

Waterfall

A new version of Chaucer's Pardoner's Tale by Matt Purland

Cast:

The Pardoner
Tam
Loghouse
Bob
The Innkeeper
An Old Man
An Apothecary

Part One:

(A drizzly English field, one afternoon in 1389. A travelling pardoner has set out his stall of holy relics, attracting a crowd of about thirty curious peasants, young and old, including muddy faced children and snuffling, agitated animals. He waits until everyone is good and ready - some seated, some standing; some drinking, some eating - before he begins his message)

Pardoner:

Ah, yes, right. Are we all in then? Good. I'm glad to see you all here - so many. Yes. Yes. Good. I hope you've all got plenty of money on you, have you? Have you? I'll explain myself, then I'll get on with my tale. It's freezing, isn't it? There's a horrible fog coming off the moor. They don't make these cloaks like they used to, do they? There's a hole right round the back which lets the cold in. Anyway, you don't wanna be concerned with my hose. Yes. The text I want to put forward today is: radix malorum est cupiditas. That's Latin, actually. Yes, I do know Latin. I'm often asked, in my capacity as official pardoner, to read the lesson in church and that's in Latin. I know a bit. I mean, you can just make something up if you're not sure. I always like to tell a moral tale, usually about money and how it really is wiser to have little 'cause then you won't have the strong temptation to let your money rule your head and as a consequence: woe - lose your soul. That's what it means - radix malorum est cupiditas - 'The love of money is the root of all evil'. I got my brother to dictate it. He's something big working for the King's court. Anyway. What I'm trying to say is, beware the hold money might take over you. It's really bad. One day you could be happily married with a family and a man comes to ask if you want to sell him your wife and kids, and you say, because you want the money, you say yes! You say yes! Obviously you might wanna get shot of the whole lot, but money, friends, is wicked. I'll be holding a collection after my short rendering of my tale. Feel free to be as generous as you would be if I were a family member or your best friend. Don't bother putting fish-heads or bottle tops in the basket. It is really pointless. Please don't bother putting in personal requests which you wish me to put before King Richard, please, because I don't have any access to him, OK? It's happened before and I've had to tell people no. I don't have access to his manifold grace, despite what you may have heard, although if you put in ten groats with each request I will make sure that he hears it from me - from my lips - this very day. That's cert.

Now where was I? I won't be selling artefacts now, actually, genuine Christian relics which have survived the test of the tarnishing hand of centuries for, er, centuries, you know - bits off clothes belonging to the saints, that kind of thing. It's amazing how many clothes they had. No - all of these relics will be available after the tale, in, you know, in yonder relic marquee - in yonder place - over there. Now, I'm sorry to disappoint you for now. I know I'm a pardoner but if I didn't get my tale across - if I just came here to sell bits and pieces - 'Pieces for Peace', as I have recently rebranded them - then I'd be no better than a common tradesman. Not saying that tradesmen are, in general terms, common. Far from it. There are even some in that

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village - yonder - who don't pretend to be shutting up shop when I walk in to offer to sell to them some of my relics. Ungrateful - ! I'm only trying to help my trade! It's just that my mission is to encourage the love of God through the purchasing of small, leftover bits of cloth which - I have it on good authority - genuinely once belonged to one saint or another. Genuinely.

With that in mind I recently opened a shop, not four days' walk from here - which has many relics for sale. See them - hand-woven antiquities - for yourselves. Judge for yourselves. Let your eyes see - let your hands touch. I'm not there often, as, as you might imagine, I have to travel about a lot, er, going hither and thither - mostly hither, although more recently I have taken to going thither rather often. I haven't been here before. That's fortunate - for me - for us all, in that you don't know what I'm going to say - haven't heard it - and I know that you don't know where I live.

Let my words be my judge and jury and, hopefully, I will gain your 'pardon' - just a little pardoners' humour there - as you discover, through the moral tale which I am intending to unfold, that there is, that there is nothing more mischievous to the soul or damaging to a potential holy life than the love of money. Please remember friends, that wood-carvings illustrating this theme in a plain way will be available at the end, for five groats each. Settle back then - be at peace - for the tale which I'm about to commence - I am going to start it, by the way - is one of sadness, misery and, well - . If you smell anything strange during the telling of this tale then it may simply be the smell of your own terror.

Or it could be my nag - could only get him swedes for his meal last night. I had them as well actually; it was yum. Very good stuff. Stand well back! As I introduce three sorry young men, all revellers; forward, come:

(Enter Tam, Log House, Bob and The Innkeeper. The scene changes to an inn)

Tam, Log House and (Pause) Bob! Gaze on these sorry specimens of human beings, gentlemen. And women, if you must be here, but strictly speaking shouldn't be. Who's doing the baking? Well - look at them. At their hollowed eyes, their sunken cheeks. Sniff their melancholy and gloom. These young men were drinking, in the ale house again - as they were wont to do. A small company of 'yonge folk that haunteden folye, as riot, hasard, stywes, and tavernes' - and what I mean by that is - they were always making merry...

Tam:
Come on, Log House - it's your turn to buy the ale.

Log House:
Is it, rum-popo! It's Bob's. Bob.

Bob:
What?

Log House:
Can you get us all another jar, like? I'm thirstier than a man who's been eating dry-roasted nuts and washing them down with powdered parsley.

Tam:
I'll get these. For I think it is actually my round. Here's a florin, Bob. Hey! The bar's that way.

Bob:
Anyone would think - Tam - that you thought I was just about to go off with your florin. I was

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going to ask the lute player to keep it down a bit in the corner. Aw. I've got a banging head.

(He goes up to the bar)

Pardoner:

I forgot to say that there was a load of harpists, guitarists, lutists and flautists in the inn.

Tam:

Have you finished, mate?

Pardoner:

Yes.

(Bob returns carrying a tray with three mugs of ale)

Log House:

Bob. What did you get me?

Bob:

Ale. It was all they had.

Log House:

It's all they've always got!

All

Oh - ho, ho, ho, ho!

Bob:

Oh! Whee! Do you know, I've been coming to this same ale-house since I was eight - you know, when I got my first job pulling an eighteen hundred pound ploughshare?

Tam & Log House:

Yes, yes, yes.

Bob:

Well, in all these years; all these years, of ale.

Tam & Log House:

Of ale - .

Bob:

I've never seen the jolly miller over there actually pay for an ale.

Tam:

No, neither have I now you mention it, kid. Look at that broad smile on his face. I'll knock it off! Oy! Miller! Jolly! Yes - I am talking to you. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Do you want a fight - ay - mate? Yeah - mate - .

Pardoner:

And they were always fighting and drinking and causing mischief. They were gross buffoons, uncouth and with their brains in their boots. In short, they weren't the sort of folk one would want to invite to a proper genteel ritual hanging, or even your common or garden flogathon...

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Part Two:

Bob:

Now we know why he's called the jolly miller. I tell you, if I bartered the fruit of my labours directly for ale like he with his corn and his meal I'd be jolly.

Log House:

But Bob, you don't have any labours.

Bob:

Not any more, but ey - I need all my time for drunken carousing. Come on! Let's carouse!

All (Singing):

I know a pretty maid

I spy her in a tree

I ask her if she's coming down

She says, 'Oh, not likely.'

I tried to climb a ladder

To be near to my love

As soon as it met her pretty bough

She met it with a shove. Oh!

I know a pretty maid

I spy her in a tree

I ask her if she's coming down

She says, 'Oh, not likely.'

Milk is her complexion

Treacle is her smile

My uncle says she is the

Sweetest lady by a mile.

I know a pretty maid - .

(Noise of a funeral procession passing outside)

Log House:

Hang on like - that's all very well but what's all this noise? What's all this clinking?

Tam:

And clanking.

Bob:

And clunking.

Pardoner:

And clonking.

Log House:

Outside, eh? Eh - bar fellow. What's going off like?

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Innkeeper:

It is a corpse being carried to its burial hole
He sought a good life but was taken long before his time
The crying you hear comes from a mother and a family
Weeping for the son and heir that death has poached.

Tam:

Hey, I knew him - Ethelred the waggoner. I didn't know he was sick.

Log House:

That's 'cause you spend too much time 'ere an' not enough at home.

Tam:

What - ?

Bob:

Hey, relax you two - it's normal to see the bodies carried through the streets - right?

Tam:

But haven't you noticed recently - the bodies have been coming past here more often?

Innkeeper:

This waggoner man used to drink with you
Your companion. He won't any more
You used to play games here together
You won't play any more with him as your mate
He died last night of the plague
Alone, in an abandoned house
The plague has shaken hands with all surrounding villages
If you weren't lost to ale you would know of this.

Bob:

Hey, hang on mate - it's you who's selling it; and making a tidy profit. Ah! Indeed.

Log House:

Indeed.

Bob:

There.

(The Innkeeper goes)

Tam:

Poor Ethelred! Only last week we were playing a drinking game with him called 'Who can drink the most ale'. He won easily, didn't he?

Bob

Death is a rampant outlaw - the terror of the town. Midsummer past he came and took away my sweetheart. We had been going to marry and the date we had set then is not long from now.

Tam

Bob - take courage - have another peanut. Is it so ridiculous for us - seeing as we're three and

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Death's but one - to go after him and find him; and kill him? What - is it funny, Log House?

Log House:

Hey. Ey. We can't kill Death, like.

Tam:

Why not?

Log House:

Well he's probably bigger than us. And anyway, I'm happy here with me drink. I've just ordered a pie. It's coming out of the furnace now.

Bob:

Never mind your pie. Can't you put justice before a savoury meat filling?

Tam:

Did you not see Ethelred? Laying there? This villain Death has got away with his tricks for long enough. Who's gonna come and help me make him stop?

Bob:

Me.

Log House:

Alright. Bob - pass me coat.

Part Three:

Pardoner:

So they left the tavern, in itself an act of strangeness for the friends, and caught up with the procession, where they learned that Death had just that morning visited a neighbouring village. As they were still pretty drunk they didn't actually mind having to walk all the way there. Log House wanted to wait for the next horse and cart but, you see, all the population were indoors, gripped with fear because of the devastating effect of the plague.

This is exciting, isn't it? Actually, what I wanna say is - it's hard to capture the essence of all of this on a wood-carving, isn't it, so I am like glad you're here. Oh; my wife loves this tale. I'm not sure if I'm supposed to have a wife being as I'm a pardoner, connected to the legit church and everything. We are waiting for official instruction from the Pope in Rome and we are really hoping that he says it's OK 'cause I'm married now so, you know, what can you say? She's a great girl. Makes nice cake. As I say, we are always moving on - it'd be silly not to be, all the pardoning there is. Though I might have to give all this up if the church authority says no wives as, you know, although getting people to pay so their souls can get cleansed is important in the great scheme of things, I like a bit of company at night, you know what I mean? She's great. I've got a wood-carving of her - in here. Here. Anyway, Rebecca's her name. I bought her for twenty guineas.

Those were the good old days; back when I had twenty guineas to throw around. Anyway, what was I saying? I'm sorry. I could talk all day; ha ha - that's good, for my job! I bet what you want to hear is the next part of my tale. Just gonna down some grog. Have some if you want. What? As I should say, 'When they han goon nat fully half a mile, Right as they wolde han troden over a stile - ' are you following? Well, I'll try and make it, explain it better later - 'An oold man and a povre with hem mette. This olde man ful mekely hem grette'. In a nutshell,

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right, what I'm trying to say is they came across an old guy, a very, very old man with hoary hair, i.e. white - which is a good explanation of the word 'hoary'. OK? Before this occurrence - well, let's just go back to a few moments before...

(The scene changes to a cart track)

Bob:

Do you know, I'm as tired as a tag-tailed bobble.

Tam:

And I'm as hungry as a man in August who can only eat Easter eggs due to a medical condition and forgot to stock up on them.

Log House:

Look youse two, will you stop moaning. I have had this big thing in me boot all the way an' you don't 'ear me complaining, do you?

Tam:

That's your foot.

Log House:

Eh, is it? Ar right. I wondered what that was.

Bob:

Look, we're bound to come across this place, the village of Thrumbstall, soon. We're on the right track. In fact there is only this one track . Ey. We're bound to get there before this afternoon.

Log House:

Eh, if we're walking two miles, right, to this place, at a rate of one mile per hour then we're bound to get there in about - . (All think) Er, soon.

Tam & Bob:

That's right. Of course.

Log House:

Personally I hope that we get this Death thing over sooner rather than later and get back in our old snug for a good round of our old drinking games.

(They spy a very Old Man coming towards them)

Who's this old feller?

Bob:

He's giving me the creeps. He looks eerie.

Tam:

Look at his hair. It is what can only be described as 'hoary'.

Old Man:

Greetings to you, gentlemen. God save you. Where yonder are you headed? Tell an old man.

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Tam:

Listen, Grandpa - get out of our track. What's it to you what we're doing or where we're going? You're just an old man, with hoary hair at that.

Old Man:

Now one moment - .

Log House:

We're going to find Death, like, in the village of Thrumbstall - and when we find him, we're gonna kill him.

Old Man:

Really?

Tam:

Log House! Why do you have to tell him all our plans? And anyway - why are you called Log House? I've let it pass all these years we've been friends but my strong curiosity, finally, must be satisfied.

Log House:

I'm called Log House because I was born in a log house - a store house for logs.

Tam:

Well by that logic I should be called Roaring Brook, because I was born beside a roaring brook.

Bob:

And by that logic I should be called House Which No One Came Near, because I was born in a house which no one came near.

Tam:

But instead you're called Bob.

Log House:

I somehow prefer Bob. Is it short for something? (Bob nods proudly) What?

Bob: Philip. (Pause. To the Old Man) Right then - you'd better be getting along your way then?

Old Man:

Er, no.

Pardoner:

The old man was indeed going along a certain way. His was a road with no definite end. He said...

Old Man:

I have wandered, not just yonder but near and far over the whole wide expanse of the earth, and back again, and then wandered again - forever treading wearily, putting one step in front of the other, endlessly seeking rest, yet pressing ahead as if the only food my body need for fuel be to move forward, to walk, walk, walk, walk, walk.

(Pause)

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Log House:
Don't you get corns?

Old Man:
'For I ne ken nat fynde a man, though that I walked into Ynde - '

Tam:
Now you've lost me there, pal.

Old Man:
'Neither in citee ne in no village', that would exchange his youth for my age. What I mean is - what I long for is to be at rest - for Death - but am forced instead to wander the earth, butt of many a man's mocking words, a beggar, knocking on the earth with my stick - (he does so): please mother - let me in. Look - how my flesh, my face stretches over bone till translucent it has become. (Shouting at the barren ground) Shall I be dust before you let me home?

Tam:
I do feel sorry for you but what has it got to do with us?

Old Man:
You are seeking Death. We have met, but he refuses to listen to my pleading.

Bob:
But to kill Death.

Log House:
Yeah, like, to kill him. Hey. You know - you said you've met Death - that villain who killed Ethelred - ?

Tam:
Careful, Logboy - he may be dangerous.

Old Man:
I assure you on oath - all I possess stands in the sight of all three of you. If you are truly seeking Death - and as I've told he will not listen to my complaints for rest - you should go up that way, left, not straight on as you are. For beneath a tree, in the grove yonder, I left him only recently. May God grant you peace.

(The Old Man leaves)

Bob:
Right. Thanks. Bye.

Log House:
Bye.

Tam:
What d'you wanna do? D'you wanna go?

Part Four:

(The scene changes to the fateful grove)

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Pardoner:

They did go, and the spot he'd shown them wasn't far away but instead of finding Death they found florins - eight bushels worth. And that's more than I've ever made in six weeks of public engagements. Anyway, it's about this much (he gesticulates). If a bushel is - wait. (Pause) Eight - . (Pause) Anyway - the friends danced and made a shower of the lovely shiny coins...

Bob:

Can you believe it? We're rich! Rich beyond our wildest dreams!

Log House:

There's got to be eight bushels worth 'ere, at least!

Pardoner (Interjecting):

Only eight.

Bob:

What's the matter?

Tam:

I thought that old guy said we were going to find Death here - under these branches.

Bob:

What does that matter now? He was wandering in his mind.

Log House:

Bob's right. Put it out of your thoughts. It's a miracle. Sit down here. Look at it - this beautiful, beautiful gold. I've never seen coins this shiny and new - they're untouched by mortal hand.

Bob:

Log's right, Tam. Someone's done us a big favour here. I never imagined when I woke up that by three o'clock this afternoon I'd be rich. We'd be.

Tam:

That's right, Bob. And Log House. We'll share the money; split it evenly! Oh - . Eee! (Pause) I've got a funny feeling in my basin! I'm going to be sick.

Bob & Log House:

We're rich! We're rich! (Squeals)

Tam:

Let's have a song.

All (Singing):

I saw my maid err, oh so fair
At her kitchen table
I said, 'Oh love, please let's be wed'
She hit me with a ladle.

Pardoner:

So there they stayed under the tree, hardly able to contain their excitement. None of them had known money before. They'd never had one florin to rub together, never mind eight bushels worth. None of them had ever had two florins which hadn't immediately gone into the pocket of the innkeeper. They planned how they would spend it...

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Log House:

I'm gonna buy meself a castle, like - I'll do it up an' that, put in some new paintings, new turrets and curtains an' new eyeholes - you know, them long, pointy windows what you shoot arrows out of. I'm gonna do it proud but I'm not gonna go and live there. I'll rent it out to visiting Kings and Princes and make them pay through the nose for it. I'll live in me shed still.

Bob:

Good idea, Loggers. I'm gonna buy some tulip seeds and grow a field with loads of tulips in. I'll charge admission to see it. People will come and visit it from all over Europe. Merchants, artisans, windmill owners. All will wonder at my field of tulips. Why, I'll even get in the Domesday Book with it - if they bring out a revised edition.

Log House:

I'm gonna become posh. I'm gonna have electrocution lessons and buy some longer lasting flannel trousers. I've had these on for several months now without a wash and, you know, you do get tired, like, of the same old, old threads and desire new ones. With the leftover money I'm gonna buy meself a name, you know.

Bob:

A title, like the Duke of Mansfield, or Lord Log House of East Essex? What about Earl of Cumbrihore? You've got a few options open.

Log House:

No, when I say a name I mean a proper name for myself - like James or Trevor, or Bob.

Bob:

Hey, mine's spoken for!

Log House:

How many people with money do you know called Log House?

Bob:

How many people do we know with money?

Bob & Log House:

Us! Ha ha ha ha! Oh - .

Bob:

What are you gonna do with your spoils? Oy!

Tam:

What? Oh, I was just thinking; looking at all that gold, I could go away, leave our village, leave my family and everything I know. I don't know. I'd just keep on walking, keep going, experiencing different things. Staying in inns; broadening my expectations. I'd just set off; with gold in my pocket it would not be a problem for wherever I went people would want to know me. I'd be popular; and stay off the ale. I wouldn't need to drink like a fish because wherever I'd go, whenever I opened my purse people would hang on my every word.

I would make friends with emperors, with Kings, with noblemen and women. With people who have never slept in hay or on the ground. We'd dine together and I would be their host, presenting them with the finest menus. I have heard about places which are different to here. In the Crusades, so they say, Richard went to Palestine where they don't have grass on the ground - no, they have sand. I'd love to go there. I'd buy a horse, which would take me from place to place and if its foot got sick or wouldn't heal because of a bad shoe I could get it fixed

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immediately so it wouldn't limp.

Think of the clothes I could buy with it. New clothes, new shoes. Things which have been made by a tailor - a tailor, to fit just me! To think that nobody believes I could ever become anything. When I'd gone through all these things and got bored of it I would go off to the sea, stand on the edge of a cliff and shout with my voice, nice and loud, to the line faraway where the world finishes. 'Course, if it is a waterfall there, where the sea meets the sky, well good luck to it. I will have seen it, measured it, with these eyes if it is a waterfall at the world's end. Because at the moment I haven't seen it.

I think it's important we all - . When I'd done with fame and lording over all manner of people from Kings to courtiers, to princes, to people who have seen things, those that have known - I would go to the seashore and use the remainder of the coins to make sure that I was alone, and could always be alone.

(Pause)

Bob:
Why?

(Pause)

Log House:
I've had a thought, right. What if people think we're thieves - think we've stolen the dosh?

Tam:
Good point, Log House.

Bob:
Well, we can't flash it around straight away. And I think we ought to move somewhere where we're not known - for a while. Hide it.

Tam:
Good advice. (Pause) But first - I suggest we have a feast. I propose someone goes into the village with one of these coins and gets us all a nice piece of bread and ale and cheese. To make it fair - as they'll be leaving behind a load of wealth - we shall draw lots to see who goes.

(They use blades of straw. Tam holds the three straws. Each of them draws)

Log House:
Mine's long.

Tam:
It's not me - we're even.

Bob:
OK. I'll go. Guard it, hm? For all your lives are worth. Won't be long.

Log House:
Ah - great. Well done mate.

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Tam:
It's best the youngest fetches for his elders.

Bob:
OK. I'll go and get some victuals. (To Log House) Salt & Vinegar flavour? (Log House nods. To Tam) Prawn Cocktail flavour? (Tam nods) Alright. An' I'll get a loaf. Brown or white?

Tam:
White. We're gonna need plenty of carbohydrates if we're going to carry this lot to a safe home.

(Bob heads off back to town, turning to watch the others warily)

Log House:
Right, now he's gone are we gonna split all the dosh halves, like? You know, I'll scratch your back if you tickle under me arm, you know. I can sense this curious chemistry between us - can you? And I'm not talking about those magic mushrooms in that briar patch either. We'll 'ave them later.

Tam:
I know. This is turning into a lucky day of the first order. (Pause. He looks at Log House, then decides) Yes. Then stand down there and guard the south side of the hoard. We're going to have to use extreme caution. And be exceedingly cautious too.

Part Five:

Pardoner:
Meanwhile, inside the village perimeter it hadn't taken Bob long to buy some sandwiches and assorted pots of dripping and other sundry victuals, some of which were literally dripping. He was soon walking down a pretty cottage lane to meet his friends again. Then the hungry lad was struck in the head by a terrible thought: he would wolf down all of the victuals himself. Which he did - and went on his way again. When a yet more heinous thought fell into his head...

(The scene changes. We see Bob who is back in the village again. He enters a chemist's shop. The chemist is rather deaf and tends to shout)

Bob:
Hello. Good day - are you an apothecary

Apothecary:
What's it to you?

Bob:
I want to buy some poison.

Apothecary:
What?

Bob:
What for? To kill my friends because we've all come into some money, and... Oh dear! I've given me game away! Please don't turn me over to be hanged sir, please. I've never fancied it

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really. I wouldn't be very good at it, I'm sure. It's, it's - think, Bob, think! - it's to get rid of rats under me floor.

Apothecary:
What?

Bob (Shouting):
I've got rats!

Apothecary:
Rats? Where?

Bob:
At my home!

Apothecary:
In Rome...??!

Bob:
At my house!

Apothecary:
A sly mouse? I thought you said rats! Have you both?

Bob:
I did!

Apothecary:
A fib? Don't lie!

Bob:
I'm not!

Apothecary:
A shock? You shouldn't produce falsehoods. Criminals always get their just deserts.

Bob:
I don't like puddings. I haven't a sweet tooth.

Apothecary:
Planning on a meat booth, eh? A crazy experiment but I'm not going to let my education stand in your way. Anyway, I - .

Bob & Apothecary (Together, slowly and deliberately):
- haven't got time to stand here passing the time of day with the third runner up in last month's village idiot competition.

Bob (Exasperated):
Have you got an ear trumpet?

Apothecary:
Yes, about half past ten.

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Bob (Finding an ear trumpet):

Ah. Can you fill these two flasks with poison, your best most dangerous stuff, if you please? I can pay you handsomely.

(The Apothecary fills both the flasks)

Apothecary:

That's very kind of you. No one's ever called me handsome before. Though I was once voted alchemist most likely to have a long beard.

Bob:

Oh. (He pays) There's mead in this one. (He points to a third, smaller flask)

Apothecary:

I know. I think it's better to take them out of the oven after twenty minutes myself, just to let the mixture gel, and then stick it in, at a slightly lower temperature, near to boiling point, till you've given it forty five minutes in all. Anything else, was it?

(Bob leaves the chemists, shaking his head)

Pardoner:

Where am I? One of the things I hate, about this, about being a pardoner, is the travelling. Moving from place to place. Oh, I should say I get some satisfaction from the job - from the way that people respond, not just from the money. People are so grateful to me for letting them be able to buy their piece of Heaven. You should see some of their faces, hear what some of them have come up to me and said. Yet I didn't pick this profession. I more like kind of fell into it really.

What's that there? I will be selling relics at the end of my tale - . And I haven't just got cloth but all different kinds of fragments of possessions which once belonged to the saints - . I've got a sandal belonging to a Celtic hermit. And he wants it back. No - . It's only a joke. He's hopping mad. Yes! Thank you - I'm here all week!

I've got a stool that was given by a fool to the Bishop of Goole by a sacred pool. I've got bits off a chair which was once sat on by Saint Augustine - for three guineas. What was I going to say? My wife Rebecca wants me to stop, stop all of this life, and settle down with her and live out our days in peace. I don't know 'cause it's the only life I've known, except when I was growing up on our farm. I tell her that I'm working to serve the Lord, helping to cleanse people's souls and she says God - only God can wash the soul.

Are you gonna be interested in what I'm going to offer? It won't be long. I've almost finished. When she's asleep I watch her, her eyes shut and hair on her face. It's beautiful, the most beautiful sight to see in the world, more beautiful than any sky or field or sea I've seen. I think there's no need for me to keep travelling around. What is it I'm seeking? What's it for? Because the most beautiful piece of God's creation is here with me. Then I do feel blessed by God. When I'm there, thinking these things I feel that I could easily throw it all in. Do something else, start a new line of work; something positive, which doesn't involve - as she calls it - fleecing. She's not one to beat around the haystack, my wife, but. I look at her and think, 'you're a good woman, the best, Bec. I want to do this for you, change my life.' And she speaks, without speaking, if you see what I mean: 'I'll help you. I'll be your strength what you won't know.'

I said once to her about going and working in a town - someday. I would be a cobbler, which

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Waterfall

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of course is my trade. She would earn extra money sewing - and she sounded keen. There's no money in cobbling, not like this. Or sewing. But when I'm lying next to her at night, as I say; stroking her face, her warm breath and hair on me; kissing her closed eyes and little cheek...

I'm sort of going on. Anyway.

(Enter Bob, eventually coming up to where Tam and Log House sit)

Bob thought not about such things as breath - just florins. He left the chemists and wandered up to the place under the boughs of the tree where he had left his friends. Now - neither of them were pleased that Bob hadn't either florin or food for their feckless, festive fortune-feting feast - but because of their plan they let it roll...

Log House:

Thanks, mate, for the mead. Eh, you were right not to bring us back any scran.

Tam:

I'm not very hungry, ta lad.

Log House:

That's right. And who wants the florin back or wants to know on what it was spent, like?

Tam:

We don't! Ha ha ha ha!

Tam & Log House:

Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha - ey.

Bob:

But I did get some best quality mead, from the finest mead shop in the village. Here are your two flasks, and that small one's mine.

Tam:

Thanks, Bob. Cor!

(Tam and Log House jump on Bob, attacking and killing him)

Bob:

Stop! Murder! Ahh!

Pardoner:

But they didn't stop and, do you know what? (Pause) After they had murdered Bob they found they were very thirsty. Wait a minnow - you're ahead of me there, aren't you? That's right, seizing on the flasks they drank until they had finished every solitary drop...

Log House:

Ey - Tam - I thought this was - er - our lucky day. (He dies)

Tam:

When I have gone, I want but one thing. Tell my old dog, Nuzzle, that I've only gone and died. And left the land of woe and pain. I never sought to call upon my dog this loss. May he truly be a nuzzler and nestle my earthly shell, though the soul be absent from within. May I find assurance when my spirit has flown, that this paltry walk in the garden isn't all. (He dies)

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Pardoner:

Oh - what wrong! What wickedness! What moral dearth, what woe! And all so that they may fill their perishing worm-holed mortal sacks with wine instead of mead; with celery instead of swede; with grapes instead of apple tart, despite grapes being a bit fiddly.

But, you should all agree with me that this has been a lesson of immense moral importance - and has more than proved my text. What I've wanted to say is: *radix malorum est cupiditas* - the love of money is the root of all evil. Think! Yes! Of the better ways in which your money could be invested rather than licentiousness and drinking. Think not of how a pardoner will spend the florins which he will gladly receive and probably put on a dog, but rather what the benefits will be, claimed by your soul thereon.

You are more than welcome, now, to view my holy merchandise; to unburden yourselves of money, the love of which leads, as I say, to death and unthinkable suffering. I think it's only fair that any elderly are served first. Anyway - . Yes, don't wait before you take your opportunity to lighten your financial agenda. I'm gonna be behind that table, over there, till about sundown. Now that's a good length of time, isn't it? And think! The more money you give away to me the more money I will have; which will mean, in converse proportions of course, I will have to pray all the harder, for both you and particularly for me, that I don't fall into fiscal malatraction. Thank you very much. Good afternoon to you.

The End