concept of the scale of what you’re proposing, they ask you to explain your demands to the Lord’s wife.

“M’Lady,” you shout up to her window. “Here be our demands: thou shalt give us ten million golden coins, and in exchange we shall end this rebellion without burning the town down and murdering thee.”

Her response does not come immediately, and it appears she needs time to think about this.

“Thou dost realize ten million golden coins is a lofty sum?” she says. “I will take some time for the Lord to collect such a bounty. But if thou disperses thy rebellion until he returns home from business, I will discuss the matter with him and attempt to meet thy demands. If the answer be nay, then thou art free to murder us and burn the town down. But if the answer be yea, then we shall pay thy ransom and let thy rebellion come to an end.”

Sounds fair enough.

“Very well, Lady Lord,” you say. “Our rebellion shall disperse for the coming fortnight until thy husband returns.”

Sambor gives the orders and all of the peasants return home or to the tavern. Life continues as normal for some time, with long days of working the fields followed by long nights of getting stumbling drunk on stale ale at Ye Threadbare Coif. After about a fortnight, you’re depositing your turnip basket into your turnip cart one day when G’bain approaches.

“Oye, peasant filth!” he says. “The Lord is back in town and specifically asked to see thee. Mineself could not imagine why he would ever want the company of a disgusting turnipmonger, but orders are orders. Come along now.”

One of G’bain’s henchmen hits you upside the head with a shovel and knocks you unconscious. When you awaken you’re sitting on a fine velvet chair in front of a large fireplace. Your head aches but the fire feels nice. Seated by the fireplace is a dainty bald man clothed in flowing silken robes, poking at the embers with an iron spike.

“Oh, thou art awake,” he says. “Dost thou know who I am?”

You shake your head.

“I am the Lord,” he says. “I have recently returned from a business trip, and my loving wife hath informed me that a rabble of peasants hath demanded ten million golden coins lest they rebel and burn down the town.”

He stands up and walks towards you, hot poker still in hand. He sits down directly across from you on the sofa. You can see the tip of the poker is red hot.

“‘Now,’ thought I, ‘just what kind of peasant is wise enough to know about such large numbers?’” he says. “Methinks such a fellow could be quite a nuisance were he to fall afoul of our just and fair feudal law. But, on the contrary, in the right hands, methinks such a fellow could be of great use to me. And on top of that he could make quite a pretty penny.

“Therefore, what I propose is thou comes and works for me as a moneycounter. Thou shalt live in the town and work in my moneycounting facility. I shall pay thee an ample wage and thou shalt become a rich and respectable townsman. In return, all I ask is that thou orders thy fellow peasants to disband the rebellion.

“What say ye? Wilt thou come and work for me, thy Lord, as my moneycounter?”

[Go to work for the Lord. Go to page 36.](#)

[Nay, ‘tis a peasant’s life for me. Go to page 38.](#)

Go to Work for the Lord

“Very well,” you say. “I shall come and work as thy lordly moneycounter.”

“Most excellent,” says the Lord. “You shan’t regret your decision.”

By this point everyone has forgotten about the rebellion, so you don’t even need to convince them to stand down. So you go to work counting the Lord’s money. And a lot of it there is. As the years go by, you become one of his best moneycounters and get rich beyond your wildest dreams. You own a respectable house in town, your daughters grow up and get married to respectable merchants (not gentlemen, because you’re still of peasant stock, after all), and you enjoy the finer things in life.

One evening, as you’re closing up the moneycounting shop, you hear a rabble outside. You open the shutters to find a mob of peasants with torches and pitchforks surrounding the building.

“Oy, ye filthy moneycounter! We know ye’s got money in there. Come now and toss it all out the window or we shall burn thy shop to the ground!” It’s Sambor leading a peasant rebellion. With him are Dugo, Bogumil, and Chleb.

“Sambor, my friend, is that you?” you call to him.

“I be no friend of thine,” says Sambor. “Give us the money and let’s be over with it.”

You only keep a relatively small amount of money in the shop at any one time, specifically to avoid problems such as this. And, anyway, it’s all insured. You meticulously count the satchels of coin you have on hand, record this for the insurance claim, then toss them all out the window.

“Okay, that’s everything,” you tell Sambor.

“Oh, that was easy,” he says. “I guess I just kind of expected that we would be burning the building down, and I don’t really have a plan for what to do now.”

Sambor is such an idiot, you think to yourself. But your old friends are with him, so you can’t leave them hanging. You know if you let them escape with the money the Lord will have his men hunt them down.

“This is what’s going to happen,” you begin. “In about an hour, some constables are going to come here to file a report. When I tell them the money was stolen by a mob of peasants, they’re going to go door-by-door throughout the fief and kidnap and torture anyone they suspect might have been involved until they get names. Once they have names, anyone involved will be executed and the Lord will get his money back.”

The mob seems disheartened by your analysis.

“But I don’t want that to happen,” you say. “So here’s what you’re going to do: Take the money and bury it in the woods out behind Ye Threadbare Coif. Then everyone go home and act like this rebellion never happened. When the constables come around, I’ll say there was a break in. Someone is going to have to take one for the team, so I’ll tell them it was Chleb who stole the money.”

“What? Why me?” Chleb complains.

“C’mon, Chleb. Be a team player,” Dugo says.

“Yeah, Chleb, don’t be such a coxcomb,” says Sambor.

“Okay, fine,” says Chleb. “But you guys owe me one.”

They do as you say, and the rebellion disperses. When the constables come around you tell them Chleb broke in and stole the money. The Lord decides to make an example of him, so they arrest him and hang him in the village square the next morning. You approach Dugo, Bogumil, and Sambor in the crowd at the execution.

“Hey guys,” you say. “Shame what happened to Chleb. I swear, I thought the Lord would just torture him or something.”

“Such is life. What brings you here, anyway, ye big shot moneycounter?” Bogumil asks.

“Oh, I got fired,” you say. “The Lord wasn’t happy that I didn’t sacrifice my life to protect his money. Now I’m a peasant again.”

“Oh. Welcome back, I guess,” says Dugo.

“Thanks,” you say. “Hey Sambor, you hid that money out back behind Ye Threadbare Coif, right?”

“Ye bet yer boy bosom I did,” Sambor says.

“Well then, let’s go and get us a drink,” you say. “For Chleb.” The four of you depart for the tavern and drink to Chleb’s memory. After a few rounds, Chleb walks in.

“Chleb!” you shout in excitement. “You’re not dead anymore!”

“Nay,” says Chleb. “I was hanging from the gallows there for a good while, but eventually the rope snapped. The crowd had all dispersed by that point, and there was no one around to notice. So I decided to come to the bar.”

You slide Chleb an ale. His neck is pretty crooked and probably broken in many places. But peasants are a hardy lot, and otherwise he seems fine.

You figure the money hidden out back is enough to get the five of you free drinks for the rest of your short peasant lives. And it is.

You return to life as a peasant, using the Lord’s stolen money to pay for drinks for the rest of your short peasant life. You die slightly happier on account of this.

The End.

Nay, 'tis a Peasant's Life for Me

“Nay, 'tis a peasant's life for me,” you tell G'bain.

“Okay. Well, that's a terrible choice, not gonna lie,” says G'bain. “But I guess terrible choices are about what I'd expect from a peasant.”

G'bain pulls a roll of parchment from his man-pouch and begins reviewing it.

“I have here a list of various punishments,” he tells you. “Since I'm feeling generous, I'll let you pick. So go on then, and choose thy punishment.”

[Naked Ox Drag. Go to page 64.](#)

[Get sent to War. Go to page 66.](#)

As a Matter of Fact, We *Were* Starting a Rebellion Demanding Money

“Halt there, turnipmonger!” shouts G’bain. “Where goes thee at the wee hours of the noct on a work night? Not off to start a rebellion demanding money are thee?”

“As a matter of fact,” you say, “we *were* off to start a rebellion demanding money.”

Just as the words leave your lips you realize your mistake, but it’s too late.

“Okay, well, that was easy,” says G’bain. “Ye know, normally I would say ‘You know the drill’ then take you off to be tortured. Then I would make you confess all the names of your co-conspirators and torture them, too. But I’m feeling magnanimous tonight, and thy plan to rebel demanding money hath piqued mine interest.

“So I’ll tell you what: You cut me in on this deal, give me a little kickback of say a thousand golden coins if thy rebellion succeeds, and I’ll look the other way.”

G’bain’s two henchmen give you a “take the deal” look as he awaits your response. Torturing people is hard work. Probably they’ve already been henching for long hours today and want to get home without having to torture anyone else for the remainder of the night.

What do you do?

[Accept G’bain’s offer. Go to page 40.](#)

[Reject G’bain’s offer. Go to page 42.](#)

Accept G'bain's Offer

“Very well, G'bain. I accept thy offer,” you say.

“Oh, yay! I'm so happy!” G'bain says with excitement. “I just *love* extorting people.

“Here's what you need to do: When you and the other smelly peasants go down to the Lord's manor, throw a few potatoes at the window. The Lord is out of town right now, but the Lady is home, and she always wakes up when someone throws potatoes at the window. Are you following so far?”

You're not really following. This is way more information than you're used to processing, but you nod your head to indicate you're tracking.

“When she comes to the window, tell her that all the peasants on the fief are rebelling,” G'bain continues. “Demand that she gives you two thousand golden coins or else you'll burn the house down. Do you know what two thousand is?”

You don't. You nod your head to indicate you do.

“Two thousand is a lot, but it's not so much that the Lord will notice it's gone,” G'bain says. “The Lady loves her rest, so she'll surely have one of her servants bring you the coins so she can go back to sleep. She also imbibes prodigiously of fine wines, so chances are she won't even remember this tomorrow.

“After the servant brings you the coins, deposit half of them behind the hedge that I hide in every night. You know, the one I always pop out of to harass peasants when they're coming home from the tavern? Do you know how much half is?”

Man, he's asking way too many questions. You start to think maybe you should write all this down, but then you remember you don't know how to write. You nod again.

“Good, so you'll deposit half the coins behind my favorite hedge, then you are free to do whatever you want with the other half. Go buy ale or sheep or whatever you peasants are into these days,” G'bain says. “We shan't ever speak of this again. If anyone asks, this conversation never happened. Get to it then. The hour is getting late. If you wait too long, the Lady will be so passed out that no amount of potatoes will wake her.”

With that, G'bain departs. You go and join with the other peasants to tell them the plan. You can tell they don't really understand any of this “two thousand” or “half” business either, but they trust you.

The rebellion goes off without a hitch. You're really on your A-game out there. Just flowing. In the moment. Like you've done it a thousand times. The window potatoes wake the Lady, just like G'bain said. Then the servant brings you down a bunch of satchels of golden coins. You make a rough guess at what half is, and you're actually pretty close. Then you deposit G'bain's half behind his favorite hedge.

“What should we do with the rest of these coins?” Sambor asks you. “Our rebellions have never gotten this far before, so I don't really know what to do.”

The answer to that is obvious: free drinks for life at Ye Threadbare Coif.

It turns out a thousand golden coins is more than enough to pay for drinks for every peasant on the fief for the rest of your short, miserable lives. Congratulations! You've earned free drinks for life for the entire fief! You're otherwise still a peasant and life still sucks, though.

The End.

Reject G'bain's Offer

“Nay. I shall stay true to my friends. I reject thy offer,” you tell G'bain.

“Wow, you're an idiot,” says G'bain. “But you probably knew that already. Now that you've rejected my generous extortion offer, the only reasonable solution is to torture you or send you off to war. Since I am such a benevolent lordsman, I shall let thee choose.

“So go on now. Choose thy fate.”

[Naked Ox Drag. Go to page 64.](#)

[Go to War. Go to page 66.](#)

Demand Better Pitchforks

“Oh, that’s right. We’ll demand better pitchforks,” says Sambor. “So we’ll get the mob together with torches and our current low quality pitchforks then march down to the Lord’s house demanding better pitchforks. Sound like a plan?”

This is by far the most planning anyone at the table, including yourself, has ever done. Usually you just wake up and toil until you can’t physically move anymore then fall asleep and repeat the next day. Surely, when the Lord sees how worn and rusty your current pitchforks are he will gladly meet the rebellion’s demands. You agree the plan sounds good.

Everyone at the table raises a mug and toasts, “To Better Pitchforks!”

The leaders of the rebellion depart the tavern to get their old pitchforks and torches and to gather the other peasants from nearby hovels.

It is dark now and you begin walking home alone. As you draw within a furlong of your hovel, G’bain suddenly jumps out from behind a hedge and orders you to halt.

“Halt there, turnipmonger!” he shouts. You shuffle nervously and hope he doesn’t notice in the darkness. “Where goes thee at the wee hours of the noct on a work night?” Every night is a work night. “Not off to start a rebellion demanding better pitchforks, are thee?”

[“Nay, M’Lord, just drunk and stupid because I’m a peasant.” Go to page 44.](#)

[“As a matter of fact...”. Go to page 48.](#)

Nay M'Lord, Just Drunk and Stupid Because I'm a Peasant

“Not off to start a rebellion demanding better pitchforks, are thee?” G'bain asks.

“Nay, m'lord,” you say. “Just drunk and stupid because I'm a peasant.”

“Oh, well that's too bad,” says G'bain. “Because the Lord just bought like a thousand new pitchforks from a pitchfork merchant that was having a big blowout sale. We have a whole storehouse full of shiny new pitchforks, and I have no idea what to do with them. I advised the Lord that it was an impulsive purchase, but he never listens to me. He's always buying a thousand of something on a whim just because some merchant tells him 'tis a great deal. Last week it was yellow and blue checkered man-skirts. This week it was pitchforks. Then there was the time he bought a thousand wheels of cheese because the cheesemaster had a buy-999-wheels-of-cheese-get-one-free deal. What a mess that was! Have you ever smelled a storehouse filled with a thousand wheels of moldy cheese?”

“Alack, if all thy current pitchforks are satisfactory, I suppose I'll just have to dump these new ones in the river to make room in the storehouse for whatever the Lord buys a thousand of next week. If you decide you need a new pitchfork, make my job easier and go take one from the storehouse.”

In the back of your mind, you sense an opportunity presenting itself. But you can't quite put your finger on it.

“Run along then,” G'bain says. “I'm going back behind this hedge to harass the next peasant who walks by, and I want it to be a surprise.”

On the walk home, it hits you. The storehouse! Free pitchforks ripe for the taking! You run home, grab your old pitchfork and torch, then hurry to join the rest of the rebels.

“You look out of breath,” Sambor says as you join the others.

“I ran here as fast as I could,” you say.

“You did what?” he asks.

“Ran,” you say. “It's like walking, but faster.”

“Oh,” he says. “Why?”

“I'll tell thee why,” you say. “G'bain has a whole storehouse full of shiny new pitchforks. He's going to dump them in the river and said we can take as many as we want.”

The other peasants seem intrigued by the idea, but indecisive.

“Look, I'm all about new pitchforks, but what about the rebellion?” asks Sambor.

“Well, we don't really need to rebel anymore, since the only thing we were rebelling about was new pitchforks,” you say.

“I say we take the pitchforks,” Chleb says. “My current pitchfork sucks.”

You look at his pitchfork. It does suck pretty bad.

The rest of the rabble seems to agree that taking the pitchforks is the best course of action.

“Fine,” says Sambor. “But can we at least burn the storehouse down afterwards?”

“No!” you say.

“What if we make it look like it was an accident?” he says.

“Well...”

No. We're just taking the pitchforks. Go to page 46.

Fine. We'll burn down the storehouse. Go to page 47.

No. We're Just Taking the Pitchforks.

“No. We’re just taking the pitchforks,” you say. “We’re not burning down the storehouse. That’s totally unnecessary and it’ll only end up getting us all tortured after.”

“Fine,” says Sambor, “but see if I ever invite *you* on a rebellion again.”

Honestly, you are totally fine with not being invited on a rebellion again. Anyway, this isn’t the first time he has said this. Chances are Sambor will get drunk tomorrow and invite you on another rebellion.

Everyone rabbles over to the storehouse and you open it up. It’s a beautiful sight, fresh pitchforks as far as the eye can see. There’s just enough to go around, and everyone gets one. Not only are you happy about your new pitchfork, but it feels good to help G’bain clear out the storehouse. He seems to be under a lot of pressure lately. With the storehouse empty and new pitchforks in hand, all the peasants return home in high spirits.

The next day, you’re picking turnips out in the fields, as you do every day. You make eye contact with G’bain from a distance and nod. He nods back.

Respect.

Life returns to normal, and everyone is happy on account of their new pitchforks. There is a newfound respect between you and G’bain, although it is unlikely to last after you inevitably get drunk and rebel again next week.

The End.

Fine. We'll Burn Down the Storehouse.

“Fine. We'll burn down the storehouse,” you say. “But we have to make it look like it was an accident.”

“Sounds like a win-win to me!” Sambor exclaims.

The rabble rables over to the storehouse. When you open it up, it's a beautiful sight. Never before have you seen so many fresh pitchforks. There's plenty to go around. Once everyone has a brand new pitchfork, Sambor does the honors of lighting the storehouse on fire. It's a beautiful sight. You run your new pitchfork through your fingers while watching the flames roar skyward in the cool night air.

The next day G'bain approaches you while you're picking turnips.

“Hark! Peasant! Nice new pitchfork you have there,” he says.

“Thank you, m'lord,” you say.

“I was being sarcastic,” G'bain says. “Dude, seriously? I tell you about all these new pitchforks in the storehouse, then you go and stab me in the back by burning the place down?”

“But...”

“And before you even say, ‘But that was an accident,’ you idiots left like a hundred old pitchforks lying around the burnt-out storehouse.” Oops. Guess you forgot to hide the evidence. “Some of them even had thy names on them. Not cool. Not cool at all. This is why you peasants get a bad rap.”

“Sorry,” you say.

“Look, I am exhausted right now,” G'bain says. “Do you know how stressful it is to be the lordsman of this fief, keeping all you peasants in line whilst also keeping the Lord happy? Obviously, you must be tortured for this, but I don't even have the energy to torture you right now. So just go and, like, whip yourself fifty times with a cat-o-nine-tails or something, then report back to me once you've finished.”

Wow, this is the first time G'bain has delegated you the duty of torturing yourself. Maybe that means he's finally starting to trust you with important tasks. This could be a real turning point in the relationship. You don't want to let him down.

“Yes, m'lord,” you say. And you won't let him down.

You whip yourself fifty times like G'bain asked. When you report back to him, he is unsatisfied with the results and has one of his henchmen whip you fifty more times.

Then your life on the fief returns to normal, except that you have a new pitchfork, which was totally worth it.

The End.

As a Matter of Fact, We *Were* Starting a Rebellion Demanding Better Pitchforks

“Not off to start a rebellion demanding better pitchforks are thee?” says G’bain.

“As a matter of fact,” you say, “we *were* off to start a rebellion demanding better pitchforks.” You immediately realize your mistake. As a peasant, you’re so used to answering everything obediently that it just kind of slipped out.

“Oh, well, that was easy,” says G’bain. “Seriously, if you’re going to rebel, why wouldn’t you demand something less petty, like freedom or money? We literally have a whole pile of new pitchforks in the pitchfork storehouse and would have just given them to you if you asked.

“We would have whipped you first of course, for being so bold as to ask thy lord for something, but we eventually would have given them to you.”

“Oh,” you say.

G’bain pauses and thinks for a moment while you prepare for the worst. He doesn’t take kindly to rebellions. He’ll be happy you confessed to your involvement, so he probably won’t kill you, but you know there’s at least some torture in store.

“Ye know what? I don’t really feel like torturing anybody right now. And I loathe the thought of all those beautiful new pitchforks sitting in the pitchfork storehouse gathering dust,” says G’bain. “Follow me. I shall grant thy fellow peasants and thee thy wish for new pitchforks.”

You follow G’bain to the pitchfork storehouse. His henchmen throw open the doors to reveal hundreds of gleaming new pitchforks. You have never seen anything so beautiful in your entire life.

“Well, take thy pick,” he says.

You’re in a daze of ecstasy as you walk amongst the piles of flawless, shiny pitchforks. One pitchfork in particular seems to glow with a natural luminescence and draws you to it. You pick it up and feel as a peasant renewed. It’s balanced to precision. It’s ratio of shaft to tines is perfect.

“This is the one,” you say.

“Very well,” says G’bain. “I know I said I didn’t feel like torturing anybody, but I can’t just let thee get away unscathed. What do we say, ten lashings sound fair?”

“Sure,” you say, and you remove your tunic. One of G’bain’s henchmen gives you ten lashings and sends you on your way. On your way out, G’bain stops you.

“If any of ye other filthy rebels are looking for new pitchforks, send them my way,” he says. “They’re on sale right now for ten lashings a piece.”

You acknowledge the limited time offer and head back to meet up with the rest of the rebellion. You find them gathered with their torches and old pitchforks, waiting for you.

“Hey now, where’d you get that shiny new pitchfork?” Sambor asks you.

“G’bain has them on sale right now in the pitchfork storehouse,” you say. “Only ten lashings upon the back each.”

“Pretty good deal,” says Bogumil.

“Yeah,” says Dugo. “Why are we wastin’ our time with this rebellion when we have this once-in-a-lifetime chance at discount pitchforks?”

Chleb asks to take a look at your pitchfork. “I say, this must be the finest pitchfork I’ve ever laid my filthy peasant hands upon,” he says. “Guys, come check this thing out.”

The rest of the peasants gather around and admire your new pitchfork.

“I’m going to get me a new pitchfork,” one of them says. “At only ten lashings these things practically pay for themselves!”

“Verily, me too,” says another. One by one, all of the rebels depart to the pitchfork shed to get their new pitchforks. And that is it for the rebellion.

Life on the fief improves greatly in the ensuing days, with everyone enjoying their new pitchforks, and their backs only slightly torn up from the lashings. Drunken nights at Ye Threadbare Coif are livelier than ever, and even Sambor’s spirits are too high to foment rebellion. One night, you sit down at the table with Bogumil and Dugo, but there’s no sign of Chleb.

“Chleb’s dead,” says Bogumil. “Pitchfork accident. He got so excited working with his new pitchfork that he was running around the fief with it yelling ‘This is the BEST-PITCHFORK-EVER!’ Then he tripped on a rooster and his pitchfork stabbed him in the face.”

“Such is life,” says Dugo.

“At least if you’re gonna go, that’s the way to go,” you say.

You proceed to get drunk, looking forward to yet another wonderful day on the fief with your new pitchfork tomorrow.

Your peasant life continues as it always has, except that it is marginally better on account of your new pitchfork.

The End.

Nay, I Am a Servile Coward Who Is Loyal to My Liege

“Nay, I shall not rebel on this night,” you tell the table. “I am a servile coward who is loyal to my liege.”

“Ugh, no fun. The olde thee would have rebelled,” says Sambor, disappointed. “I guess I’ll just try again tomorrow.”

Sambor leaves the table without paying his tab and the four of you are forced to cover for him with an extra turnip each. You continue drinking for some time.

The night is getting late and there is a lot of work to do tomorrow, as there is every day. You bid farewell to Dugo, Bogumil, and Chleb and start the journey on foot back to your hovel. You are walking on the road that cuts across the open turnip fields when in the distance you see flickering lights moving towards you. As they draw closer you can hear the distinct sounds of a peasant rabble. They cross paths with you on the road, because it’s the only road. It turns out it’s Sambor leading a rebellion.

“Hark! My turnipmonging companion!” yells Sambor gaily. “I had a few drinks with the fishmongers, and we decided to rebel tonight. We’ve formed a mob and are heading down to the Lord’s manor to start the rebellion. Want to join us?”

[“Umm, no thanks.” Turn to page 51.](#)

[“Sure. Just let me grab my pitchfork.” Turn to page 52.](#)

Umm, no thanks

“Umm, no thanks,” you tell Sambor. “I think I’ll just go home to my daughters.”

“Suit thyself,” says Sambor. “Just don’t come whining to me when our rebellion succeeds and we’re enjoying the fruits of all the good things that always come after a violent rebellion.”

With that, the rebellion departs and you return home. Your daughters are sweeping the floor and there is a woman sitting in the only chair in your hovel.

“Good eve, dear,” the woman says to you. You notice she is holding a baby.

“Good eve,” you say. “Uhh, who are you?”

“I am thy new wife,” she says. “And I have already borne thee another child. A daughter.”

“Oh,” you say. “That’s nice.”

You’re pretty tired so you lie down on your bed of straw and ox dung to sleep. What a crazy day, you think to yourself. Working in the fields, getting drunk, almost joining a rebellion. And now you have a new wife and daughter. Things happen fast these days. You fade to sleep, pondering what new adventures await you on the morrow.

[A new adventure awaits. Turn to page 3.](#)

Sure. Just let me grab my pitchfork.

“Sure, I guess I’m down for a rebellion after all,” you tell Sambor. “Let me just grab my pitchfork.”

“Great!” Sambor says. “I knew you’d come around. You shan’t regret it. Nothing bad ever comes of a violent rebellion. But ye know, come to think of it, I’m a little thirsty. What do ye say we all head back to the tavern for a few drinks first.”

That sounds like a good idea. You’re thirsty, too. So the entire rebellion heads back to Ye Threadbare Coif for a few more flagons of ale.

You sit at the table with Sambor, Dugo, Bogumil, and Chleb, getting drunk and planning out the rebellion.

“So what are we going to demand?” you ask the table.

“What do ye mean?” Sambor asks.

“The rebellion. We need to demand something,” you say. “Otherwise, we’ll just go in there with our torches and pitchforks and burn the town down. Then tomorrow when they inevitably catch us and torture us we’ll have nothing to show for it.”

“Good point,” says Sambor. “I guess we hadn’t thought through that part.”

“Freedom would be nice,” says Dugo.

“Verily,” agrees Bogumil. “I’ve always wondered what freedom would be like. Although money would be nice, too.”

“Myself, I could use a new pitchfork,” says Chleb. “My current pitchfork has been in my family for generations, and it doesn’t pitch or fork as well as it used to.”

Sambor orders another round of drinks on Chleb’s tab, and the table ponders what the rebellion should demand. Nobody at the table has ever planned anything before, and they’re starting to get a little loopy from all the stale ale they’ve been drinking, so they turn to you for guidance.

“So,” says Sambor. “What do ye think? What should we demand?”

[Demand Freedom. Turn to page 14.](#)

[Demand Money. Turn to page 29.](#)

[Demand Better Pitchforks. Turn to page 43.](#)

Send me to The Pit!

“Wow, okay. I’m gonna be honest with you, that’s a terrible choice and you are most definitely going to die,” says G’bain. “Are you sure you don’t want to reconsider? Like, at this point you’re definitely going to be tortured, but I’m willing to do something a little less extreme like a hundred lashings with a cat o’ nine tails or dragging you behind a horse for a couple hours or something.”

“Nay, send me to The Pit!” you yell in defiance.

“Very well,” says G’bain. “I hate to see a perfectly useful peasant go to waste, but at least this should have a solid deterrent effect on any other potential recusants.”

G’bain pulls some papers from his man-pouch and hands them in your direction. “Wouldst thou mind signing these forms consenting to anything and everything that happens to thee in The Pit? We’re sending thee there anyway, but the process is a whole lot easier if you just sign them.”

You don’t have a pen, don’t even know what a pen is, and you definitely don’t know how to write.

“Oh, that’s right. Thou art a peasant,” says G’bain. He brings forth a small tray from his man-pouch and flips open the lid. “Just stick thy thumb in this ink then stamp it here on the paper.”

[Do as G’bain says. Go to page 54.](#)

[Shout, “Look out, a fawn!” Then turn and run away. Go to page 55.](#)

Do as G'bain Says

“Oh, that’s right. Thou art a peasant,” says G'bain. He brings forth a small tray from his man-pouch and flips open the lid. “Just stick thy thumb in this ink then stamp it here on the paper.”

You do as he asks. You stick your thumb in the ink then stamp it on the papers. Upon reflection, you realize this was probably stupid of you, seeing as you just consented to being tortured and killed in a slow and horrifying way. But as a peasant you’re so used to doing what people tell you instinctively and without hesitation that it didn’t occur to you until just now.

“Well then, that settles it,” says G'bain. “If thou wouldn’t mind removing thy clothes, we shall begin parading thee through the town in shame momentarily.”

You begin removing your clothes, which are pretty much just a shoddy tunic and a pair of hose. As you remove your hose you remember you have a small, sharp gardening spade in your pocket that you use for picking especially troublesome turnips. Thrust smartly, you think, you can strike a fatal blow upon G'bain and make your escape. What do you do?

[Stab G'bain with the gardening spade. Go to page 56.](#)

[Keep taking your clothes off in shame. Go to page 60.](#)

Shout, “Look out, a fawn!” Then turn and run away.

“Look out! A fawn!” You shout.

G’bain lets out a high-pitched scream, then covers his face with his hands and drops to the ground in the fetal position. Apparently, he is afraid of fawns. His pathetic cowering gives you ample opportunity to escape back to your hovel.

Life returns to normal for some days and you hear nothing from G’bain or his henchmen. Then one evening, as you’re walking home drunk from Ye Threadbare Coif, G’bain jumps out from behind a bush and stands in front of you.

“Lo there! Peasant!” says G’bain. “Where goes thee at the wee hours of the noct on a work night?”

Every night is a work night.

“Walking home from the tavern, sire,” you say.

“I see,” says G’bain. “Look, about the other day. I, uhh, obviously have a thing about fawns.”

“Indeed,” you say.

G’bain scratches his head awkwardly and swirls the toe of his pointy shoe in the dirt.

“If the other peasants found out that their lordsman was afraid of fawns, it could wreak real havoc on discipline around here,” G’bain says. “I trust that this shall remain betwixt you and I? A little secret betwixt...friends?”

You would hesitate to consider G’bain a friend, considering most of your interactions with him consist of him torturing you. But it could be beneficial to have this bit of leverage on him.

“Forsooth,” you tell G’bain. “Thy secret is safe with me.”

“Most excellent,” says G’bain. “In return, I shall ensure that you are tortured and generally maltreated much less than is typical. I am not going to shake thy hand, because I don’t want to catch whatever filthy peasant diseases you might be carrying, but consider this my word.”

You nod in agreement.

“Very well. Carry on then,” says G’bain. “I shall return to this bush so that I might surprise other peasants walking home from the tavern and harass them. Good morrow.”

“Good morrow, G’bain,” you say. G’bain crawls back behind the bush and you continue your journey home. Does he hide behind that bush every night? you wonder. You respect his dedication, but this guy seriously needs to get a life. On the walk back you think yearningly of the many turnips that await your picking tomorrow.

For the rest of your life, G’bain remains true to his word. You are still tortured from time to time, but much less so than normal. Life around the fief is generally about as enjoyable as it could be for a wretched peasant.

The End.

Stab G'bain with the Gardening Spade

You slowly reach into your hose for the gardening spade while G'bain is looking away. You run its sharp, rusty metal between your fingers and eye your target: his thin, noble neck pulsating in the twilight. If you thrust it into his throat he will bleed out so you can make your escape. His henchmen are nearby, but henchmen are useless when there's no one to give them orders.

You hold the spade firm in your grip as you lunge toward G'bain. His gaze turns toward you as you thrust at his throat. Your eyes briefly meet and you see an almost mocking surprise in his.

He easily slaps the spade from your hand then pushes you to the ground.

“Ha! What be this, now?” laughs G'bain. “A mere peasant really thought he could get the better of a lordsman like mineself? Pathetic! Ho-ha!”

So your plan failed. Now the henchmen are laughing at you, too, and it's quite embarrassing.

“I'll tell thee what, though,” says G'bain. “Thy reflexes, while still dull and poorish, aren't too bad for a peasant. I can always use people with good reflexes working for me as henchmen. Ghilwaith over there used to be a peasant himself.”

He motions towards one of the henchmen, who nods appreciatively.

“What sayest thee, dost thou want to become a henchman?”

[Sure. Become a henchman. Go to page 57.](#)

[“Nay, thy henchmen are soulless ogres and I'd rather die.” Go to page 58.](#)

Sure, Become a Henchman

“What sayest thee, dost thou want to become a henchman?” says G’bain.

“Sure,” you say.

“Great! You start now. Put thy clothes back on and we shall head into town to get you one of these sinister henchman outfits,” he says. “You won’t be paid of course. The hours are long, the working conditions are abysmal, and I’ll probably end up killing you in a fit of rage because you’re only slightly less expendable than a peasant. But as far as social mobility goes around here, this is about as good as it gets. Thou cannest thank me now.”

“Thanks,” you say.

You head to town to get fitted for your henchman outfit then you get right to work. You work as a henchman for G’bain for many years. It’s a thankless job, but you eat one square meal a day and you get to torture all kinds of interesting people.

As promised, one day G’bain flies into a fit of rage over someone that you didn’t torture enough – or maybe that you tortured too much – and he kills you.

With your dying breath you remember the turnip fields. You remember the smell of fresh dirt in your nostrils and all over your body on a summer morning. You also remember that you had a bunch of daughters whom you left parentless when you decided to become a henchman. Somehow you never even thought about them until now. Are they still alive? Statistically, probably not. You try to remember their names and faces but G’bain hits you again with his man-pouch and you die.

You are dead. But it was nice to break up the monotony of peasant life as a henchman for a while. If it makes you feel any better, a few of your daughters survived and have relatively successful careers as peasant housewives and widows, which are the only careers available to peasant women.

The End.

Nay, Thy Henchmen Are Soulless Ogres

“What sayest thee, dost thou want to become a henchman?” says G’bain.

“Nay. Thy henchmen are soulless ogres and I’d rather die,” you say.

“Fair enough,” says G’bain. “I honestly can’t even argue with you on that one. These guys are terrible. Just the worst. Some people are into the whole ‘being a soulless ogre’ thing, though. But if ‘tis not thy thing, I respect that. I can’t go having decent people as henchmen now, can I?”

The henchmen rip off the last of your clothes now and get ready to parade you through the streets in shame.

“Your peasant body is filthy and disgusting,” says G’bain as your final undergarments are shod. “Merely gazing upon it is torture to mine eyes.”

You always thought of yourself as pretty fit for a poor peasant who consumed nothing but ale and turnips and worked outside fifteen hours a day, so you are hurt by his comments.

The henchmen lash your hands behind your back with twine and shove you towards the town to begin your walk of shame. All along the road, the other peasants begin to gather. They throw cabbages at you and shout insults like, “Rebel scum!” and “Filthy peasant! Which I guess is an ironic thing for me to say because I am also a filthy peasant, but thou art filthier!”

A rather large cabbage just misses your head, and instead hits G’bain. His henchmen quickly find the one who threw it and violently pull him from the crowd. It’s your friend Chleb. They make him strip down, bind his hands with twine, and he joins you on your walk to The Pit.

“Hey, Chleb,” you say.

“Hey,” he says. “Sorry I tried to hit you with a cabbage.”

“It’s no problem,” you say.

“It’s just that my wife died last night and I’ve been a little frustrated, you know?” he says. “And throwing cabbages and yelling at people who are about to be tortured is pretty cathartic for me. No offense.”

“None taken,” you say. “My wife died last night, too. Ague.”

“Ague, that’s tough,” he says. “I’ve had a couple wives die from agues. This one was hit by a stray arrow.”

“Ouch,” you say.

“Hush thy mouths, peasants,” says G’bain. “This be not a social hour. We wouldn’t want thee in a good mood prior to thy execution, would we?”

“We were talking about our dead wives,” you say.

“Wow, buzzkill,” says G’bain. “That sounds morose enough that it will make thy deaths even more painful. Resume thy conversation.”

But you don’t really feel like talking about it anymore. You and Chleb continue your walk of shame in silence. When you reach the town, it’s more of the same. Heckling and cabbages. Some of the wealthier townsfolk might throw a parsnip or two, and Chleb even gets hit by a chicken thigh.

You reach the edge of The Pit and look down into it. It’s not so deep that you’ll die when you hit the bottom, but it’s deep enough that it will hurt very bad. The henchmen turn you and Chleb

around so your backs are facing The Pit. A crowd has gathered around to watch you die. They have calmed down to a mild rabble to listen.

“Well, peasants. Any last words?” says G’bain.

You try to think of a rousing speech that would inspire the crowd into attacking G’bain and setting you free, but all you can think of is turnips. G’bain lifts his man pouch over his head, ready to strike you with it and send you to your death in The Pit. Just before his man pouch comes down to deal the death blow upon your head, a voice from the crowd yells, “Stop!”

The crowd parts, and through it trots a dainty, well-dressed nobleman on a horse.

“My Lord!” says G’bain, as he bows down on one knee. The henchmen and the crowd follow suit. It’s the Lord of the Fief, come to your rescue!

“Do not throw these peasants into The Pit,” the Lord orders. “I’ve gotten a ton of HR complaints about murdering our employees in The Pit, and it looks terrible on our workforce satisfaction surveys. The last thing I want is to have to report to The King on the low morale on this fief. Find some milder way to torture these peasants, then send them back to the fields.”

“Yes, My Lord,” says G’bain. You can tell G’bain isn’t happy, but orders are orders. “Today is thy lucky day, peasants. Looks like you’ll just be getting regular torture instead of The Pit.”

You and Chleb jump for joy at your new lease on life. In his excitement, Chleb twists his ankle on a cabbage and falls into The Pit and dies.

“Agh, you clumsy peasants!” shouts G’bain. “My Lord, I am so sorry, but that was unintentional.”

“Workplace accident,” says the Lord. “I don’t think it’ll bring my ratings down much, so I’m not too worried about it. Just set this other one free.”

With that, the Lord turns on his horse and departs. G’bain’s henchmen unbind your hands.

“Well, you heard the Lord,” G’bain says. “Get back to work.”

The crowd disperses and you return home. You spend the rest of the day picking turnips and putting them in your turnip cart. Chleb’s death was unfortunate, but all things considered, today could have been worse. You run the soil through your tattered hands, grateful for your new lease on life, pondering what adventures await you at the tavern tonight.

You continue life as a peasant then die at the ripe old age of 36.

The End.

Keep Taking Your Clothes Off in Shame

You use your better judgment and decide not to stab G'bain, but to instead accept the peasant's death which awaits you in The Pit.

"Your peasant body is filthy and disgusting," says G'bain as you remove your final undergarments. "Merely gazing upon it is torture to mine eyes."

You always thought of yourself as pretty fit for a poor peasant who consumed nothing but ale and turnips and worked outside fifteen hours a day, so you are hurt by his comments.

G'bain's henchmen lash your hands behind your back with twine and shove you towards the town to begin your walk of shame. All along the road, the other peasants begin to gather. They throw cabbages at you and shout insults like, "Rebel scum!" and "Filthy peasant! Which I guess is an ironic thing for me to say because I am also a filthy peasant, but thou art filthier!"

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"Hey, Chleb," you say.

"Hey," he says. "Sorry I tried to hit you with a cabbage."

"It's no problem," you say.

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"None taken," you say. "My wife died last night, too. Ague."

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"Ouch," you say.

"Hush thy mouths, peasants," says G'bain. "This be not a social hour. We wouldn't want thee in a good mood prior to thy execution, would we?"

"We were talking about our dead wives," you say.

"Wow, buzzkill," says G'bain. "That sounds morose enough that it will make your deaths even more painful. Resume your conversation."

But you don't really feel like talking about it anymore. You and Chleb resume your walk of shame in silence. It's hurtful, emotionally and physically. The embarrassment and shame coupled with the incessant barrage of cabbages and rough ground tearing at your feet are alone enough to kill a man. You try to think of turnips to take your mind off the pain. You are briefly successful in this.

When you reach the town, it's more of the same. Heckling and cabbages. Some of the wealthier townsfolk might throw a parsnip or two, and Chleb even gets hit by a chicken thigh. It's unspiced and undercooked, but it's a chicken thigh nonetheless.

You reach the edge of The Pit and look down into it. It's not so deep that you'll die when you hit the bottom, but it's deep enough that it will hurt very bad. The henchmen turn you and Chleb around so your backs are facing The Pit then unbind your hands. A crowd has gathered around to watch you die. They have calmed down to a mild rabble to listen.

“Well, peasants. Any last words?” says G’bain.

You try to think of a rousing speech that would inspire the crowd into attacking G’bain and setting you free, but all you can think of is turnips. G’bain lifts his man pouch over his head, ready to strike you with it and send you to your death in The Pit. Just before his man pouch comes down to deal the death blow upon your head, a voice from the crowd yells, “Stop!”

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“Yes, My Lord,” says G’bain. You can tell G’bain isn’t happy, but orders are orders. “Today is thy lucky day, peasants. Looks like you’ll just be getting regular torture instead of The Pit.”

You and Chleb jump for joy at your new lease on life. In his excitement, Chleb twists his ankle on a cabbage and falls into The Pit. At the last second you manage to grab his hand and pull him to safety.

“Agh, you clumsy peasants!” shouts G’bain.

“Actually, that was pretty impressive,” the Lord says. He dismounts his horse and walks over to you, keeping a safe distance because he doesn’t like lowborns breathing on him.

“You there, peasant, what is thy name?” he asks. You tell him. “I’ve been looking for someone who can help prevent workplace accidents around this fief – people tripping on rakes, getting run over by oxen, and the like. It seems like you might have what it takes.

“Consider thineself promoted. From here out, thou shalt be my Fiefdom Safety Officer.”

“FSO?! But, my Lord, this peasant has no qualifications for that,” pleads G’bain.

“Hush thy mouth, G’bain,” says the Lord. “Stick to what you know and go find someone to torture.”

“Yes, my Lord.”

“Well,” says the Lord, turning to you. “Get to it. Go prevent some peasants from falling down a well, or whatever it is you idiots do at work.”

Congratulations! You’ve been promoted to Fiefdom Safety Officer (FSO). Turns out you’re pretty good at the job, and you reduce accident-related deaths on the fief to just a few per day.

The End.

Actually, Give Me One of the Milder Torture Selections

“Yea, actually give me one of the milder torture selections,” you tell G’bain. He nods his head and his thin pampered lips form a scornful smile.

“Ah, a cowardly choice, but a smart one,” he says. He pulls a catalogue from his man-pouch and begins reading off the torture selections.

“Let’s see, we have the Naked Ox Drag. Classic, good for public humiliation. Basically we’ll strip thee of thy ragged clothes and drag thee behind an ox through the village square for a few days.

“Then there’s the Naked Eye Poker. Pretty much what it sounds like. We strip thee naked and poke thine eyes out. Better for older peasants whose usefulness from a productivity standpoint is already diminished. Wouldn’t want to blind a perfectly hardy peasant, so methinks this one is out of the question for thee.

“Ooh, here we are. My favourite. War. Our lord always needs a few solid and expendable bodies to levy into the infantry. This way thou couldst go stand in a field and get slaughtered in a hail of arrows or die of malaria whilst campaigning in the Swamplands or whatever. We’ll have to strip thee naked first, of course

“What say thee? Shall it be the Naked Ox Drag, or War?”

[Naked Ox Drag. Go to page 64.](#)

[War. Go to page 66.](#)

[“Why do all the punishments involve stripping me naked?” Go to page 63.](#)

“Why Do All the Punishments Involve Stripping Me Naked?”

“Why do all the punishments involve stripping me naked?” you ask G’bain.

“That’s a stupid question, and I don’t know what thou means to imply by it,” he says. “Just pick one already.”

[Naked Ox Drag. Go to page 64.](#)

[War. Go to page 66.](#)

Naked Ox Drag

“I’ll take the Naked Ox Drag,” you tell G’bain after some contemplation.

“Hmm, alright then,” G’bain says. “I wouldst have chosen War myself, but have it thy way.”

G’bain’s henchmen approach you and rip your clothes off your body. There’s already an ox on standby, so they lash your wrists and ankles together with some twine then tie you to the ox.

“Okay, off we go then!” says G’bain, and he slaps the ox on the rump. It takes off at a casual saunter towards town. It’s actually not too bad. Pretty mild as far as Naked Ox Drags go. The last time you were Naked-Ox-Dragged it was winter and the ground was frozen and you got stuck behind a kitchen cart which had forks and knives falling out the back the whole trip, right in your path. That one hurt much worse.

As the ox approaches the town, you pass by your daughters returning from the market.

“Oh, Papá!” they say in a fright. “What hath they done to thee?”

“Worry not about me, daughters,” you say. “‘Tis just a standard punishment for fomenting rebellion. Don’t expect me home for dinner for a couple nights, though.”

“Thou never art home for dinner, anyways,” they say. “Thou goes to the tavern and gets drunk every night. But okay, we shan’t wait up for thee.”

“Very well,” you say. “I’ll try to find a new wife once I’m done with this, so hopefully ye can have a new mother in a few days.”

“Oh, that would be quite swell, Papá!” they say. The ox continues down the street and your daughters fall out of view.

The drag goes on for a few days until you’re tattered and beaten. The first few hours are exciting because everyone in town came out to hurl cabbages and insults at you. But they soon lose interest, and most of the dragging is painful and boring.

On the third day you are jolted awake by a cold shock to find the ox has stopped. You’ve been in a semi-conscious daze brought on by dehydration and head trauma, and are still a bit disoriented. Shivering, you open your swollen eyes to see the blurry form of G’bain looking down at you holding an empty bucket of water.

“Oye, there ‘e is!” says G’bain. “How d’ya feel, scoundrel?”

Your mouth fumbles for words, but you’re still too out of it to speak intelligibly.

“Blah, blah, blah,” says G’bain. “I think what ye means to say is, “Thank you, Mr. G’bain, sir, for dropping me off in front of my house so I can get back to work immediately.””

As your vision starts to clear, you see that you are, in fact, in front of your hovel. One of G’bain’s henchmen cuts you loose from the ox. Slowly, you struggle to your feet.

“All right, quit dill-a-dallying,” says G’bain. “There’s plenty o’ turnips to be picked, and ‘tis already daylight. I expect a full turnip cart by sundown. Get to, then!”

At that, G’bain turns on his heels and departs. The henchman spits at your feet and gives you the old “I’m a henchman and hate everyone” look, then follows behind.

You promised your daughters you’d have a new wife by the time you got home, but there’s no time for that now. Maybe you’ll find one tomorrow. For now, there’s work to do.

You head out back and gather your tools, your turnip basket, and your turnip cart, then you do what you do best: you start picking turnips.

You return to your pathetic life as a peasant. You get married within the fortnight to a homely but tolerable peasantess. Life still generally sucks, but honestly, what did you expect? At least there's still ale.

The End.

War

“I suppose I’ll go to War,” you tell G’bain.

“Excellent choice!” he says. “Thou wilt make an exceptional arrow target! That is, if thou manages not to die of cholera before the next battle. Ho-ha!”

G’bain’s henchmen proceed to strip you naked for a uniform fitting. The uniform is just a tattered burlap sack and an old helmet with an arrow sticking out of it from the last guy who wore it, but they insist you have to be naked for the fitting.

They hand you a spear and assign you to the infantry, specifically to a battalion whose duty is to serve as speedbumps to the enemy cavalry. After a week of training which consists mostly of push-ups and getting stepped on by horses, your battalion is shipped off to war.

In your first battle you are trodden on, trampled, and slashed with broadswords, but nothing can take you out of the fight. Your body is so hardened and used to beatings from life as a peasant that you feel invincible. In your second battle you put up a heroic defense against an enemy cavalry charge and you’re promoted to sergeant. After your third battle you’re promoted to lieutenant, which is as high as they’ll let a peasant go.

When the war ends you return home a hero. On the march home, you decide to stop in at your favorite tavern, Ye Threadbare Coif, to see what your old pals Dugo, Bogumil, and Chleb are up to. You join them for a flagon of ale and a bowl of hoof stew. You sing songs and talk about the good old days picking turnips by day and drinking ale at the tavern by night.

After a nostalgic night, you return home to your hovel. You find your daughters there sweeping the floor and tending to the livestock. Oh, that’s right, you had daughters. Guess you never had the chance to tell them you were going to war.

“Hello, papá,” they say in unison as you walk through the door.

“Hello, daughters,” you respond.

“Where ever hast thou been these past four years? We were quite worried about thee.”

“No worry, my dears. I was just at war for a little while.”

“But papá, it appears you have lost an arm and an eye. And your entire body is covered in scars and you are actively bleeding from your head.”

“Such is the soldier’s way, my dears. And anyway, the head wound just happened at the bar,” you say. You are tired, so you lie down to sleep.

The next day, you awaken before dawn on a bed made of straw and ox dung. You roll over to kiss your wife but then remember she died many years ago from an ague.

Your daughters are already up and about doing their tasks for the day. The war is over, so it’s back to being a peasant for you.

Time to get to work.

You have nothing for breakfast because you can’t afford food. You spent all your earnings from the war on ale and a cool eye patch for your missing eye. You walk outside to the fields. It is still dark, but already it is hot. At the same time it is also freezing cold. It is pouring rain and the wetness chills you to your bones, but it is somehow also so dry that your throat is parched. You’re used to such hardships from the war, so they don’t bother you much.

You pick a turnip with your one remaining arm and put it in the basket.

You pick another turnip and put it in the basket.

You keep picking turnips and putting them in the basket. When the basket is full you deposit it into your turnip cart. You return to picking turnips and repeat the process.

Part of you misses the war. It was a nice change of pace. But you're happy to be back here picking turnips. Maybe one day there will be another war, then you can get back out there and get trampled by horses again. Yea, that would be fun. But for now you'll try to make the most of picking turnips.

You smile as the morning sun shines upon your battle-scared face. You dig your broken fingers into the ground and pick another turnip.

You return to life as a peasant. For what it's worth, you enjoy it. You probably die of plague or war or something at some future date, but no need to worry about that now.

Just enjoy picking the turnips.

The End.