

(ARTHUR)

Who's there? Who's there? Come out, I say!

(A YOUNG BOY, about 14, appears from behind the tent)

TOM

(Coming forward)

Forgive me, Your Majesty. I was searching for the Sergeant of Arms and got lost. I didn't wish to disturb you.

ARTHUR

Who are you, boy? Where did you come from? You ought to be in bed. Are you a page?

TOM

I stowed away on one of the boats, Your Majesty. I came to fight for the Round Table. I'm very good with the bow.

ARTHUR

And do you think you will kill people with this bow of yours?

TOM

Oh, yes, Milord. A great many, I hope.

ARTHUR

Suppose they kill you?

TOM

Then I shall be dead, Milord. But I don't intend to be dead. I intend to be a knight.

ARTHUR

(Caught)

A knight

TOM

Yes, Milord. Of the Round Table.

ARTHUR

When did you decide upon this non-existent career of yours? Was your village protected by knights when you were a small boy? Was your mother saved by a knight? Did your father serve a knight?

TOM

Oh no, Milord. I had never seen a knight until I stowed away. I only know of them. The stories people tell.

ARTHUR

From the stories people tell you wish to be a knight?

(HE finds this hard to believe)

(ARTHUR)

What do you think you know of the knights and the Round Table?

TOM

I know everything, Milord. Might for right! Right for right! Justice for all! A Round Table where all Knights would sit. Everything.

(ARTHUR walks away in thought. Then turns to the BOY with a strange inner excitement)

ARTHUR

Come here, my boy. Tell me your name.

TOM

It is Tom, Milord.

ARTHUR

Where is your home?

TOM

In Warwick, Milord.

ARTHUR

Then listen to me, Tom of Warwick. You will not fight in the battle, do you hear?

TOM

Yes, Milord.

ARTHUR

You will run behind the lines and hide in a tent till it is over. Then you will return to your home in England. Active. To grow up and grow old. Do you understand?

TOM

(Disappointed)

Yes, Milord.

ARTHUR

And for as long as you live you will remember what I, the King, tell you; and you will do as I command.

TOM

(No longer disappointed)

Yes, Milord.