

*Cédric Schippers, George Saunders exercise. 1st person narrator, introduces us to their world. Matter-of-fact, calm tone. More prideful and less sad than George Saunders. Begin in medias res.*

Misses Lancelot enjoys her corn salads a lot I see. It's her new favourite afternoon snack, Greg told me. I wonder what it tastes like. Quite annoying to work with though. Those little yellow specks always stick to my shovel. Too small to pick with my fingers yet too sticky to clack off. Usually, a quick precise hit to the floor gets rid of all sticky bits, a technique I've mastered over the years. Not that Greg cares about how my tools look though. Probably because his dorm is too small to shelter his own. He is our Seneschal, also known as "Chores master" or my personal favourite: "Lord of the Buckets".

"You done with hole seven ya shitstinker?" Greg yells.

"Almost full bucket!" I shout back.

"It seems woman's shit does smell like roses to you, ha ha" Greg yells through the tunnels. He knows the upper folks can hear it from the latrines. But it's not a big deal anyway - I know they appreciate me.

"This ain't your only hole to clear today, Pat. I've got other important matters of the castle to attend." Greg slams the door and walks off.

I don't mind Greg's attitude towards me. It makes sense he lashes out at me given his pitiful life. If a man must sharpen his heart every day from such a miserable existence, eventually, nothing remains but scraps of rust. He lacks community, hobbies and most importantly, love. He has no idea how it feels to receive the warmth of a woman's love. The only warmth he knows is the blistering heat from his infected peg leg. With every step he takes through the tunnels, the brown liquid

seeps closer to his pus loaded stump. I guess not everyone is cut out for my field of work, Greg being one of them.

Unfortunately, no treasures found today. The only souvenirs she has left me recently are those little yellow golden nuggets - corn. I'm glad she still cares about our relationship though. We have a special way of communicating our love for each other, I'm mostly at the receiving end, which only shows how real our connection is. I still keep her confession of love close to me, folded in the silken fabric she once touched. The mere thought of that wonderful treasure shivers my hearth with a warmth so tender and soft, it makes the harrowing screams of the oubliette fade away. Not that I mind the noise coming from the oubliette. The baron personally handed that room to me, mind you, the biggest out of all rooms I've seen from the other servants. Certainly bigger than Greg's room.

They've left me a piece of meat pie at my seat. Surely this time it won't be filled with bones like every day for the past week.

"What's the matter goutfoot, not feeling hungry today?" says Henry.

"Yeah, you love meat pies, right? We saved this one specially for you since you enjoyed it so much the other day," says Willie.

"I think he's already had a bucketful of shit from the baroness! His favourite!

How did you like the corn?" Greg shouts while spilling ale from his mouth.

I grin and eat the edges of the pie. I let them have their laugh. I don't care about what they say. A content cherished soul doesn't concern himself with the outer noise of peasants. At least I'll return every night to a room grazed by a woman's charm. I can almost already feel her soft hips through the treasure she left me, a treasure folded neatly below my pillow.