

(The main courtyard of Trammel Stables. Trammel speaks with his wife and business partner, SHILLELAGH. Across the stage, GIDEON hammers dents out a horseshoe.)

(Enter SIR HALLOCK, one the the Royal Cavaliers, a.k.a. the mounted knights of the realm. Confident but polite. He leads his horse and carries a torn saddle.)

TROUBADOUR

That morning, the stables had a very special visitor.

HALLOCK

Oi! Is the stablemaster about?

TRAMMEL

Zounds, it's one of the Royal Cavaliers!

(GIDEON jumps up with attention.)

SHILLELAGH

Quick, put him in a spending mood!

GIDEON

(straining to see)

One of the Royal Cavaliers? Where?

TRAMMEL

You, get out of sight! That is a member of the nobility! I can't have lowborns hovering about him like flies!

(GIDEON hides behind a stall but watches as TRAMMEL and SHILLELAGH rush to attend Sir Hallock.)

SHILLELAGH

Welcome good sir! Welcome to Trammel Stables!

HALLOCK

(proffering the saddle)

Saddle's torn. I was hoping someone here might be able to mend it.

TRAMMEL

Wouldn't you rather have a new horse? We've a sale on Nestemian purebreds. Buy two, get a free mule.

HALLOCK

I think the saddle will be sufficient.

TRAMMEL

(whisks away the saddle)

Think nothing of it! We are experts at...

(squints at it in confusion)

... repair ...

SHILLELAGH

(snatching the saddle)

I'll fix this. You bring out the stallion.

(to HALLOCK)

Just a moment sir knight!

(The two rush off. GIDEON emerges hesitantly.)

GIDEON

M'lord, it looks like your horse has some burrs in her tail. May I brush her down?

HALLOCK

Good eye, lad. That'd be appreciated.

(GIDEON brings over a brush and tends to the horse.)

GIDEON

Are you on a daring mission? To kick down a castle door and challenge everyone inside to battle?

HALLOCK

(finding the boy's enthusiasm endearing)

Nothing that exciting. Just a patrol up the Great Highway.

GIDEON

Is it terribly dangerous?

HALLOCK

Maybe a few scraggly forest bandits, nothing of concern. I gave my patrol partner the day off.

GIDEON

Good sir... do Cavaliers ever have assistants? People to carry their swords when they're not using them?