



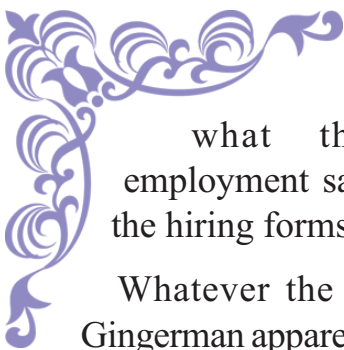
A Fiscal Fairy Tale

By Tom Brown

The records in Personnel are incomplete. As well as anyone can tell, Gingerman was hired by someone working in the kingdom's cafeteria. Perhaps it was the lady who made all the desserts.

“We need someone who's personable and friendly — an outgoing sort of chap — someone who can charm the workers and knights and ministers as they wait to be

Gingerman



served.” That was what the requisition for employment said, the one attached to the hiring forms for Gingerman.

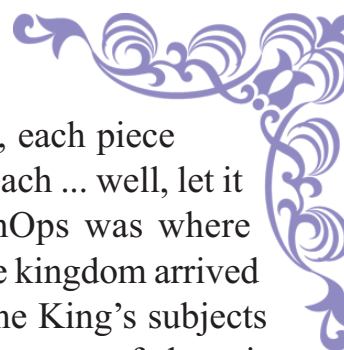
Whatever the reason for his hiring, Gingerman apparently did his job along the cafeteria lines *too* well. Everyone loved him. He sang. He told quick jokes and jollied one patron after the next. People soon forgot

...a rugged chap whose rough facial stubble revealed a man not too keen on social etiquette.

what they ate in the cafeteria, but the image of young Gingerman scooting about, singing and laughing, was indelible.

But after working in the cafeteria for only a week, Gingerman was procured by the Accounting Department as a finance translator. After another week, he was snatched up by Personnel itself to be a resource representative. Then, before the ink on Personnel’s own department transfer forms had dried, Gingerman was asked to work in Central Operations, the heart of the King’s command structure.

As he had with his supervisors in the cafeteria and in Accounting, Gingerman charmingly said that he appreciated the big break he had been given, but he needed to avail himself of this new and exciting opportunity. So barely into his third week working for the kingdom, Gingerman was thrown into CenOps like a cookie into a very deep jar.



CenOps was where each horse, each sword, each piece of armor, each banner, each ... well, let it suffice to say that CenOps was where everything needed in the kingdom arrived first. Only the best of the King’s subjects were considered for a tour of duty in CenOps. That is why Gingerman stood out so quickly, even on his very first day.

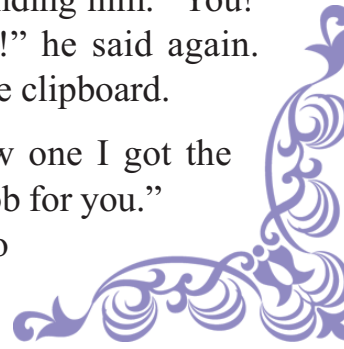
“Gingerman,” said the Deputy Chief of CenOps, “welcome aboard. I have an important assignment for you!” The Deputy Chief was a rugged chap whose rough facial stubble revealed a man not too keen on social etiquette. His ever-present clipboard and handy pencil, on the other hand, revealed a man who liked to set forth tasks to do — and then check ‘em off! “Gingerman, I need you to count the new load of sheep. Get a good count, and make sure it ties to this ‘ere bill of lading. Make sure we don’t pay for one ‘ead more than we ordered.” Gingerman, smile ablazing, snapped his fingers and was immediately “on task.” As he hopped, he started to sing.

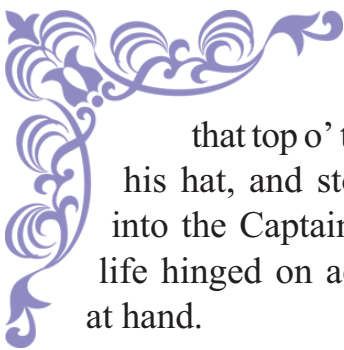
Run, run, as fast as you can!

What a guy; I’m Gingerman!

On his way to count the sheep, he was stopped by the Captain of the Guard, a most impressive fellow bedecked in a metal suit so shiny and bright that Gingerman had to hold his arm up and the side of his head to keep the glare from blinding him. “You!” said the captain. “You!” he said again. Gingerman set down the clipboard.

“You! You’re the new one I got the memo about. I have a job for you.” Gingerman, ever eager to





please, flashed him that top o' the mornin' smile, tipped his hat, and stood at attention staring into the Captain's eyes as if his whole life hinged on accomplishing the chore at hand.

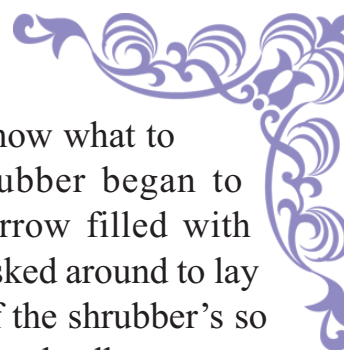
“Gingerman, get me a full count of the armor we have on hand and the amount of armor oil we have to polish it! The King has a procession this Friday, and we have to be sure that we can spiff up every one of his guards!” Without a word, Gingerman did his best salute (for he had not been trained as a soldier!) and vigorously snapped his body to the left with his right arm, hand, and finger pointing skyward. His swagger announced he had been commissioned, and his finger pointed only toward armor and oil.

Run, run, as fast as you can!

Can't do better than Gingerman!

Just as he ran past the sheep stalls toward the armory, he was stopped again, this time by the Chief Shrubber. The young employee dropped his arm to his side and listened intently. “Gingerman, I say... that is you, isn't it, Gingerman?” Nodding and squinting his eyes at the same time, he could not imagine what the man with the green-stained shears could possibly want of him.

“Gingerman, my crew uses their shears on every hedge and grassy quad day in and day out. There must be a way to sharpen these so we can, shall I say, chop-chop that much better. I need you to sharpen all our shears!” This induced a strange reaction in Gingerman; for a moment, with fingers stroking his



silk-smooth chin, he looked like he didn't know what to do. As the Chief Shrubber began to withdraw the wheelbarrow filled with shears, Gingerman whisked around to lay his hand right on top of the shrubber's so that in no time at all, the wheelbarrow was under his own command. With a short leap

*Always pleasant. Always chipper.
Always helpful. Well... I'm not!*

of both feet in the air, clicking heels, Gingerman was off!

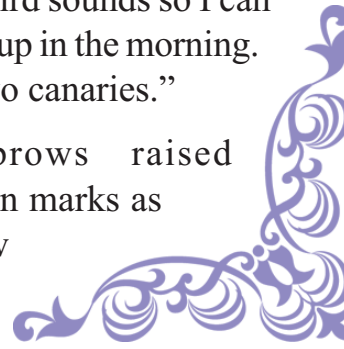
Run, run, as fast as you can!

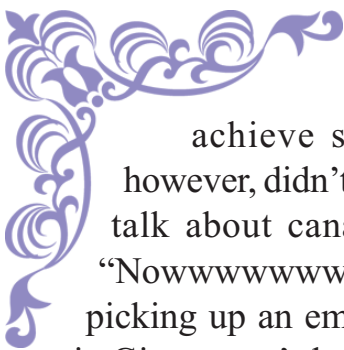
The one you want is Gingerman!

As the shears jangled loudly in the rumbling wheelbarrow he pushed, Gingerman was accosted by a lady-in-waiting (who also seemed to be in a real hurry). “You're Gingerman, right? Heard about you. Always pleasant. Always chipper. Always helpful. Well... I'm not!” Her breasts heaved as she crossed her arms, effectively blocking Gingerman from moving even an inch further.

“What would make me happy is nothing less than a pair of golden canaries to sing and chirp and...” her voice, almost breaking into laughter, was quickly checked, “and generally make happy bird sounds so I can feel better about getting up in the morning. I want you to get me two canaries.”

Gingerman's eyebrows raised themselves into question marks as he began to inquire how





and where he could achieve such a feat. The lady, however, didn't approach Gingerman to talk about canaries, so she snapped, "Nowwwwwww!" Then she bent over, picking up an empty birdcage, and set it in Gingerman's helpful hands.

Gingerman, setting the wheelbarrow off to one side, started to whistle as a sign of sure-can-do. And as he whistled, he sang.

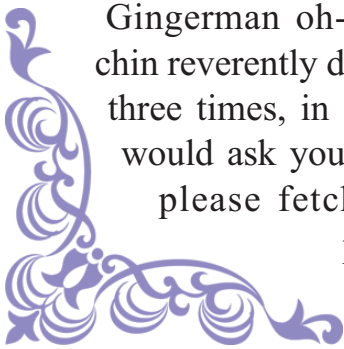
Run, run, as fast as you can!

You can bet the ranch on Gingerman!

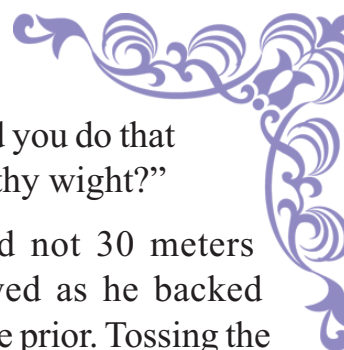
Dashing toward the ParaPet Store, Gingerman's puffed-out sleeve was tugged

Yet his winning ways, his dapper dress, the handsome part in his hair, the gleaming smile — all seemed sufficient for the moment that led to each new mission.

by the kingdom's Prior, a senior member of the King's church. "Gingerman, my child. Welcome to the kingdom! I invite you to come to pray with me each evening after dinner. Will you do that, my son? Will you serve the church each day in this modest but important way?"



Gingerman oh-so-slowly brought his chin reverently down to his chest, two or three times, in assent. "Oh, yes, and I would ask you, little lamb, could you please fetch some wood for my priory? It is so cold after



evening chapel. So... so... so *very* cold. Would you do that for me as well, my worthy wight?"

Seeing the woodshed not 30 meters away, Gingerman bowed as he backed away reverently from the prior. Tossing the birdcage toward a nearby trash barrel, Gingerman went on his way to collect and carry wood for the churchman.

Run, run, as fast as you can!

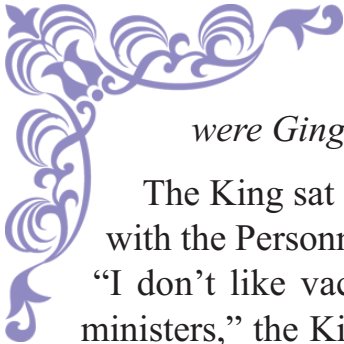
Everyone loves Gingerman!

During his first full week in CenOps Gingerman met just about everyone in the King's direct employ. And all he met had a job for him to do. Fresh and eager — and ready as a whip, Gingerman said "Yes!" to them all: butcher, mason, baker, huntsman, courier, falconer, farrier, public relations director. But, try as he might, Gingerman couldn't seem to complete any task assigned to him.

Yet his winning ways, his dapper dress, the handsome part in his hair, the gleaming smile — all seemed sufficient for the moment that led to each new mission. Some who employed Gingerman never checked to see that his work was done, and some noted that he hadn't gotten back to them on the work they requested. By and large, however, they all just smiled and wrote off Gingerman's lack of results to his naivete. Further, since few in CenOps ever spoke to anyone else, no one really knew the extent of Gingerman's commitments — or his equivalent lapses.



Run, run, as fast as you can!



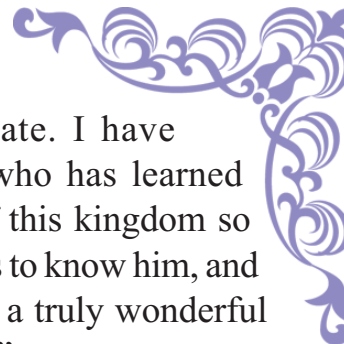
Don't you wish you were Gingerman!

The King sat on his throne, impatient with the Personnel Minister before him. "I don't like vacancies in my circle of ministers," the King barked. "Yes, yes, it *is* sad that the Minister of Money died so unexpectedly yesterday, but I want his spot filled posthaste! I mourn for my dear departed counsellor, but this kingdom can't afford, even for one day, to slough off. Now, whom do you have as a replacement?"

Given The King's temper and tone, no other minister chose to interrupt or to suggest otherwise.

Given The King's temper and tone, no other minister chose to interrupt or to suggest otherwise. The Personnel Minister, his hands clasped tightly to hold the files of all the potential ministers, tried to utter the names of the top nominees. His stuttering, however, begat a low level of royal rage, which was expressed by the King's flaring black eyes and glower.

Sensing the awkwardness of the moment and not wanting the kingdom to be short two ministers in as many days, the Prime Minister begged the King's pardon. "Your Majesty," he then ventured. "I do not know if the name of young Gingerman is in the stack of files of our esteemed Personnel Minister.



"But I have heard his name incessantly of late. I have never known anyone who has learned about the operations of this kingdom so rapidly. Everyone seems to know him, and he seems to have made a truly wonderful impression on them all."

The King could see a table full of ministers all nodding their head in agreement. The Personnel Minister raised his finger to add his own thoughts, but The King stopped him. "Then, do I take it that this grand council of ministers, together and as one, does advise me to entrust our treasury, our economy, our pensions, both our M1 and M2 currency flows into the hands of this new man, this... this... Gingerman?"

Everyone in the room smiled. "Your Majesty," replied the Prime Minister, there's no one more able." And with that, all the other ministers enthusiastically echoed him. "Gingerman!"



The End

Illustration and layout by Mac Thornton

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