

The King's Stewards

Chosen

Joan, Saulutus, and Otar stood before the King. "I must go on a journey," said the King, and I need people to take over my work while I am away. I have chosen each of you to help. I do not know when I will return, but when I do, I expect to find you doing your jobs well."

"Joan, you will take care of all the farmlands. The kingdom needs a lot of food to feed all the people." The King handed her a booklet. "This booklet will tell you how to grow enough food for all the people."

"Saulutus, I am placing you in charge of our military while I am gone. You must keep our land safe from fighters who want to attack us. You must also protect the good people from robbers and other bad men inside my kingdom." The King handed Saulutus his booklet of instructions.

"Otar, you will maintain the castle while I am away. It must be cleaned and repaired and look its best at all times." He handed Otar his booklet then rose from his throne and spoke to all of them. "The farmland, military, and castle are mine. You must take great care to manage them well." Then the King left the room.

Joan, Saulutus and Otar immediately opened their booklets and began to read them. Saulutus was filled with pride as he thought of what the king had entrusted to him. He wanted to make the soldiers stronger than they had ever been. Joan also felt honored that she had been given such an important task. All the people would starve if she did not manage the farming and storing of the food properly. Otar too felt privileged that the King had selected him, but he couldn't help feeling a little less important compared to Saulutus and Joan. Their responsibilities seemed much grander. However, he also read his booklet which told him how to keep the castle looking beautiful.

Outside the castle, a long line of people had gathered to see the King off. He and his helpers, all on horseback, rode to the castle gates then stopped. Rising from his saddle, the King spoke loudly to everyone. "I have appointed Joan, Saulutus, and Otar to take care of my responsibilities while I am away. Listen to them until I return."

With that, the King settled back into his saddle and began his long journey.

Joan

Joan woke up early. She wanted to meet with the farmers today to discuss this year's growing plan.

After reading the booklet the King had given her, she noticed areas that needed improvement. The corn, wheat, and bean seeds had been planted too far apart last year. If she made the rows closer, then more food could be grown.

Since Joan was in charge of feeding all the people, she wanted to grow **more** than enough. In fact, she decided the farmers should grow **twice** as much as last year! She knew it would require a lot of hard work, but she also knew that the King would be very happy if she could grow that much.

Joan called all the farmers together. "This season we have a lot of work to do. While the King is away, he expects us to grow and store the required amounts. But if we could double that amount, think how happy our King would be if we tell him we have not just done what he asked, but we have done much more!" The farmers all agreed and cheered loudly.

Joan explained that the corn, wheat, and bean rows must be closer. After planting, they must watch for and chase out hungry rodents and be extra vigilant about keeping weeds out of the fields. Finally, they would have to build three more storehouses to hold the extra food they would gather in.

All the farmers got right to work. They sweated when the sun was hot and kept mice and groundhogs out at night even though they felt cold and tired. They built three giant storehouses and had to eat while they worked. No one could take a break if they wanted to finish on time. Every farmer was sore and tired, but no one complained.

Finally, every task was completed. Now everyone, especially Joan, waited eagerly to see if all the extra rows they planted would produce as much as food as they hoped.

Otar

"Well, I better get to work," yawned Otar. He opened his booklet of instructions. The lists inside were way too long. "This is just too much," Otar sighed. He grumbled as he swept a few of the rooms but didn't bother to get all the corners and edges, thinking, "No one will see, so who cares?" Finally, the day came to an end and Otar couldn't wait to go to bed. "Tomorrow will be just as boring and tiring as today," he whined.

As he headed towards his room, he saw his friend Bagpippen. "Why the grumpy face, Otar?" asked Bagpippen. "The King wants me to keep his castle beautiful while he's away, but it's just too much work," said Otar holding his list. "I wish he would have given me something more fun to do." Bagpippen smiled and said, "Let's take a look at that list." They sat down together and Bagpippen said cheerfully, "I think I can help. You have a long list of 100 chores to do. Let's divide that up into shorter lists. Do you think you can do 10 chores each day?" "Well, yes," said Otar. "That sounds much easier."

After making smaller lists, Otar still looked unhappy. "Thanks, Bagpippen, but I still don't feel this job is as important as Joan's or Saultus's."

"How do you think the King would feel if he came back to a run-down, weed-filled home?" asked Bagpippen. "He would probably be upset," Otar responded.

"But what if he came home to the cleanest, best-kept castle he had ever seen? How do you think that would make him feel?"

A light came to Otar's eyes. "I bet he would be very pleased with me for doing such a great job!"

"I think so too," smiled Bagpippen as he left the room.

The next morning Otar woke with excitement! "I'm going to improve this castle so much that the King won't even recognize it!"

Every day Otar completed 10 chores. But he didn't stop there. He created new gardens with sweet-scented flowers all around the castle. He had old wooden floors replaced with rare and beautiful wood from far-off lands. He shined all the silver and gold utensils and he even made new royal robes for the King to wear when he returned. The castle was transformed into a stunning palace of magnificent beauty. It was truly a home worthy of the King. Otar couldn't wait until the King returned to see how majestic his castle had become!

Saulutus

Saulutus strolled out from the King's presence filled with pride. He had always dreamed of being a great military leader. Now was his chance. He would make the military into the strongest, best-trained soldiers in the nation. He wanted super soldiers!

Saulutus called the soldiers together. "As you know, the King has been called away. I am now in charge. I am going to increase your training and make you stronger and faster than you've ever been." The soldiers said nothing. "Meet me at the training field in two hours."

The soldiers lined up for practice every morning. Saulutus demanded that the soldiers put in three hours of training every day. He removed soldiers from their other responsibilities so they could practice. After a few weeks of this, the townspeople began to notice that there were very few soldiers on the streets to protect them. Robbers noticed this too and began to steal from the people. Saulutus knew this was happening, but did not change his plans. It was more important to him to make the soldiers strong than to keep the people safe. Plus, he was getting ready for a big show he had been planning. He was going to show all the people how excellently he had trained his army.

Saulutus sent out heralds into the town to announce the grand event. They shouted to everyone, "Tomorrow, General Saulutus invites you to a grand event! Come and see the strongest soldiers in the nation show off their skills!"

The townspeople, however, were quite upset that Saulutus had taken their soldiers away. They were now living in fear of being robbed or hurt by criminals who wandered freely through the town. Some people planned to attend the event, but others chose not to go.

The big day had come for Saulutus. He dressed in his finest military outfit. He stood before the mirror and said, "Today, everyone will see how great a general I am. I have trained these men to be super soldiers. I am the finest leader that this kingdom has ever known!" He took one final look in the mirror and then headed for the arena.

Saulutus sat in his seat of honor and awaited the beginning of the event. But just seconds before it began, there was the loud blast of a trumpet and the strong voice of the official herald called out, "The King has returned! Make way for the King!"

The Return

The trumpets sounded as the King neared the city gates. All the people stopped what they were doing to welcome the King and his helpers home. The people who had gathered to watch Saulutus's demonstration quickly left the arena to see the King. Saulutus also left, but he was angry. Now no one would be able to see how well he had trained the soldiers.

The King rode through the town and greeted the people with smiles and waves. But he noticed that many looked unhappy. "Why are they sad? He wondered. His large group of men on their horses trotted past the farm fields. They looked quite different than when he had left. The King was curious and full of questions.

When he reached the castle, he dismounted his horse. The castle looked dazzling! A sweet scent filled the air and the hundreds of colorful flowers made for a beautiful sight! The King was delighted.

After a good night's rest, the King sent out messengers to call Joan, Saulutus, and Otar. "I am happy to be home," he said to them, "and now I want each of you to tell me what you have done while I was away."

Joan quickly stepped forward, eager to share what she had been working on. "Your Highness, after reading the booklet you gave me, I thought of a way to grow even more food than you wanted me to. We planted more rows than last year and we have been able to harvest twice as much this season! We also built new storehouses so we can keep all the food safe. I hope that you are pleased."

The King grinned from ear to ear and exclaimed, "Well done, Joan! You have not only done what I asked of you. You have gone far above that. You have done such a good job that I am going to keep you in charge of all the farming from now on. I will also send you out to share what you've learned with the surrounding kingdoms!"

Joan bowed her head and felt very happy. The King was obviously pleased. That is what she had desired most of all. Her planning and hard work had been worth all the effort!

Otar was next to step forward. "Otar, you also have gone beyond my expectations. My castle is more beautiful than it's ever been. Why, I hardly recognized it! What caused you to do such an excellent job?"

Otar was very happy to hear the King's praise. "Well, Sire, I wasn't happy at first, but a friend helped me and reminded me of how pleased you would be to come back to a beautiful home."

"My home has never looked better," declared the King. "Well done! You are now Head of Maintenance. You will always be in charge of keeping my castle looking beautiful." Otar beamed with joy!

And now it was Saulutus's turn.

The Return Part 2

"Come forward, Saulutus," said the King. "Have you been keeping our people safe?" Saulutus looked at the floor as he slowly came nearer to the throne. He recalled the instructions of the King and was now afraid. He remembered they said, "You must keep our land safe from fighters who want to attack us. You must also protect the good people from robbers and other bad men inside my kingdom."

"Speak up, Saulutus. Is my kingdom safe?"

"Well, Your Highness, I have been working hard to make the soldiers strong. We have spent hours and hours each day doing training and practicing. In fact, just before you returned we were going to have a small demonstration of our new skills."

The King did not look happy. He spoke in a serious tone. "Saulutus, I gave you very clear instructions about what your job was. You were to make sure my land is safe and to protect the good people. I have only been home one day and have already had many people tell me they have been robbed and live in fear. Why did you let this happen?"

The King's eyes were piercing and his anger was growing.

"I was trying to make them stronger, Your Highness," trembled Saulutus.

The King's voice rose and Saulutus shrank back when he sprang from his throne and shouted, "That was NOT your assignment! You removed the soldiers from their important job of keeping the people safe. All you cared about was making yourself look great before the people. If enemies had attacked while I was gone, we would have been ruined! You failed to do the job I assigned to you. Now you will have no part in my kingdom!"

The King called his soldiers to his side. "Take this man and remove him from my kingdom!"

The soldiers marched Saulutus to the edge of the kingdom. "Saulutus, by the order of the King, you are hereby banished. You are not to enter this kingdom ever again." Saulutus fell to the ground and wept loudly. He would now become a wanderer and be forever without a home.

Back at the palace, the King called for a great feast. He spoke to all his people. "Today, I would like to reward Joan and Otar. While I was gone, they did an excellent job at taking care of the farmlands and my castle. They have been rewarded with important positions in my kingdom because of their outstanding stewardship."

Joan and Otar stepped forward, bowed low before the King, and received a grand applause from the cheering multitude.