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# Robin Hood and the King



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An English Folktale  
Adapted by Katherine Follett  
Illustrated by David Cockcroft

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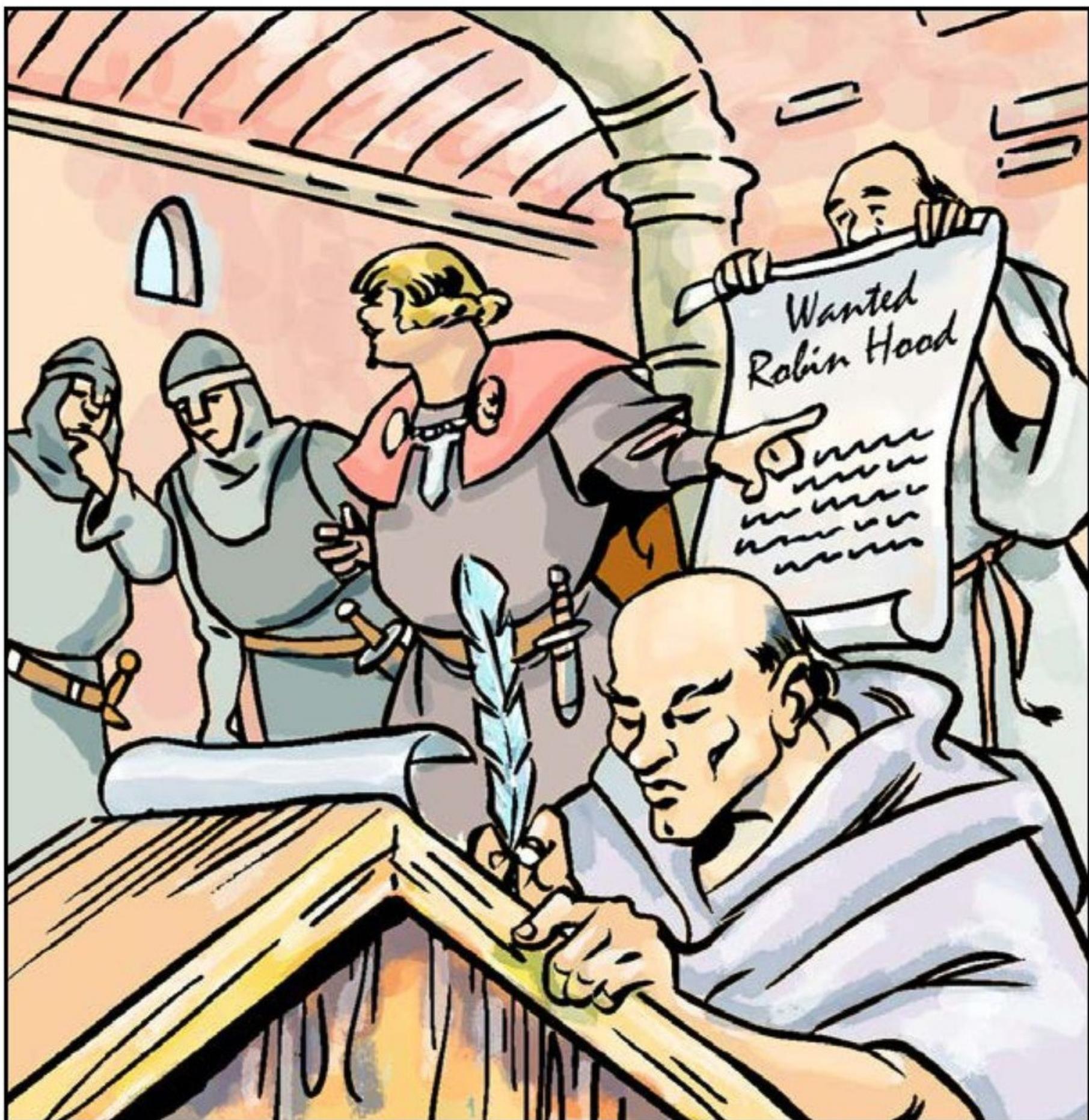
## Introduction

Robin Hood and his Merry Men lived in Sherwood Forest, where no one could find them unless they chose to be found. They knew every tree in the forest as they knew their own family members.

They **camouflaged** themselves in green so that the wicked lords who journeyed near the wood would not see them until it was too late to escape.



King Richard of England was off at war, and greedy lords ruled the land while he was away. Robin Hood and his band robbed these wicked rich men and gave their money back to the poor. The evil lords wanted to hang Robin as a thief, but they could never catch him. Robin thought the **corrupt** lords were the real thieves; they unjustly raised taxes and stole money from the villagers, leaving the common folk of England starving and homeless.



The cruel lords put a price on the heads of the Merry Men and especially their **brazen** leader, but they soon found that the English people loved and admired Robin Hood and his band. No price was high enough to purchase the life of the people's hero. Even the king himself, when he returned from war, could not help but respect this **cunning** outlaw who continued to deceive the corrupt lords, slipping through their fingers like sand whenever they thought they had him in their **clutches**.

## King Richard

"I wish I could look upon Robin Hood just once," said King Richard to his trusty companion, a knight who had served him for many years. "I wish I could see him and his men shoot and wrestle and perform all the feats of skill about which tales are told, but I cannot simply stroll into Sherwood. If they heard that the king was coming, they would think I wanted only to arrest them. They would flee deep into the forest ere I could get a glimpse of them."



King Richard spoke kindly, for he loved all sports and admired those who excelled in them. Robin Hood and his band were widely known to be the best archers, wrestlers, and sword fighters in all the land, which was only natural since they spent all their days in the forest practicing these arts. They used their skills to take back from the greedy lords what rightfully belonged to the poor people of England.

"In sooth, I would give fifty, nay, a hundred gold coins to see Robin Hood and his Merry Men of Sherwood," said the king.

"My liege, I'll tell thee how to see him," laughed the knight. "Don the robes of a fat **abbot** and ride through Sherwood Forest with a pouch full of gold coins. He'll be sure to offer you a feast so he can steal your gold." This was how Robin Hood lured the wealthy lords into the forest while they were traveling, tired and hungry, away from the luxuries they were accustomed to at home. No greedy noblemen with protesting bellies could refuse a feast during a long journey, even if they suspected that the banquet was offered by an outlaw.

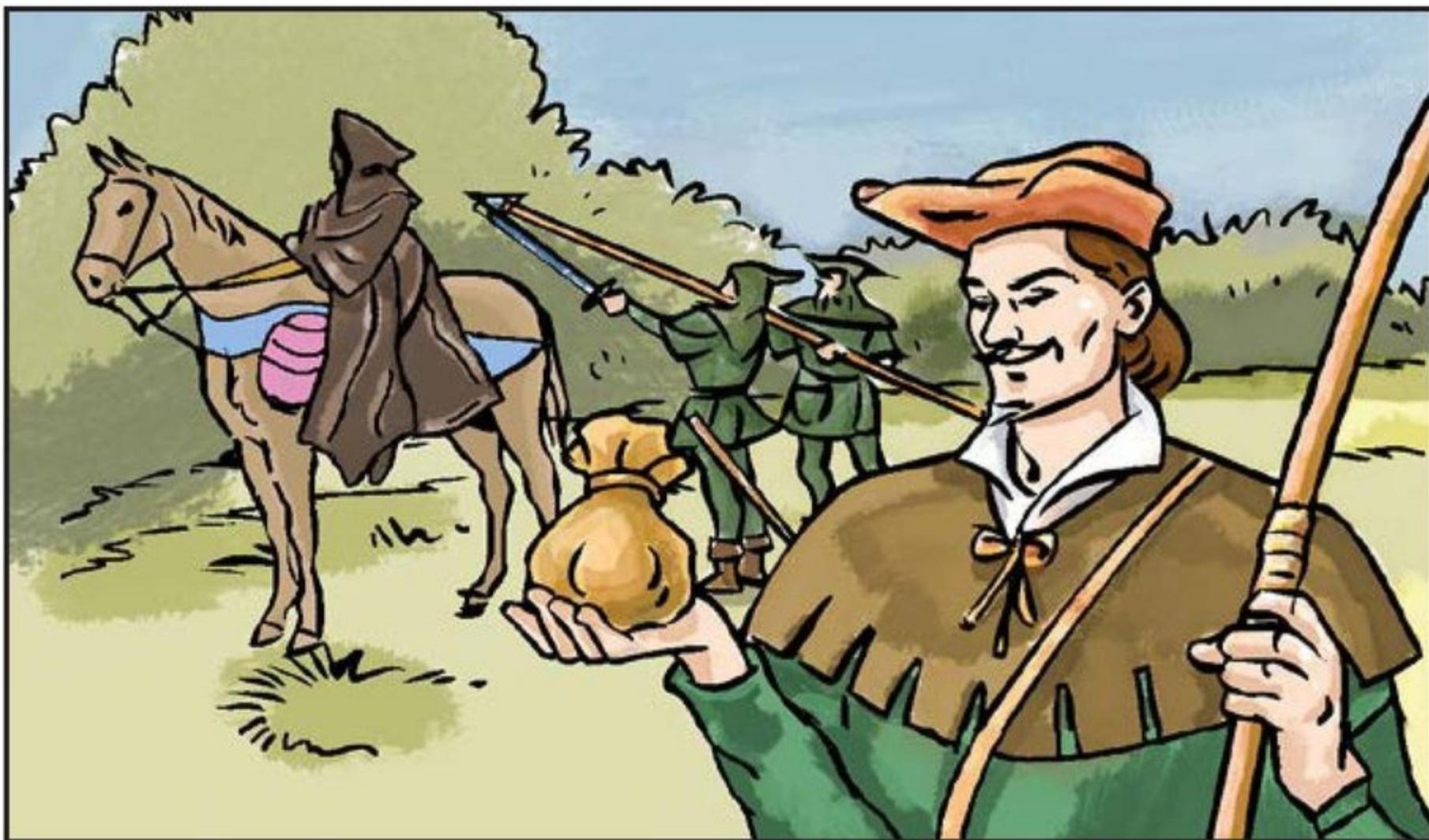
"'Tis brilliant! I'll do it!" cried King Richard, slapping his knee. "Aye, it will be a grand **jest**."





## The Feast

So the king and seven of his knights dressed themselves as an abbot and seven **friars**. They journeyed along the road toward Sherwood Forest, disguised in hooded robes, with the king on a horse and the knights traveling at his side. Sure enough, Robin Hood and his men greeted them on the road with a wave and the promise of a hot meal if they would stay awhile. The Merry Men brought the monks to the meeting tree, an old oak the size of a house, where they searched them and easily found the pouch of gold. But the Merry Men returned one-third of the gold to the pretend abbot because it was not their custom to leave any man in need. Robin Hood was pleased with these churchmen because they did not resist or scold him.



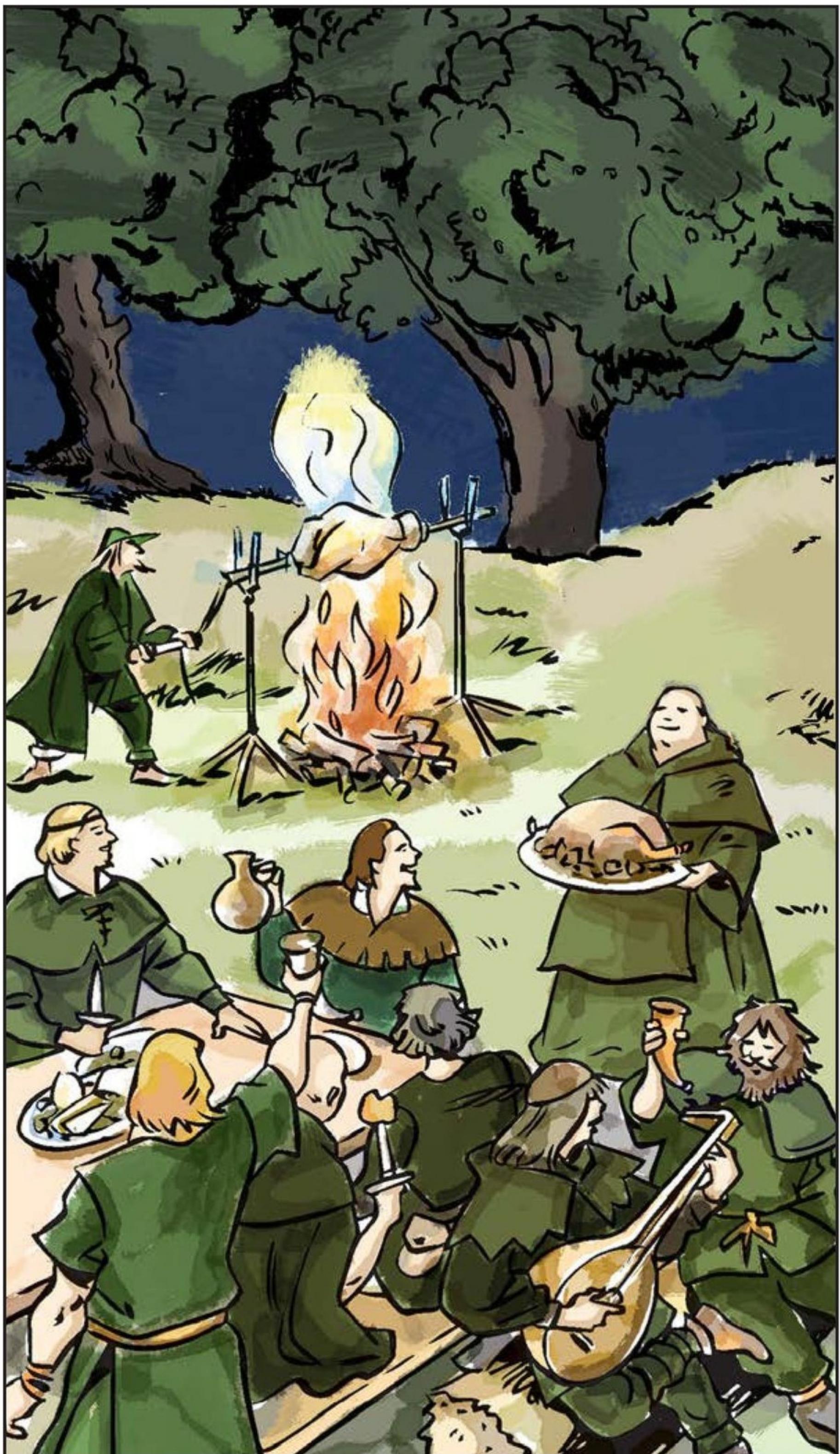
"Come," said Robin Hood, "and we shall give ye a feast worth all your coin."

"I have a good appetite for a feast," said the disguised king. "But even more, good fellow, I would see the fine archery and wrestling and swordplay that ye are famed for."

"Agreed, sir. By my faith, thou shalt see the very best we can do," answered Robin, "but, Holy Father, why not remove thy hood and enjoy this sweet evening air?"

"Nay, I cannot," answered the pretend abbot. "My brothers and I have made our vows not to let our faces be seen ere this journey comes to an end."

"Very well, then," said Robin Hood. "I interfere with no man's vows."





Robin and his men served a splendid feast of roasted **venison**, pheasant, and fish, all cooked to perfection over a roaring fire. And Robin never once suspected that he was entertaining the king. The king was very impressed with the delicious food the Merry Men seemed to produce out of nothing but the forest. He had no idea that outlaws could be so well fed and content while living among the beasts of the woods.

After the men cleared the dishes, they organized the sports, beginning with a wrestling match in which the strength of the men was outmatched only by their agility. King Richard had not seen such skill even during his time at war, and he could see his own men, still disguised in their robes, itching to join the contest. Finally, as the dawn stained the edges of night with pink light, Robin Hood announced the final contest. Each of the Merry Men would demonstrate his skill with a bow.



## The Archery Match

The archery target was a mark that only the best archers could hit, made of a tiny garland of leaves and flowers hanging from a stake a great distance away.

**"Hearken, gentlemen,"** said Robin Hood, "you will each have three shots, and any man who fails to place his arrows within the garland will receive a blow to the side of the head as hard as I can give."

**"Forsooth, can anyone hit inside that little garland at such a distance?"** asked the king in amazement. He could barely make out the outline of the target in the shadowy early-morning light.

"Aye, watch and see, friend abbot," answered Robin Hood proudly.

First, David of Doncaster shot and lodged all three arrows within the garland while the king looked on, astonished. Then Much, the miller's son, also lodged all his arrows inside the garland. These truly were the finest archers in all of England, and the king had not yet seen Robin Hood, who was superior to them all. Then Wat the Tinker drew his bow, but he failed to make allowance for the slight breeze. One of his arrows barely missed the mark.

"Come hither and take thy punishment," called Robin Hood, pretending to roll up his sleeves. The king supposed that, since Wat had missed by so little, he would receive only a tap. Instead, he got a blow that knocked him to the ground.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed his companions.

"Oh, ho!" laughed King Richard. "I am glad I am not in this contest." But he was impressed with the way Robin Hood's men obeyed him. *They are better at following his commands than my servants are at following mine*, he thought.

The shooting went on, and most of the men shot their arrows within the garland, but a few missed and received tremendous punches that sent them rolling like barrels down a hill.



The last to shoot was Robin Hood. His first shaft struck so hard that it split off a piece of the stake upon which the garland was hanging. His second lodged a scant inch from the first. But the final arrow he shot, which was not feathered properly, swerved to one side and missed the stake completely.

Then all the company roared with good-natured laughter, for they seldom saw their master miss.

"Go and take thy punishment, Master," said Much, "and pray it be only half as rough as Wat's was."

"Very well," said Robin Hood, "I shall surrender my arrow to our guest and take my punishment from him."



Robin was being somewhat crafty in this decision. Although he did not mind hard knocks, he did not like the thought of being sent sprawling in front of his band. He guessed that the arms of the churchman would be as soft as pillows, for abbots never worked or used their muscles much. Robin assumed the monk's punch would be weak, but the pretend abbot bared an arm so thick and muscular that the men stared and gasped. King Richard was an active king, and years at war had made him incredibly strong. Robin Hood gulped but placed himself squarely in front of the king, who struck a blow that would have knocked out an ox. Down went Robin Hood, rolling over and over on the ground while his men shouted with laughter.

"Well," said Robin Hood, sitting up, blinking rapidly, half dazed, "ere today, I thought no one in England could strike such a blow. Who are you, man? Methinks thou art no churchman."



## King Richard Reveals Himself

King Richard threw back his hood, and Robin immediately recognized his king. If he had been a disloyal man as well as an outlaw, he would have trembled, but Robin had always remained loyal to his **sovereign**. Indeed, he believed that stealing from the wicked lords and returning the gold to the common folk was the greatest service he could perform for King Richard. Robin Hood had never knelt for any lord, but there was no shame in his voice when he knelt before the king.

"Your Majesty," he said, "you have no subjects in all England more loyal than me and my Merry Men. No evil have we done except to the greedy nobles and rich churchmen who have abused thy subjects. We beg thy pardon if we did wrong, and we beg for thy protection, as we always serve thee faithfully."

The king was astonished that an outlaw should speak so well and with such **conviction**. He was also impressed that Robin Hood hadn't run away for fear of being arrested. The outlaw not only was one of his most loyal subjects, but he was also courageous and noble even beyond what the legends depicted. King Richard also knew that Robin was the best archer in England, and he wanted him by his side.

"I shall forgive all thy lawbreaking and order the nobles to leave thee at peace," he said, "if with me to my court thou wilt come and serve me there. Pray you, bring Little John, Will Scarlet, and Wat the Tinker to become knights in my court. As for the rest of thy men, I shall make them royal rangers. 'Tis certain they can protect Sherwood Forest better than anyone, and they have done good deeds in providing for the common people."

"With all my heart," replied Robin Hood, and a great roar went up from the Merry Men. They adored their king, and though they loved the outlaw life, they had always hoped their good deeds would be recognized by the throne.





So Robin Hood left the greenwood and went to the king's court, where he served King Richard well. His men became rangers of the forest, protecting the land and its people, and Robin Hood was never far from his loyal men. He often disguised himself as a greedy noble, laden with gold, and rode through Sherwood Forest. Only after his men had waylaid him did he reveal himself, congratulating them on their work and, of course, leaving the gold with them to be distributed to anyone in need. With Robin Hood at court and the Merry Men protecting the countryside, the common folk of England never had to suffer under the rule of wicked lords again.

## Glossary

<b>abbot</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the leader of a group of monks (p. 7)
<b>brazen</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	boldly defiant (p. 5)
<b>camouflaged</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	disguised by blending with surroundings (p. 4)
<b>clutches</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	claws or hands that grip and hold something tightly (p. 5)
<b>conviction</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a strong belief or opinion (p. 17)
<b>corrupt</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	dishonest in order to gain something (p. 4)
<b>cunning</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	able to use cleverness to trick others (p. 5)
<b>ere</b> ( <i>conj.</i> )	before (p. 6)
<b>forsooth</b> ( <i>adv.</i> )	in truth; indeed (often used to suggest doubt) (p. 12)
<b>friars</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	Christian monks (p. 8)
<b>hearken</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	listen (p. 12)
<b>jest</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a prank or joke (p. 7)
<b>liege</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a lord to whom one owes faithful service (p. 7)
<b>sovereign</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the supreme ruler of a nation, especially a king or a queen (p. 16)
<b>venison</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	deer meat (p. 11)

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by Bertha E. Bush  
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