

THE LITTLE GENTLEMAN

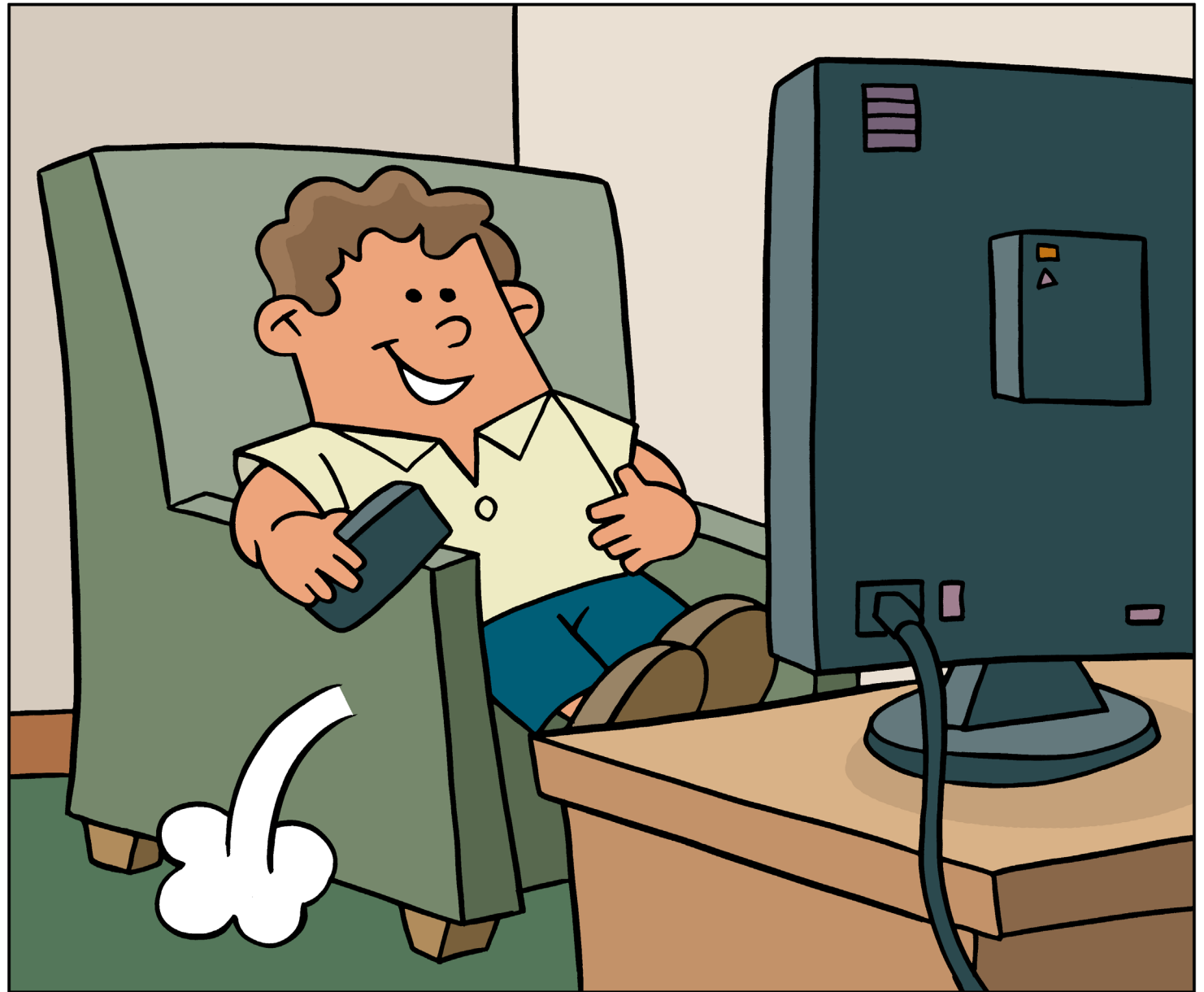
Robert ran into the living room, plopped down on the chair, and stretched out to watch TV. After a few minutes, his mother came in carrying his baby sister.

"Robert, do you think baby Annie and I could sit on the couch?" she asked.

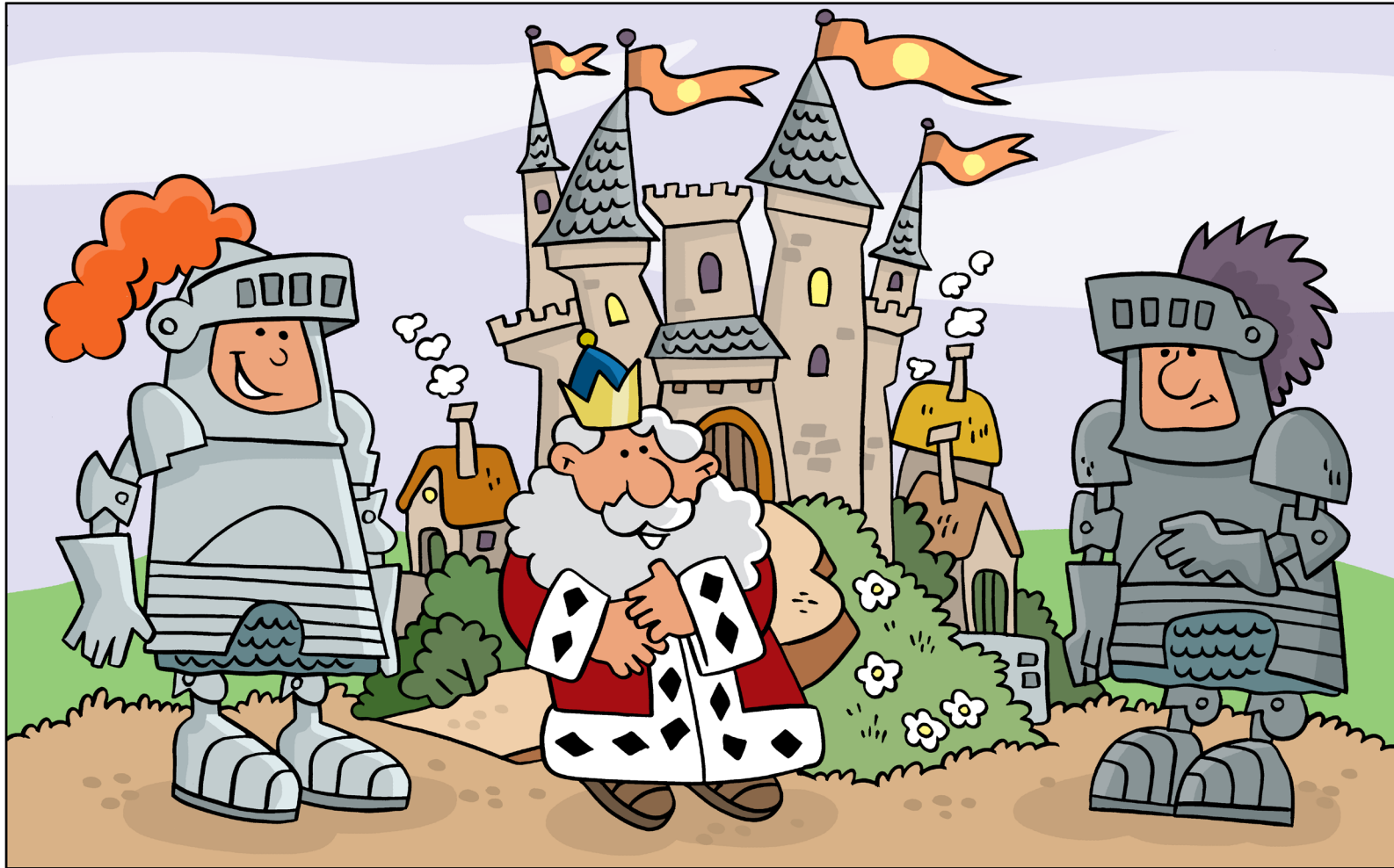
Robert moaned. "Aw, Mom, I'm so comfortable! Why can't you and Annie pull a kitchen chair over to sit on?"

"Now, Robert, if you were acting like a gentleman, you would make space for Annie and me," she said.

"A gentleman?" Robert asked. "What is a gentleman?"



"A gentleman is someone who is kind and courteous, has good manners, and prefers others before himself. Let me tell you a story, and afterwards, you can tell me who you think the gentleman in the story is."



Once upon a time, there was a great castle and in it lived a very kind king. In his kingdom, there were many brave knights. Two of them were Nicolas and Tristan. The king decided to do something to find out which of these two knights was a true gentleman.

The king told the two knights to go to a nearby town to buy a horse for him. He also told them that there was something special about this mission, so they were to do the best they could.

Nicolas was a kind and well-mannered knight, but Tristan only thought of himself and what would make him happy.

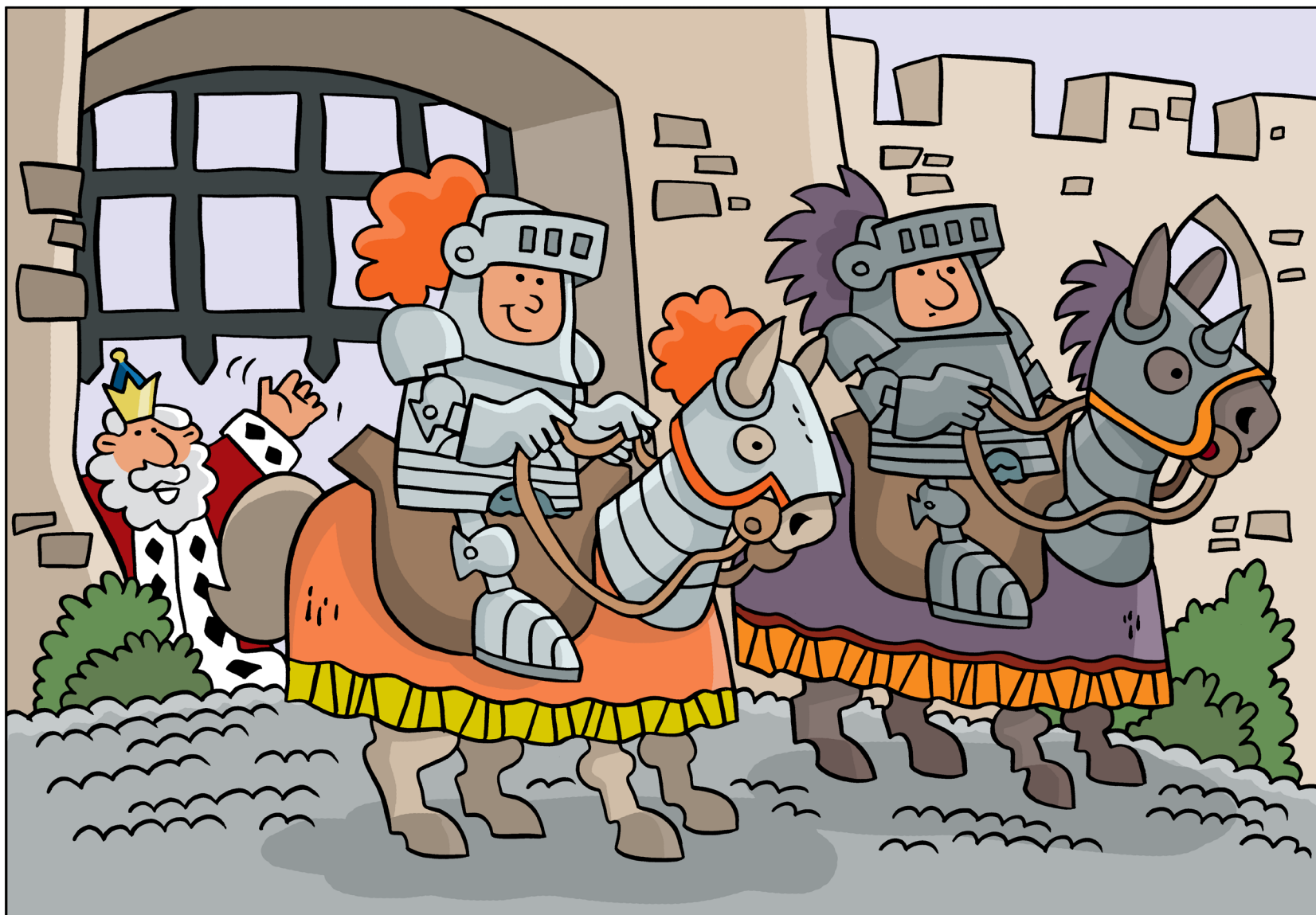
Aha! thought Tristan. I am sure the king wants to know which of us is the best, and I will show him that I can find the best horse.

"You are to leave right away, as I want the horse before sundown," the king said.

"Yes, my Lord, we will do as you wish," replied the two knights.

With that, Tristan and Nicolas got on their horses and galloped away to find a horse for the king.

On their way, they came upon an old woman on the road who was carrying a heavy load.



"Out of the way!" shouted Tristan. "I'm on a mission for the king!"

The old lady quickly stumbled to the side of the road. Tristan galloped by, leaving a cloud of dust behind him and the poor old woman coughing.

"Whoa!" called Nicolas to his horse as he pulled to a halt.

"Good day!" Nicolas called out. "Where are you going with that heavy load?" he asked kindly.

"I am going to the nearby town," said the old woman.

"Let me help you. I will take you to the town on my horse."

"Thank you very much, kind knight!" said the old woman with a smile.



Nicolas arrived at the town a while after Tristan had.

"Where were you?" Tristan demanded to know. "What took you so long?"

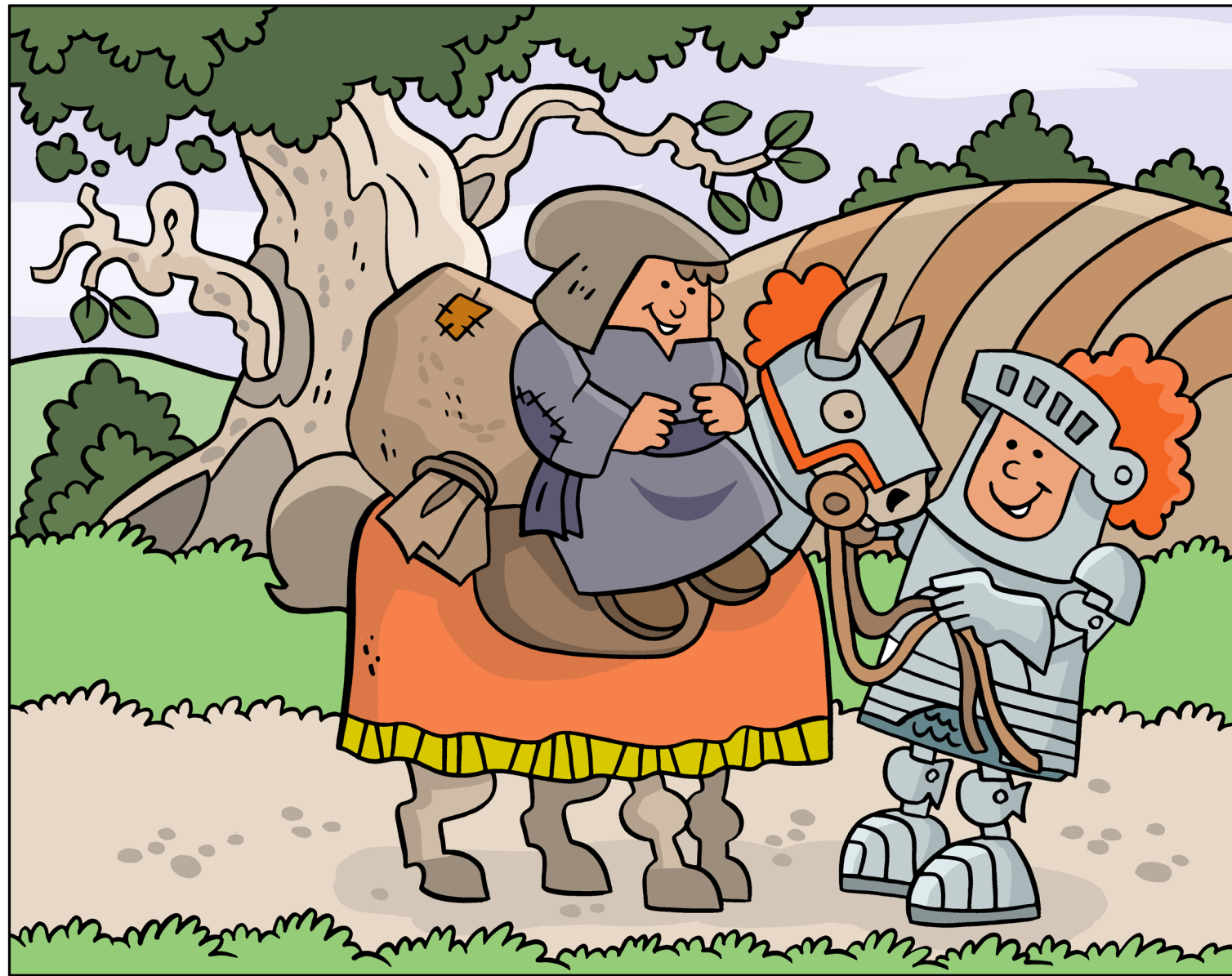
"I was helping an old woman with a heavy load," said Nicolas.

"We're wasting time! Let's ask someone where we can buy a horse," said Tristan.

A baker was setting out some fresh bread when Tristan shouted at him, "You there! I am on a mission for the king. Tell me where I can find the man who sells horses in this town."

"Over there, by the blacksmith," came the quick answer from the startled baker.

"Thank you, kind sir," said Nicolas. "That bread smells mighty good!"



"Here, have some," said the baker with a smile as he handed a warm bun to each of the knights.

"Thank you very much," replied Nicolas. Tristan took the bread and walked away without even turning to say thank you.

After looking at the horses that were for sale, they settled on one they were sure the king would like.

"I want that big white one over there," said Tristan. "I am sure the king will like that one."

"Oh, but we like that one, too," said a little voice from behind the knights.



Nicolas and Tristan turned around to see a young girl and her little brother who said they were there to buy a horse for their family's farm.

"Well, too bad," Tristan said gruffly. "We saw it first, so it's ours!"

The little boy let out a sob. "But sir," said the young girl, "we've been saving up for a long time to buy this horse. A horse like this is very needed on our farm."

"Well, the king also needs it," said Tristan.



"Tristan," Nicolas said, "I think the king would prefer that these people have it, and I am sure we can find another one that the king will like just as much."

"But this is the one we chose—why should we have to let them have it?"

At that moment the king himself arrived on the scene. "Because that is what I would like you to do."

"My Lord!" exclaimed Tristan and Nicolas, as they bowed.

"We didn't know you were here."

"I followed you, as I wanted to see if you would act as true gentlemen on your journey."



"You are both very brave knights, but it's not just bravery that makes you a knight. Kindness and gentle manners toward others are also necessary qualities to make you knightly.

"I am very thankful for your loyalty to me and to my kingdom, but it is equally important that you are also gentlemen and care about my people and have good manners. My knights represent me, and if you are unkind, the people will think that that is how I am too."



"I'm sorry, Mom! Nicolas was a good gentleman and I want to be like that too. What should I do to be a gentleman?" asked Robert.



"To be a gentleman, you would be kind and think about others instead of only thinking about yourself. For example, if someone is carrying something big or heavy and you see they need help, you could hold the door open for them. You could offer to help carry in the shopping. When an elder enters the room, if there is no place for him or her to sit, you could stand up and offer your seat. You could offer someone else the biggest piece of cake. You could say 'excuse me' if you bump into someone. Those are just a few examples.

"A gentleman is always courteous to everyone," explained Mom.

"I'd like to try that," said Robert. "Do you think we could start over?"

Mom walked out of the room with baby Annie. She waited a few minutes in the kitchen before entering the living room. As she walked into the room, Robert stood up with a sweeping bow and said, "Good afternoon, Mother. Would you like a seat?"

"Now that's what I call a real gentleman!"

