

Sir Gideon, how bravely you dispatched those brigands! You must have a reward.

TROUBADOUR

... He was not destined to be an actor.

GIDEON

(back to his prior voice)

Nay, good princess, protecting the kingdom is reward in itself. That and looking upon your face --

(Enter MASTER TRAMMEL, the ornery owner of Trammel Stables. He yanks the broom out of Gideon's hand, disrupting the fantasy.)

TRAMMEL

Boy! Half the morning's done! We didn't become the finest stable in Southhold by lazing about!

GIDEON

I've done all my chores and just pulled a stone out of Aspiration's horseshoe! She might have hurt herself walking on it. I was about to take her out for a run.

(Trammel's wife SHILLELAGH enters and watches disapprovingly.)

TRAMMEL

Done all your chores, have you? Have you brushed down all the horses?

GIDEON

Yes sir!

TRAMMEL

Have you mucked the stalls?

GIDEON

Yes!

SHILLELAGH

Have ye replaced the hinge on the rear gate?

GIDEON

Yes!

TRAMMEL

Checked the saddlebags for holes?

GIDEON

Yes!

SHILLELAGH

Sharpened all the spurs?

GIDEON

Yes!

TRAMMEL

Sorted horse blankets by fabric?

GIDEON

Yes!

SHILLELAGH

Sifted weevils out of the oats?

GIDEON

(wrinkling his nose at the memory)

Ugh, yes.

TRAMMEL

Swept the north stable?

GIDEON

Twice.

SHILLELAGH

Swept the south stable?

(GIDEON doesn't answer; TRAMMEL flips the broom over, thatch downwards, and shoves it into Gideon's hand)

TRAMMEL

Here's your blade, sir knight. Go battle the horse poo.

(aside, to Shillelagh:)

I have half a mind to return that stableboy to the orphanage!

SHILLELAGH

You can't do that, I checked.

(They exit. GIDEON dispiritedly begins sweeping. The ENSEMBLE approaches him, unseen.)

ENSEMBLE

(to GIDEON)