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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Robin Hood: How Robin Hood Was Paid His Loan (3/10)

Twelve months had come and gone since Robin Hood lent four hundred pounds to the poor knight to redeem his land, and now the day had arrived when he had promised to pay back the money.

The sheriff had returned to Nottingham, and Robin Hood and his merry men were left in the greenwood.

"Let us go to dinner," said Little John.

"Nay, not yet," said Robin. "Now I fear our friend the knight is likely to prove false, for he comes not to pay back the money, according to his word."

"Have no doubt, master," said Little John, "for the sun has not yet gone to rest."

"Take thy bow," said Robin, "and let Much and Will Scarlet go with you, and walk up into the Sayles, and to Watling Street, and wait there for some stranger guest, for you may well chance upon one there. Whether he be messenger or mountebank, rich man or poor man, he shall share dinner with me."

Forth then started Little John, half-angry and half-troubled, and under his green mantle he girded on a good sword.

The three yeomen went up to the Sayles; they looked east and they looked west, and not a man could they see.

But all the time Robin kept thinking of the knight who had promised to return that day with the borrowed money.

"I marvel much he does not come," he said. "I fear he does not mean to keep faith."

"Have no doubt, master," said Little John. "You have no need, I say."

Sir Richard Lee, meanwhile, who had tarried to see the wrestling, came while it was still daylight to fulfil his promise. He went straight to Barnsdale, and there he found Robin Hood and his band under the greenwood tree. Directly the knight saw Robin, he dismounted from his palfrey, and saluted him courteously on one knee.

"God save thee, good Robin Hood, and all this company."

"Welcome, welcome, noble knight," said Robin. "I pray thee tell me what need driveth thee to greenwood? I am right glad to see thee. Why hast thou been so long in coming?"

"The abbot and the high justice have been trying to get hold of my land," said the knight.

"Hast thou thy land again?"

"Yea, and for that I thank God and thee. But take not offence that I have come so late in the day. On my journey hither I passed by some wrestling, and there I helped a poor yeoman who was being wrongfully put behind by the others."

"Nay, by my faith, for that I thank thee," said Robin.

"The man that helpeth a good yeoman, his friend will I be."

"Have here the four hundred pounds you lent me," said the knight, "and here is also twenty marks for your courtesy."

"Nay, keep it and use it well yourself," said Robin, "and thou art right welcome under my trysting-tree. But what are all those bows for, and those finely feathered arrows?"

"They are a poor present to thee," said the knight. Then Robin Hood bade Little John go to his treasury and fetch four hundred pounds, and he insisted on the knight's accepting this money as a gift.

"Buy thyself a good horse and harness, and gild thy spurs anew," he said laughingly. "And if thou lack enough to spend come to Robin Hood, and by my truth thou shalt never lack while I have any goods of my own. Keep the four hundred pounds I lent thee, and I counsel thee never leave thyself so bare another time."

So good Robin Hood relieved the gentle knight of all his care, and they feasted and made merry under the greenwood tree.

