

Chapter one

Robin Hood becomes an Outlaw

Robin Hood was born near the end of the 12th century. His real name was Robert. He was the son of the Earl of Huntingdon. At that time, England had many problems. King Richard was away on a crusade in the Holy Land. He was away many years.

His brother, John, became king. He was a cruel and greedy king. His men were arrogant and brutal. The poor people of England suffered a lot. They paid very high taxes to King John and his sheriffs. Many families died of hunger!

One day, the cruel Sheriff of Nottingham killed Robin's father, and took away his lands. Young Robin lost his father, his home, his lands and all his possessions.

He escaped to Sherwood Forest with his loyal servants. They decided to live as free men in the forest. They didn't want to be slaves of King John. However, the King considered them outlaws.

When Robin and his men reached Sherwood Forest, they sat down to rest. Robin Hood smiled at his loyal servants. Then he said to them, 'My friends, Sherwood Forest is our new home. Now we are free but we are outlaws. Everyone in the kingdom is against us!'

'Master, we are not afraid because you are with us,' said Much.

'Yes, I will stay with you, but you must do what I tell you. We must not become robbers. We must never harm the poor, the old, women or children. We must respect and protect them.

'We take only from rich merchants, noblemen and fat churchmen! Here is my plan: when rich travellers come into Sherwood Forest, we invite them to eat with us. Then, they must pay for their food. They must give us half of everything they have! We then give this money to the poor. Do you promise to do what I tell you?'

'Yes, we do!' they cried.

Robin and the outlaws lived in caverns in the forest. The caverns were a perfect hiding place. They were warm and dry in the winter. In the summer they were cool.

They were happy in the forest. They all wore green clothes and carried bows and arrows. Robin had a horn to give signals.

Soon, other honest men joined the outlaws of Sherwood Forest: Nat, Will Scarlett and others.

The outlaws were excellent archers. Robin Hood became the best archer in the region. In the forest, Robin and his men practised with their bows and arrows.

CHAPTER TWO

Robin meets Little John

One day Robin came to a stream with a small bridge. When he began to cross it, he heard a loud voice say, 'I want to cross the stream first!'

Robin turned around and saw an enormous, young man. He was very tall.

'No, I was first!' answered Robin.

'Can you push me off the bridge?' asked the enormous man. He was holding a wooden staff.

Robin cut a long branch from a tree and made a staff. Then he began to fight on the bridge. Robin was fast and light. But soon, the enormous man pushed Robin into the water. He was very strong.

The enormous man laughed. Then he pulled Robin out of the water. Robin started to laugh too. 'You are an honest fighter!' said Robin. 'What is your name?'

'My name is John Little. I am an honest man. I fought with good King Richard's men in the Holy Land. I made King Richard's sword and the swords of his men. He is a great king. But his brother John is cruel and greedy! I don't want to serve King John. I am looking for Robin Hood. I want to join his outlaws.'

'Welcome to our merry company of outlaws! I am Robin Hood!' said Robin, smiling. 'A friend of King Richard is a friend of mine!'

John Little was very surprised. Then the two men embraced and became good friends.

'Now that you are an outlaw, you must change your name. Your new name is Little John.'

Robin took Little John to the secret hiding place in the forest. The outlaws welcomed Little John with a big meal.

Little John was an expert sword maker. Soon every outlaw had a new sword. The outlaws liked Little John because he was friendly and kind. At night, everyone sat around the fire and listened to his stories. He told them about his adventures in the Holy Land.

CHAPTER THREE

Friar Tuck joins the Outlaws

Will Scarlett told Robin that a big, fat man lived in a cavern near a river in Sherwood Forest. One day Robin decided to meet him. He went to the river and saw a fat friar who was fishing. 'Good morning, young man,' said the friar.

'Good day,' answered Robin Hood. 'You are fishing in an outlaw river. The fish you catch are mine. You can fish here today, but only if you carry me across the river.'

The friar did not like what Robin said. So, he looked at him and said, 'I can carry you across the river. You are very thin! Can you carry me across the river?'

Robin was surprised to hear this. 'Of course, I can carry you! I am thin, but I am very strong.'

Robin lifted the enormous friar with great difficulty. Then he carried him across the river.

'You are very heavy, friar. But I can carry you,' said Robin. At the other side of the river Robin said, 'Now you must carry me back.'

The friar started to carry Robin Hood across the river. But when they arrived at the middle of the river, the friar stopped. He sniffed Robin and said, 'Goodness! You smell like an old rat! You need a good, cold bath!' And so, the friar threw Robin into the cold water. He laughed loudly and then pulled Robin to the river bank.

Robin was angry at first. Then, he smiled and said, 'You were right. I needed a bath. I feel better now. My good friar, you are free to fish in this river when you want.'

'Let us shake hands before I go away,' said the friar.

'Oh, don't go away, ' said Robin. 'My name is Robin Hood.'

'What! You are Robin Hood?' asked the friar. He was very surprised.

'Yes! Come and live with me and my outlaws. We are all good, honest men. We take from the rich and give to the poor. We want a friar because we need the word of God. What is your name?'

'I am Friar Michael Tuck, of Fountains Abbey. I had a quarrel with my abbot. He was very greedy and rich. He never helped the poor. He forgot God's teachings. When I told him this, he wanted to punish me. I escaped to the forest. Now I live a simple life.

'If you want to live a simple life, and help the poor, then come to Sherwood Forest,' said Robin.

The two men shook hands and promised to be friends for life.

Chapter four

Wanted: dead or alive!

Some years passed, and there were more than 200 outlaws living in Sherwood Forest. Robin Hood was the hero of the poor. He continued robbing the rich to give to the poor. Robin Hood called this 'The Sherwood Tax'. All the rich travellers who passed through Sherwood Forest paid 'The Sherwood Tax'.

The Sheriff of Nottingham sent an army of soldiers to Sherwood Forest to capture Robin Hood. But Robin and his outlaws were in the trees. They killed all the soldiers except one. Robin and his men were the best archers of the region. They knew the forest perfectly. They were never afraid of fighting the soldiers of the wicked Sheriff of Nottingham.

It was impossible to stop Robin Hood. The Sheriff was furious because the people laughed at him. He was never able to capture Robin Hood. King John was furious too. His subjects loved King Richard and hated him.

One day, King John stood on the castle walls. He spoke to all his people. He said, 'We must capture Robin Hood and his outlaws. They are our enemy. I can pay a hundred pieces of gold for Robin Hood, dead or alive! Bring me that outlaw!'

From that day on, Robin's life was in great danger.

CHAPTER FIVE

Robin meets Maid Marian

When Robin Hood was a boy, his best friends were Marian Fitzwater and her

brother, Mark. Robin played with them and taught them to use the bow and arrow. He also taught them to fight with the sword. Robin loved only Maid Marian, and she loved only him. One spring day Marian's father, Lord Robert Fitzwater of Malaset, said to her, 'Marian, you are a beautiful maid. Soon you must marry. There is a very rich nobleman who wants to marry you.'

'What is his name?' Marian asked.

'His name is Sir Guy of Gisbourne, a good friend of the Sheriff of Nottingham.'

When Marian heard this, she was very unhappy. This was terrible! She did not want to marry Sir Guy of Gisbourne. She loved Robin Hood and wanted to marry him.

She decided to run away to join Robin Hood. She disguised herself as a knight. Then she took her horse and went to Sherwood Forest.

Robin Hood was in the forest. He was coming from Nottingham, and was disguised as a beggar.

They met in the forest. It was evening and it was almost dark.

When Robin saw the knight, he asked, 'What are you doing in the forest?'

'What are you doing here, beggar man?' answered the knight.

They did not recognise each other.

'This is outlaw country. Go back! You can't stay here. We don't know you.' Robin said.

'I cannot go back! I am not afraid of outlaws,' answered the knight, taking out a sword. 'I am ready to fight you!'

And so the fight began. Both were experts with the sword. But Robin fell to the ground.

The knight said, 'Now, take me to your leader. Take me to Robin Hood!' She took off her helmet and Robin was very surprised. It was his dear Marian! Robin took off his beggar clothes. Marian recognised Robin. She, too, was very surprised! Then, they kissed.

There was great happiness in Sherwood Forest that evening. Marian and Robin were finally together. Friar Tuck married them after a few days. There was a big wedding celebration in the forest.

Maid Marian was now part of Sherwood Forest. She was gentle and kind to all. Everyone loved her.

CHAPTER SIX

The Sheriff's Ride

Robin Hood's fame was everywhere. The people called him Saint Robin, and Robin, Sheriff of Sherwood Forest. A lot of new outlaws joined Robin Hood. They were loyal to him and followed him everywhere. The Sheriff's men did not want to go to Sherwood Forest to capture Robin Hood. They were afraid. The Sheriff of Nottingham was very angry. He wanted to capture Robin, dead or alive!

'What is wrong with my men? They're afraid of Robin Hood. They are all stupid cowards! I don't need anyone! I am going to Sherwood Forest alone! I'm not afraid of a legend.'

The Sheriff left for Sherwood Forest alone. He entered the dark forest and saw no

one for a long time. Suddenly, a group of outlaws jumped down from the treetops. They made a big circle around the Sheriff. Then they took out their swords.

The Sheriff was terrified. His face became white.

One outlaw said, 'Well, well! What do we have here? The Sheriff of Nottingham in person!'

'Oh, please, don't kill me!' said the cowardly Sheriff. 'I can give you everything I have!'

The outlaws laughed at the Sheriff and said, 'Our master is waiting for you.'

'Robin Hood?' asked the Sheriff.

'Yes! Robin Hood! You are invited to eat with us.'

'I'm not hungry. Let me go! I can give you money, gold, jewels! But please let me go!' the Sheriff said.

'Start walking, you butcher,' said Will Scarlett. The outlaws took the Sheriff to Robin Hood.

'Let's kill him!' the outlaws cried. 'Let's kill this fat butcher now!'

Robin Hood looked at the Sheriff with disgust. He wanted to kill him too. But Marian stopped him. 'We are not butchers like this man,' said Marian. 'We are honest people.'

'Sit down and eat with us, Sheriff,' said Robin. 'After the meal, I have a surprise for you.'

The Sheriff was not hungry. At the end of the meal, Robin said, 'Now give us everything you have — money, gold, jewels! Then, take off all your clothes. Get on your horse and return to Nottingham naked!'

Robin, Marian and the outlaws laughed wildly. The Sheriff got on his horse and returned to Nottingham. He was very cold and very angry.

'I must capture that Robin Hood and destroy him!' shouted the Sheriff. When he reached Nottingham, the people saw him naked. Everyone looked at him. They pointed at him and laughed loudly. 'Long live Robin Hood, the Sheriff of Sherwood Forest!' they cried.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Silver Arrow

After his adventure in Sherwood Forest, the Sheriff of Nottingham said to his men, 'I must capture Robin Hood and destroy him. How can we capture him?' The Sheriff thought for some time. Then he said, 'I know how we can capture him. Let's have an archery competition here in Nottingham. The best archers of the region always come to the competition. The prize for the best archer is the famous silver arrow.'

One of his men asked, 'But will Robin come to the competition?'

'Of course! Robin loves challenges!' said the Sheriff. 'He will come disguised and we must discover him.'

The Sheriff's messengers went everywhere and told everyone about the competition.

One day Friar Tuck heard the news. He immediately told Robin and the outlaws.

Robin said, 'I'm the best archer in the region. I can easily win the silver arrow!'

'Oh, Robin, don't go!' said Marian. 'It's a trap! The Sheriff wants to kill you!'

'Yes, Robin,' said Friar Tuck, 'it's a trap. It's dangerous for you to go.'

'I must go! I never refuse a challenge. I will disguise myself as a poor peasant. No one will recognise me.'

'Can we come to protect you?' asked Robin's men.

'Yes, you can come disguised as peasants too. You can stay in the crowd. But be ready to fight, if necessary.'

One morning in May, Robin and his outlaws went to the archery competition. When they arrived in Nottingham, the castle square was full of people. An archery competition was a special event. There were musicians, acrobats, children, lords, and ladies. There were colourful flags everywhere.

All around the castle square, there were difficult targets. There were many excellent archers at the contest. They all tried to hit the targets. But the best archer was the peasant in the red cloak and hood. He hit all the most difficult targets. The crowd shouted with joy. He was the winner! The Sheriff was silent. He knew that the peasant with the red cloak and hood was Robin. 'Guards! Stop that peasant in the red cloak!' cried the angry Sheriff. 'He is our enemy, Robin Hood, the outlaw.'

The Sheriff's guards ran to capture Robin. But Robin's men attacked the guards. There was a lot of fighting. Robin and his men killed or injured most of the Sheriff's men.

Then they quickly left Nottingham and returned to Sherwood Forest. When they arrived, they celebrated their victory.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Alan a'Dale

Robin and Marian were walking through the forest when they saw a young man sitting near a river. He was playing a lyre and singing a sad song.

'Who are you and why are you singing this sad song?' asked Robin.

'My name is Alan of Barnsdale, but people call me Alan a'Dale. I am very unhappy because I love a girl called Alice. She loves me too. But her father wants her to marry a rich old baron. The marriage is tomorrow at Papplewick Church!' The young man was so unhappy that he started to cry.

Robin and Marian looked at each other. Marian remembered her similar situation some time ago. Then Robin said, 'I want to help you, Alan a'Dale. I have a plan! Come with me!'

Early the next morning, Robin sent his best archers to Papplewick. They hid inside the church and all around it. Robin, Friar Tuck and Alan a'Dale disguised themselves as simple peasants. Then they went to Papplewick. They entered the church and sat down.

At midday, the bishop and the rich old baron entered the church. Then Alice arrived with her father. She wore a white dress and she had flowers in her hair. She was beautiful, but very sad and pale. When the bishop began the marriage ceremony, Robin stood up and said, 'My lord, an ugly old man cannot marry this beautiful young woman. Winter cannot

marry spring!

'What!' cried the bishop. 'Sit down and be silent!'

'There is no love between that old man and this young woman. You must not marry them.'

The bishop was furious. He cried, 'Guards, arrest this peasant immediately!'

At that moment, Robin's men stood up and pointed their bows and arrows at the guards. The guards did not move. The bishop ran out of the church.

Alan a'Dale ran to Alice and embraced her. 'My sweet Alice, I want to marry you!' Alice was very happy and said, 'You are the only man I want to marry!'

Friar Tuck married the happy couple at Papplewick Church. Then everyone returned to Sherwood Forest to enjoy the wedding banquet. Alan a'Dale and Alice lived in Sherwood Forest with Robin, Marian and the outlaws.

CHAPTER NINE

A Stanger in the Forest

One evening Robin was hunting in the forest. He saw a knight riding an old, tired horse. The knight wore the red cross of the Crusader.

'Good evening, young man,' said the knight. 'What is the name of this forest?'

'This is Sherwood Forest, sir,' answered Robin.

'I have come from the Holy Land. I was there for many years. I fought many wars against the Turks. Now I am very tired and hungry,' said the knight.

Robin said, 'Brave knight, come and eat with me and my men. You can stay with us tonight.'

'Thank you for your offer. I am happy to accept it.'

The two men rode through the forest together. Robin told the stranger about greedy King John and his wicked sheriff. He told him how the poor people suffered. He explained why he became an outlaw. The stranger listened carefully.

There was a good meal of roast pork that evening. The stranger liked the merry company of Robin, Marian and the outlaws. He talked about his adventures in the Holy Land.

At the end of the meal, Robin stood up and said, 'Let us drink to good King Richard, and to his return!'

Everyone cheered and drank to good King Richard and to his return.

Then the stranger stood up, took off his head-covering, and said, 'My friends, I must tell you the truth. I am not a knight. I am your King Richard, also called the Lionheart!'

There was silence for a moment. The surprise was so great! Then everyone at the table cheered and cried, 'Welcome home, King Richard!'

Everyone knelt down. Robin said, 'We thank God for King Richard's return.'

'I am a lucky king. I have loyal people,' said King Richard, with tears in his eyes. 'I know that my brother John and his men are dishonest and greedy. Now I am here to punish the bad and bring justice to all.'

King Richard looked at everyone and said, 'You are not outlaws anymore. You are now free men and all friends of mine. Robin, the lands of Locksley are yours again! You

can all leave Sherwood Forest and live as free men.' There was great excitement in the air.

That night, King Richard slept in Sherwood Forest. The following morning he rode to Nottingham with Robin, Marian and his friends of Sherwood Forest.

When the Sheriff saw them, he ran away and never returned!

After the King's return, Robin, Marian and Little John went to Locksley. They lived a long and happy life. Some of the outlaws returned to their old homes and villages. Some went looking for adventure. Others became soldiers in the King's army.

In everyone's heart, there was a beautiful memory of the years spent in Sherwood Forest.

