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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Robin Hood: How The Sheriff Took Sir Richard Prisoner (5/10)

The Sheriff of Nottingham was wroth when he heard that Robin Hood and his band of outlaws had taken refuge in the knight's castle. All the country was up in rout, and they came and besieged the castle. From his post outside the walls the sheriff loudly proclaimed that the knight was a traitor, and was shielding the king's enemy against the laws and right.

"I am ready to answer for the deeds I have done here by all the lands I possess, as I am a true knight," was Sir Richard's answer. "Go on your way, sirs, and leave me alone in peace until ye know our king's will, what he will say to you."

The sheriff, having had his answer, curt and to the point, rode forth at once to London to carry the tale to the king. He told him of the knight, and of Robin Hood, and of the band of bold archers which the latter kept up.

"The knight boasts of what he has done to aid these outlaws," said the sheriff. "He would be lord, and set you at nought through all the north country."



"I will be at Nottingham within the fortnight," said the king, "and I will seize Robin Hood, and also that knight. Go home, sheriff, and do as I bid thee. Get ready enough good archers from all the country round about."

So the sheriff took his leave, and went home to Nottingham to do as the king commanded.

Robin meanwhile had left the castle, and had gone back to the greenwood, and Little John, as soon as he was whole from the arrow-shot in his knee, went and joined him there. It caused great vexation to the sheriff to know that Robin Hood once more walked free in the forest, and that he had failed of his prey; but all the more he was resolved to be revenged on Sir Richard Lee. Night and day he kept watch for that noble knight; at last, one morning when Sir Richard went out hawking by the riverside, the sheriff's men-at-arms seized him, and he was led bound hand and foot to Nottingham. When Sir Richard's wife heard that her husband had been taken prisoner, she lost no time in seeking help. Mounting a good palfrey, she rode off at once to the greenwood, and there she found Robin Hood and all his men.

"God save thee, Robin Hood, and all thy company! For the love of heaven, grant me a boon! Let not my wedded lord be shamefully slain. He is taken fast bound to Nottingham, all for the love of thee!"

"What man hath taken him?" asked Robin.

"The proud sheriff," said the lady. "He has not yet passed on his way three miles."

Up then started Robin as if he were mad.

"Arm, lads! Arm and make ready! By heaven, he that fails me now shall never more be man of mine!"

Speedily good bows were bent, seven score and more, and away went the outlaws, full speed over hedge and ditch, in chase of the sheriff's men, When they came to Nottingham, there in the street they overtook the sheriff. "Stay, thou proud sheriff—stay and speak with me!" said Robin. "I would fain hear from thee some tidings of our king. By heaven, these seven years have I never gone so fast on foot, and I swear it bodeth no good for thee." He bent his bow, and sent an arrow with all the might he could; it hit the sheriff so that he fell to the ground, and lay there stunned, and before he could rise to his feet Robin drew his sword and smote off his head.

"Lie thou there, proud sheriff, traitor and evildoer!" said Robin. "No man might ever trust to thee whilst thou wert still alive!"

Now they fought hand to hand. Robin Hood's men drew their shining swords, and laid on so heavily that they drove down the sheriff's men one after another.

Robin Hood ran to Sir Richard Lee, and cut his bonds in two, and, thrusting a bow into his hand, bid him stand by him.

"Leave thy horse behind thee, and learn to run on foot," he counselled him. "Thou shalt go with me to the greenwood through mire and moss and fen. Thou shalt go with me to the forest, and dwell with me there, until I have got our pardon from Edward, our king."