



Robin Hood and the Potter

One day, an unsuspecting potter came to Sherwood Forest. For many months, the potter had toiled by his wheel crafting beautiful clay pots and jugs. Now, on his horse and cart, the craftsman was taking his wares to sell in Nottingham. On his journey, he had been keeping an eye out for thieves and bandits. However, once he entered Sherwood Forest, he was to encounter the greatest bandits of all and their leader: Robin Hood.



Robin Hood had not always been an outlaw. In times long past he had been a titled individual. But the new sheriff of Nottingham was a cruel man. Robin could not stand silently and watch the tyrant ruin the lives of the people he ruled. As Robin opposed the sheriff, he was forced to leave his lands and shelter in the forest. From there, he continued his fight, gradually gathering a band of followers to help him in his battles. Sherwood Forest was theirs; any rich merchants who ventured within these wooded lands were soon relieved of money and goods. These were then shared out amongst the poor of Nottingham. Anyone else was required to pay a toll if they wished to cross Robin's domain.

It was Little John, one of Robin's men, who first noticed the potter approach.

"I know that potter..." he said, screwing up his face as he tried to recall a previous meeting.

"Yes," said Robin "and we shall know his money too, soon enough."

"Do not be so certain, Robin," Little John counselled his friend, "I met him at Wentbridge many moons ago. He and I had a quarrel and I am sure my sides still ache from the blows he gave me."



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“He shall pay his toll,” declared Robin. “Watch carefully my friend. I shall show you how to deal with a discourteous potter.”

Yet Little John was not convinced. “I wager forty shillings that it is he who teaches you a lesson.”

“Hah!” said Robin and flashed his crooked grin, “if you do not desire to hold onto your money, I shall happily part you from it.”

At that moment, Robin leapt from cover onto the forest path, forcing the potter to pull suddenly on his horse’s reins.

“Look out, sir!” cried the potter. “I have many fine pots here. I could have broken any of them by braking so sharply.”

“Welcome to Sherwood Forest, noble potter,” Robin said. “I apologise for my sudden appearance, but if you wish to pass this way there is a toll of one penny which you must pay.”

“A penny?” snorted the potter, “you will not see a penny of mine. Let me pass!”

Robin drew a great wooden staff and took a step forward on the path. “A penny - ‘tis but a simple thing. You will part with it willingly or unwillingly. I would suggest that you give it willingly, but the choice is yours.”

The potter’s choice was to draw his own staff and clamber angrily off his horse. He lashed out at the outlaw. Robin countered the first blow. Then, he swung his own staff. The potter easily batted this away and lunged forward. Robin was unable to block the staff this time and the blow knocked him back. He raised his staff again but the potter was quicker. A short flurry of strikes knocked his feet off the ground and the wind from his Robin’s lungs.

Gasping for air, Robin struggled to his feet. Had he the breath to do so, he would have admitted his defeat.

“Well, well,” said a grinning Little John emerging from the forest, “I watched the entire match, Robin but I must confess it was difficult for me to judge. Tell me, who was the victor? Well, did you win the wager?”

Robin grudgingly promised his friend the forty shillings before turning his attention to the potter. Despite his embarrassment, a plan was already forming in the outlaw’s brain. He could see how to turn the meeting to his advantage.



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“You have... the better of me, sir,” Robin admitted, “and so... I waive your toll through the forest. Tell me, where are you taking your wares?”

“I wish to take them to Nottingham where I will sell them.”

“You must already be tired from your travels and a tired traveller does not make a good salesman,” Robin said. “I have already wronged you. Let me right this wrong by offering you food and rest at my camp. I will take your pots to Nottingham and sell them for you. It is surely the least I can do.”



At the mention of food, the potter's nose became aware of the scent of cooking meat wafting from Robin's nearby camp. It had been some time since he had last eaten. His mind thought on Robin's suggestion but his stomach and feet had already decided - he was soon sat by the campfire, devouring the food that was offered.

“Before I go, it might be best if I borrowed your own clothes as disguise,” Robin suggested. “I am not unknown in Nottingham and I am not currently in the Sheriff's favours.”

Distracted by the camp's comforts, the potter gladly traded his own clothes for Robin's Lincoln green. “Do not sell my pots for less than five pence each,” he said.

At Nottingham, Robin stabled the potter's horse and then set about selling the potter's wares. Perhaps his sides still ached when he called out to the villagers, “The finest pots! The greatest jugs! All yours for three pennies a piece!”

The people of Nottingham recognised good quality pottery but were quicker to see a bargain. In no time, they had snapped up all of the potter's goods. Robin had nothing but five pots he had kept on the potter's cart. These he had kept aside. Instead of selling them he took the pots to the sheriff's castle as a gift for the sheriff's wife.



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The sheriff's wife was very happy with these saying, "Thank you, these pots are beautiful. If you are ever in these parts again, be sure to visit for I will buy whatever you have to offer."

Robin promised that he would do this. The sheriff's wife, still pleased with her wonderful gifts, said, "It is only fair that I should offer you a gift of my own. Please, before you return home, dine with me and my husband and accept our hospitality."

"Thank you, my lady," said Robin, "your bidding will be done."

That evening, Robin joined the sheriff and his wife for a fine feast.

"Look at what the potter gave me," said the sheriff's wife, "five fine pots."

Casting his eyes over the potter's wares, the sheriff was indeed pleased and said, "Then he is very welcome here."

Also seated around the great table were many noblemen. As the night passed, their talk turned to the sport of archery. Two of the men recalled a wager they had which rested on who was the greater with a bow and arrow.

"A shooting match!" called the sheriff enthusiastically. "After we have eaten we shall settle this wager."

Once the meal was eaten, the group went out to the castle courtyard where two targets were assembled. The two noblemen moved back to their positions and took aim. They each fired. Both arrows happily struck the target, but neither rested within the centre.

During the match, Robin had watched silently but he broke his silence now. "Fine efforts, gentlemen," he exclaimed, "but If you'll allow me, I'll wager that I could beat you both."

"The wager is forty shillings," sneered the man whose arrow had been closer to the target.

Robin still had the coins from the sale of the potter's wares. "Agreed," he said.

Robin took careful aim with the bow and arrow. When he released the string, he sent the arrow hurtling straight into the centre of the target; there was no doubt that he was the greater bowman and he gladly took the noblemen's gold.



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“You shoot well for a mere potter,” said one of the noblemen, “where did you learn to shoot like that?”

“I was taught by an infamous outlaw of Sherwood forest - the man they call... Robin Hood!”

The sheriff had been fully entertained by the match but now he was all ears. “Robin Hood!” he said, “you know Robin Hood?”

“Indeed I do,” Robin said, “though I have no kind words for the man. Yes, he taught me how to shoot but he is a thief and a scoundrel. If it were within my power, I would wish a hundred - no, a thousand - disasters upon his head.”

“Do you know where I might find him?” the sheriff asked.

“Indeed I do,” Robin replied.

“Then,” said the sheriff, “it seems you and I may be of service to each other.”

That night Robin slept soundly at the sheriff’s castle. When the morning came, the sheriff had gathered a group of his finest soldiers ready to ride out to Sherwood Forest.

“If you can lead me to his hidden lair,” said the sheriff, “I shall reward you well. Robin Hood has plagued me for too long.”

Sherwood Forest had many paths and its thick trees concealed many hiding places. Although the sheriff’s men had spent many hours scouring the woodland they had never found a trace of Robin nor his men. Now, with Robin at their head, they moved confidently to the centre of the forest.

At the centre of a wide clearing, stood a great oak tree. Its massive branches could easily have sheltered many men but today they were bare. As the sheriff’s men circled the tree, they found nothing.

“I see no Robin Hood,” the sheriff snapped.

“Have patience,” Robin replied, “he will come.”

Robin removed a horn of bone from the folds of the potter’s clothes. He placed it to his lips and a loud, long note rang out through the trees. Instantly, the once empty forest was alive with movement. The noblemen spun around in surprise to find themselves surrounded and outnumbered by Robin Hood’s outlaws.



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"I told you you to have patience," Robin Hood told the sheriff. "Now, here I am!"

Robin ordered the sheriff and his band of soldiers to hand over their horses, weapons, clothing and any other goods. The sheriff was also made to swear an oath; he must never again hunt Robin Hood and his band of outlaws. In return for these things, the sheriff and his men were allowed to leave Sherwood Forest with their lives intact.

"Before you leave, Sheriff..." Robin said.

The sheriff had ridden into Sherwood Forest on a white palfrey - a fine horse. Robin handed the animal's reins to the Sheriff.

"Your wife does you much credit. This is in thanks for her fine hospitality. Now go."

With his men trailing behind on foot, the sheriff rode out of Sherwood Forest. Robin and his merry men cheered to see the unfortunate group leave far poorer than they had entered.

"The Sheriff will never honour his promise," Little John said after they had gone. "For he is no man of honour."

"I know," Robin agreed, "but he has made the promise in front of many men and that is a victory of sorts."

As Robin's men counted their captured spoils, Robin sought out the potter.



He returned the man's horse and cart as well as giving him the sales from his pottery. Looking inside the leather bag, the potter counted far fewer coins than he expected. For a moment he made to voice his concern, but a glance around the gang of outlaws convinced the potter to keep his silence.

It was some time before the sheriff returned to Nottingham and his wife. "Well, were you successful?" she asked. "Did you



find Robin Hood?”

“Yes,” said the sheriff, “I found Robin Hood.”

He related the tale of how the potter had been Robin Hood all along. Then he told of his ambush at the centre of the forest and the theft of his goods. His wife was very amused by the story and her mocking laughter cut the sheriff deeper than any sword of Robin’s ever could.

It would not be long before Little John’s words were proved correct; the sheriff’s men returned to Sherwood intent on claiming Robin’s head. However, although they searched endlessly throughout the forest they never found a trace of the outlaw nor his many companions.