

Zoltan Robs a Bank

The Randok Capital had the strongest walls the world had ever seen, yet a section was broken and a single man stood atop the rubble, gazing upon the city ahead. Was he a legendary warrior, about to take on the Randok forces alone? Was he a master engineer, to be the first to tear down Randok architecture? No. There is no more to the answer to this question.

“Get back to work!” The boss kicked him in the head.

He toiled from sunrise to sunset, laying brick after brick. Yet, he was still hungry by the time he climbed into a makeshift pile of hay he called a bed. Zoltan wondered if not being born into aristocracy was the only reason he goes to bed hungry each day. It’s also possible Zoltan was hungry because he had just spent all his money on mead, he wasn’t sure. Either way, the only reason Zoltan worked was to have money and felt it unfair he still couldn’t afford a door to his house. After all, he’s worked full time ever since he found his first job at the young age of thirty-three.

Yet, instead of going to sleep, Zoltan laid awake in bed, thinking of the world. Is one’s birth really the only determining factor in one’s life? He did not want to live the rest of his life out like this. In a sudden bout of inspiration, ambition and uncharacteristic lack of procrastination, Zoltan was determined to take his destiny in his own hands, to carve out his own success instead of wait for it to show up like he had been.

He decided to rob the bank, it was the first thing to come to mind. Zoltan knew it would not be a challenge for him. After all, he spent all his waking hours working a hammer and carrying stones which would crush a common man, there was no doubt he was incredibly strong. Yet, not only was he strong, he was also a genius and a master of persuasion, evident through his ability to keep his job through incessant and incoherent begging towards his boss whenever conversations about firing him began.

He grabbed his hammer and burst into the bank.

Then he left the bank.

He was kicked out for tracking mud on the granite floors.

Through careful planning and consideration, Zoltan figured they might let him in if he cleaned his boots first. He sat himself down at the back wall and began knocking the mud off his boots with his hammer. Then, a deafening explosion. The back wall of the bank collapsed, revealing two hooded men making their way out with as much riches as they could carry. Seeing Zoltan, they gave him a small pouch of gold.

“If you tell anyone about us, we’ll beat the shit out of you,” and with that, they disappeared into the city.

He stared at the gold for a second, unsure of what to make of the situation, when he heard a shout.

“Hey, you there, stop!”

A guard rushed him. She must have been thinking Zoltan was the robber. A ridiculous mistake to make, just because he had a pouch of gold and a hammer at the broken wall at the exact moment of the robbery does not mean he was the thief.

The guard picked up Zoltan by one hand and threw him against the ground. Zoltan bounced several times and fell unconscious.

Zoltan realised he was not incredibly smart nor was he incredibly strong. Turns out he was further from it than humans ever though possible. One could ask how a man like Zoltan made it so long in this world, but Zoltan could not answer because he was unconscious.

Eventually, Zoltan awoke in his cell. It was dark and a musty smell grasped the air. Under the stack of hay he was laying on, he could feel bugs crawling between the thistles. He thought he was back at home at first. It wasn’t until he saw the barred door did he realise

otherwise as he could never afford a door. Either way, Zoltan knew he was innocent, despite wanting to commit a robbery, he didn't actually do anything wrong. He was sure he would be released any time now.

It was hard to sit up at first, considering all his ribs are broken, but he managed. The rising sun began to light up the room, showing Zoltan the stacks of skeletons in the corner. Zoltan realised he may not be released as quickly as he thought.

He called for the guards to explain the situation. However, as the guards entered the cell, he remembered something the thieves had said to him.

"If you tell anyone about us, we'll beat the shit out of you." One of them had said.

It would be an unpreferable situation for them to make good on their threat, and Zoltan realised it is possible not telling the guards what really happened was the safest bet.

The guards beat the shit out of Zoltan for wasting their time.

Zoltan laid in the hay pile, unable to get up since his ribs were now doubly broken. He thought back to when he was laying in his own hay pile last night and about how if he didn't try to fight destiny, none of this would have happened. Perhaps it was his fault. He closed his eyes, despite not having done anything wrong, he wondered if perhaps he did deserve jail time, for he was about to have committed a crime. Though as resigned as he was, he still hoped the sentence wouldn't be too long.

The next morning, Zoltan was informed he was, in fact, not going to be staying in jail very long, for he was going to be executed.

Despite being on death row, they still brought him food. It wasn't anything good, just coarse grain. He had no appetite, however. It was not only was it from him about to die but it also from him not understanding why he lived in the first place.

Then, he saw a rat crawl through a hole in the wall. Despite seeing Zoltan, it did not run. He looked closer and noticed it was injured and even a little sick. As he didn't plan on eating anyway, he threw some grain to the rat.

As the days went on, he continued to give his meal to the rat. The rat seemed to look better and better, yet never did run away. One day, he woke up and was about to feed the rat again, when he noticed the rat was no longer alone, with a litter of babies around her. It seemed she had given birth during the night. Her injuries were healed, she still looked a little sick but nothing too serious. Before Zoltan could react, they were gone.

The next day, no one came to give Zoltan food. He tried to knock on the barred door to ask but it swung open. When Zoltan thought back on it, he remembered how he never saw anyone locking the door. He walked down the halls, only to realise they were empty, a note left revealed all the guards fell sick overnight.

He thought back to fate again. Maybe his fate is not to be self-determined. The rats' fate were improved through Zoltan's action. Perhaps, it was not society nor destiny which limited his success but it was because he was focused on himself when good fortune is achieved through good deeds towards others.

It turned out not only were all of the guards sick, but half the city had fallen sick seemingly overnight. Some doctors thought it was a stronger flu season, but most agreed it was a rat plague. Zoltan wondered how such a thing could have happened, but didn't linger on it for long. As he walked through the street filled with rot and corpses, through the air filled with the sounds of parents crying over their dead children and children crying over their dead parents, he thought of how he had once dedicated his life to the benefit of himself, yet now he was enlightened and thought of how much good he could do for others.

He had already began his positive influence on the world by saving the rats and now, due to the increased number of people in severe need of aid, he was in excess of opportunities to continue his good work. Zoltan died of the plague several minutes later.