

Robin Hood Wins the Sheriff's Golden Arrow

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Robin Hood Wins the Sheriff's Golden Arrow

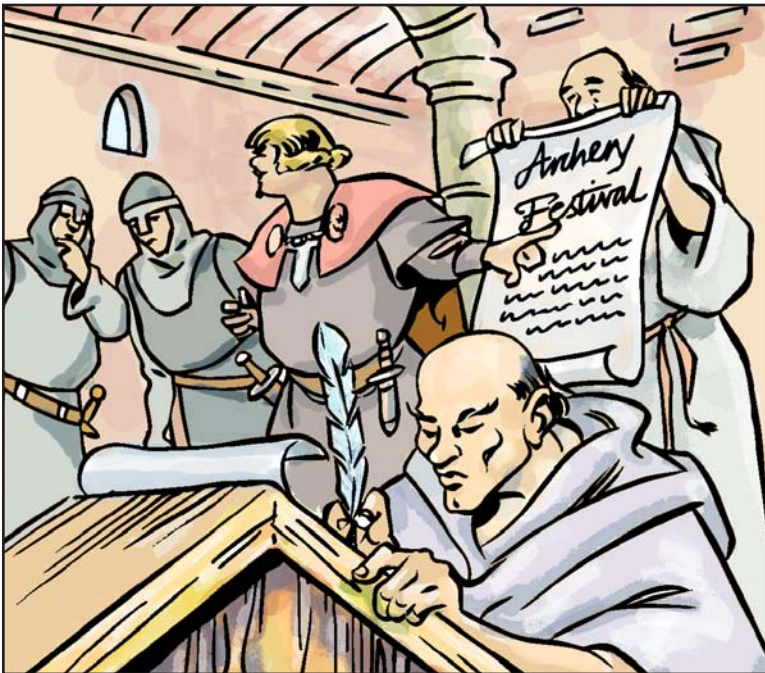


An English Folktale Adapted by Karina Barentine
Illustrated by David Cockcroft

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This story is an English folktale adapted for Reading A-Z by Karina Barrentine from an original retelling by Bertha E. Bush published in 1912.



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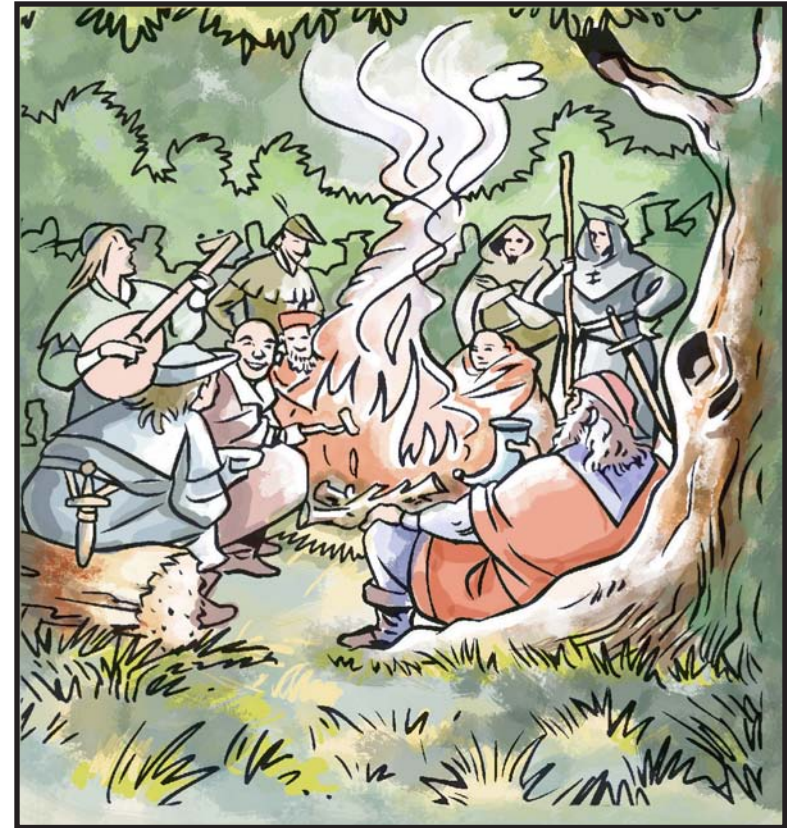
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Introduction

Robin Hood lived with his band of followers, the Merry Men, deep inside Sherwood Forest. They felt safe there, where they had built shelters of logs and bark. When it wasn't raining, they slept on deerskins outside under the stars. The men cooked their meals over a roaring fire, and ate sitting on the ground or on logs.

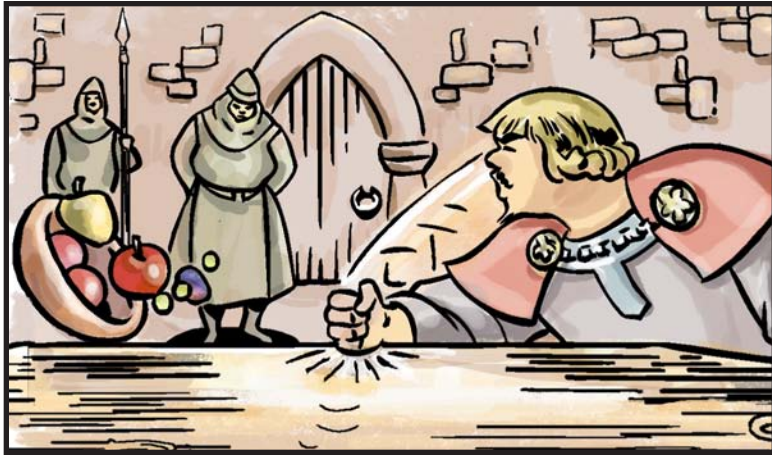


More than a hundred men made up Robin Hood's band of followers. They were all rough outlaws but had kind hearts. They were devoted to Robin Hood and his cause, and obeyed his every word. Robin needed only to play a note on his horn and the men would appear. They were the best **archers**, wrestlers, and swordsmen in all of England. They practiced daily to improve their skills. Robin Hood was the best of all the archers in the land.



Times were bad in England. **Cruel** (KROO-uhl) lords became rich by taxing the poor. Sometimes they took everything a family owned. As a child, Robin Hood had seen many of his friends' and neighbors' lives ruined. He **vowed** to make things right when he grew up.

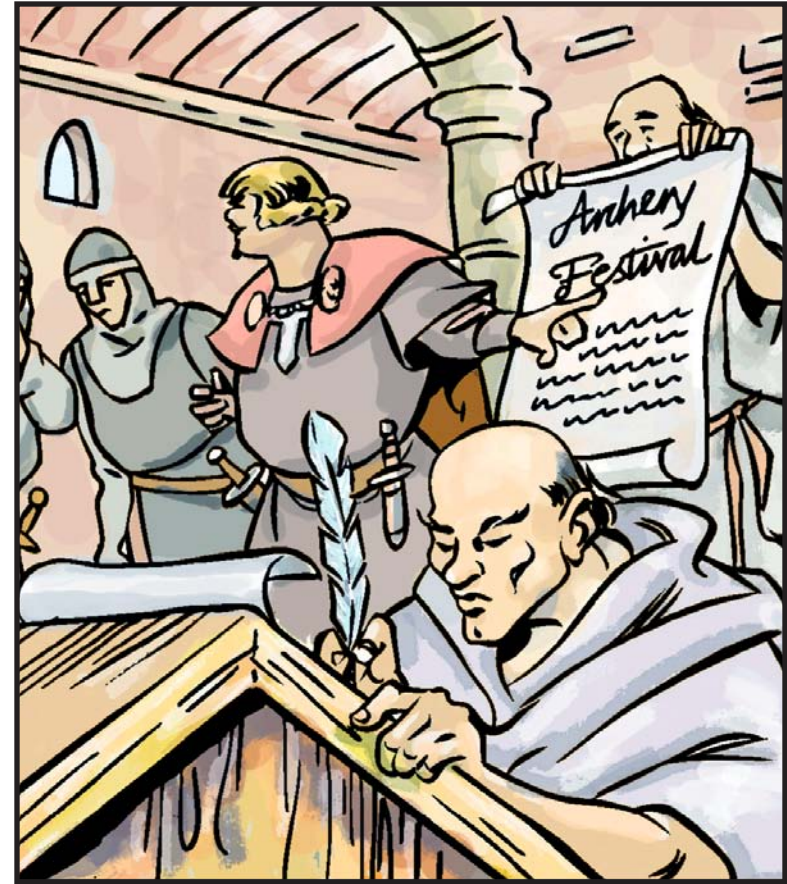
He became an outlaw by robbing and fighting the corrupt lords. Robin Hood and his men would steal back the gold taken in unjust taxes. Then they gave the gold back to the poor people. To his enemies, Robin and his men were hated robbers. To the common folk they helped, they were beloved heroes.



The Sheriff of Nottingham

The Sheriff of Nottingham hated Robin Hood. The Sheriff wanted nothing more than to catch Robin Hood and hang him in public.

Time after time, Robin got away from the Sheriff's traps. The Sheriff grew more angry and **spiteful**. One day he sent a stout guard with a **warrant** to arrest Robin Hood. Robin met the guard on the road. He invited the guard to a feast in the forest. The guard ate too much and fell asleep. While the guard slept, Robin stole the warrant out of his pocket. Without a warrant, the guard couldn't arrest Robin Hood. The guard returned to the Sheriff empty-handed.



The Sheriff of Nottingham knew it was no use sending more guards. "I've got it," said the Sheriff. "I'll catch him by trickery. I'll hold a great archery festival. The best archers in England will come here to compete. We'll give a prize of a gold-covered arrow. Robin Hood won't be able to resist the contest. When he comes, I'll arrest and hang him."

Robin Hood and his men prepared to go to the archery contest, but they disguised themselves. They dressed as barefoot **monks**, traders, farmers, and peasants. Robin was the hardest to recognize. He was dressed in the tattered clothes of a beggar.



Still, his loyal men were worried and asked Robin not to go. "This archery contest is a trap of the Sheriff's. He and his guards will know you by your hair and eyes. Please, please don't go to the contest, Robin."

Robin Hood just laughed. "Why, I can color my yellow hair with walnut stain. I can cover one of my eyes with a patch so my face will look different. A bit of danger will make it all the more fun."



The Archery Festival

The field where the contest would be held was ready. It had rows of benches for the festive viewers to sit on. The crowd of people had worn their very best clothes. All the wealthy lords were dressed like **birds of paradise**. The Sheriff had on purple velvet. His lady wore blue velvet, and both were trimmed with pure white fur. They wore broad gold chains around their necks that displayed their great wealth.



The Sheriff looked all through the crowd for Robin Hood. He looked closely at everyone, but he didn't see the outlaw anywhere. In his beggar's clothes, Robin stood not ten feet from the Sheriff. The Sheriff did not recognize him.

Finally, it was time for the competition to begin. The archery targets had been set up so far away that it was difficult to see them clearly. Dozens of archers took turns shooting just one arrow. Only ten of them even hit the target.

The Sheriff glared at the ten remaining men. "I was so sure Robin Hood would be here," he said to a guard. "Couldn't one of these men be Robin Hood in disguise?"

"No, sir," said the man-at-arms. "Six of them I know well, and they are the best archers in England. There's Gill o' the Red Cap, Diccon Cruikshank, Adam o' the Dell, William o' Leslie, Hubert o' Cloud, and Swithin o' Hertford. Of the other four, three men are the wrong size. That leaves only the ragged beggar. His hair is too dark for him to be Robin Hood, and he is blind in one eye."



The guard was glad Robin hadn't come and been trapped. He didn't want to see Robin harmed. Robin Hood had lots of friends among the common people. Even the Sheriff's own guards had helped him get away many times.



One by one, the archers aimed and let their **quills** fly. Each of the arrows struck near the center of the target. Gill o' the Red Cap's first arrow struck only an inch from the center. His second and third were even closer. Then Robin Hood, who looked to everyone like the poorest beggar in England, shot his arrow. It hit the very center and the crowd gasped. Adam o' the Dell was to shoot next, but he unstrung his bow instead. "I've been an archer for forty years," said the man, "and I will never do better than that shot."



And so the tattered beggar won the gold-covered arrow. The Sheriff's face was sour when he awarded the prize. "You are the best archer I have ever seen," he said. "You shoot even better than that coward Robin Hood. He dared not show his face today. I will pay you well if you join my service."

"I will not," said the ragged stranger, firmly.

Robin Hood left quickly, but the Sheriff's words bothered him. "I just can't bear to have him think I am a coward," he said to Little John, his right-hand man. "I will let the Sheriff know I am the person who won his fine gold-covered arrow."



The Message

The Sheriff was **glum** that night at supper. "I thought I could catch that thief with this contest," he said to his wife. "I guess Robin Hood was too much of a coward to show his face." Right then, a **shaft** flew through the window. It stuck straight into the roast on the table. Astounded, the Sheriff unfolded the note that was attached to the arrow. The note said that the beggar who won the contest had been Robin Hood. The arrow was the very same arrow the Sheriff had covered in gold and given as the prize!

The Sheriff was enraged. Robin Hood's men had scraped off the gold and kept it. The **duped** Sheriff upended the table and stormed off. Nearby, Robin Hood and his men had never been merrier.

Glossary

archers (<i>n.</i>)	people who are skilled at shooting with a bow and arrows (p. 5)
birds of paradise (<i>n.</i>)	birds found in warm climates that have feathers of many different colors (p. 10)
cruel (<i>adj.</i>)	mean; unkind (p. 6)
duped (<i>adj.</i>)	tricked (p. 15)
glum (<i>adj.</i>)	sad; depressed (p. 15)
monks (<i>n.</i>)	religious people who usually wear long robes and live separately from the rest of the world (p. 9)
quills (<i>n.</i>)	feathers, especially pointed feathers used in arrows and sometimes as pens (p. 13)
shaft (<i>n.</i>)	the straight wooden part of an arrow (p. 15)
spiteful (<i>adj.</i>)	angry; jealous (p. 7)
vowed (<i>v.</i>)	promised (p. 6)
warrant (<i>n.</i>)	a written order authorizing an arrest or a search (p. 7)