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Living in Medieval Europe - Sample

Life in Europe isn't easy as a peasant. Peasants wake up an hour before the sunrise each day, eat a breakfast of wheat bread, peas, and beans, and then go to work in the fields until the sun goes down (Gode Cookery). Their hands and skin are browned, wrinkled, and rough to the touch. They wear rags to cover themselves from the cold and sun. They toil the land every day for the rest of their lives, even if they don't own it. Thankfully, I am not a peasant. My name is Frederick Bartholomew II, and I am what my vassals and peasants would call: their "lord." I come from a long line of nobility. When my father, Frederick Bartholomew I, passed away, he left his estate and all his peasants and knights to me. Since then, my wife and five sons have been happily taking care of Father's castle and land.

As I awaken, I look out the window of my castle to make sure all of the peasants are out on the fields working, as they should be. The stone from the castle walls make me shiver, but the smell of meat, saffron, and onions cooking in the kitchen awakens my spirit. I walk downstairs and see my servant, Ruth, cooking me my usual breakfast. Ruth is a peasant; her husband and children work out in the fields. Not only do these peasants spend all day planting and harvesting plants, milking cows, and feeding chickens, they must also dutifully serve their lord in whatever task I ask of them. "Ruth, when you cook breakfast for Hilda and the children, make sure the food is still hot when they get to the kitchen. Hilda said her meal was cold yesterday. That is unacceptable. There are dire consequences for disobeying your lord; don't make me remind you," I scold the peasant. "Yes, my lord. I apologize," Ruth says timidly with her head down. I don't look at her old, pitiful face as I put the savory spit of mutton into my mouth. *Knock, knock, knock.*

"Maurice, go open that door," I demand my other servant in annoyance. Maurice, another old peasant, hurriedly opens the door. Standing there is Sir Arthur, my best vassal. "My lord, the Vikings...they are coming!" Sir Arthur says urgently, "Sir Wilbur and I were watching the sea, and we saw a Viking ship coming from the distance!" "Gather all of the knights. We must prepare for battle," I command Arthur.

"Yes, my lord. Shall I send any word to the king of this attack?"

"No, the king has been useless in these battles. He is too involved with his battles with the pope to notice what's happening in these villages."

Sir Arthur nods in understanding and runs off to find his fellow knights. "Ruth, Maurice, go warn the peasants to go home and take cover. The Vikings will be here momentarily. You know they are swift in their attacks (Bell 5)," I order my servants. Ruth and Maurice have terror in their eyes. "Move now!" I yell. "Yes, my lord," they scramble to the fields and the other peasants cry and yelp in fear. They run into their small, dilapidated homes. I run upstairs and tell my dear Hilda and our five boys to stay in the castle. "Where are you going, Father?" little Frederick III beseeches me. "The Vikings are coming," and they understand.

I go downstairs, fall down on my knees and pray for my crops, cattle, knights, property and family. I hear noise and commotion from outside my castle. As an aristocrat, I am not a fighter. If the Vikings were to defeat my knights and break into the castle walls, I don't know what I would do. I go upstairs to a lookout point and see that the Vikings have landed ashore. The Vikings are from the North, a place called, Scandinavia. These Norsemen are not Christians, like us. They are fierce and cruel, carrying large swords and wooden shields, looting everywhere they go. I watch as 200 of them climb ashore, ransacking the village stores and homes. Where is Sir Arthur and the rest of my knights? I start to worry as the Vikings draw closer and closer to the castle. I look frantically around the room for a sword and shield. Even though I am not as adept to weaponry as my vassals, I must attempt to protect my family and home. I rush back to the window and see a large, blonde-haired, bearded Norseman approaching my door with an axe in hand. I lift the metal sword and clumsily scamper down stairs.

Right as I get there, my door comes crashing down. The battleaxe successfully broke through the door as easily as a rock falling through water. "My name is Eric Bloodaxe," the large Viking snarls, "and I am here to take everything you own!" I fall backward in terror, the heavy sword falls from my weak and shaking arms onto the floor. Eric Bloodaxe raises his axe, ready for the kill. I close my eyes and pray, and at that very moment, I hear the Viking yell out in excruciating pain like a dog whining for its master. I open my eyes to see Ruth, the peasant, who had just dumped a pot of boiling hot water onto Eric Bloodaxe's back. After using a few seconds to gain some composure, the Viking realizes that a weak, old woman had just attacked him and hungered for revenge. Although he is covered in burns, the Viking picks Ruth up with one hand and throws her across the room. "Ruth!" I yell out, and rush to her side. Just when I think we are good as dead, we hear a Viking horn in the distance, and Eric Bloodaxe rushes out of the castle, while the rest of the Vikings retreat to their ship. The valiant knights had arrived and were now chasing the Vikings out of the village.

Sir Arthur runs into the castle, "My lord! Lady Ruth! Are you ok?"

I annoyingly implore, "Where were you? I was almost killed!"

"My greatest apologies, my lord! The other knights were looking after their own fields. It was difficult to gather them all up. We came as fast as we could. We would give up our lives before anything should ever happen to you! We had taken an oath," Sir Arthur assures me.

I look at poor Ruth. She is shaken and bruised, but she is ok. "Ruth, you saved your master's life," I gratefully tell her. "It is my duty, sir," she quietly whispers.

"Sir Arthur, go get this woman a pillow, and I shall cook her some mutton."

Ruth and Arthur look surprised, but they do as I command them. Today, I will cook all the peasants a meal. They deserve it.

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