

Robin Hood Rewrite- A New Ending

The whistling of the wind whirling through my window wrung my attention from my work. I grabbed the curtains and rearranged them carelessly. Standing with a sigh, I quickly paced over to close the panes. Dully, I noticed the joyous celebration in the streets- the peasants were celebrating. Never a good sign. My heart sank low and heavy in my chest as a steady hand knocked at my door. The rhythm was familiar to me; falsely upbeat and accompanied by a pervasive sense of dread settling hot and suffocatingly in my throat. *Of course*. "Come in," I called unmovingly, my eyes fixed on the dancing crowd.

"Sheriff," a basso voice rumbled evenly, a discordant and unpleasant harmony with the shrill screech of my long-uncoiled hinges. "I'm beginning to doubt which side you're on."

I braced myself before turning neatly on my heel. "Captain," I began, hopeful that my deceptively steady voice gave away none of my fright. "It's very unfortunate that I have nothing new to inform you of. Robin Hood is one of the most elusive criminals I've ever dealt with. However, my plans-"

"I don't care about your *plans*," Captain Howard snarled, striding towards me. He was a dark, huge man; taller than me by a head, with shorn short hair bisected by a long-healed scar that ran across his scalp and ended just before his left eye. He stopped not even an arm's width away from me, pausing to stare at me viciously. His hulking frame and terrifyingly intense eyes gave me the impression of being small again, like I hadn't been since I was young enough for my mother to carry. "I care about your *failures*. For two years, you've filled my desk with empty

promises of Robin Hood in shackles. My constituents come to me with their complaints, and rightfully so. That vigilante targets them; takes their wealth and distributes it to peasants who hand-feed it directly into the mouths of their little peasant *brats*.” He spat the word at me like it burned his tongue on the way out. “I’ve promised them he’ll hang.” He took another, menacing step forward. My legs burned with the effort of suppressing the trembling he inspired. I fought valiantly not to blink or look away as he leaned in towards me, something dangerous glinting in his eyes. “I can’t hang promises, Sheriff,” he whispered. The room was intensely quiet; the only noise was my own shallow, desperate draws of air. “But mark my words, I’ll hang someone by the end of this year. Be it that green-clad yeoman or not.” Howard practically growled at me, something dark apparent in the flow of his thinly veiled threats.

“Of course, Captain. I understand.” My voice wavered infinitesimally; a small, nigh imperceptible sound to anyone whose ears were more than a hand away from my mouth. I watched Howard’s eyes glint cruelly, as if he’d heard it somehow and was mentally cataloging it as further proof of my continued weakness. The silence that filled the room was deafening, and occasionally interrupted by the rustle of my tunic as I nervously shifted in place. Idly, I considered the striking silence that Howard carried himself with, and wondered if the captain breathed at all, or could really be considered human.

He straightened suddenly. It took everything in me not to flinch. “I’m glad we’re in agreement,” he said smoothly. I couldn’t help but blink at the sudden shift in tone. “I’ll be back for your review at the end of the year. Surely your, ah-” he glanced at me intently. “*plans* will have worked by then. As you were.”

“Thank you sir,” I blurted. I waited, unmoving, until I could no longer hear his steps in my hall, and further still until the echoing *clip-clop* of his horse’s trot had faded into the noises of the

night; buried under the . My mouth was dry. Collapsing on my desk chair, I buried my head in my hands with a small noise of defeat. I *had* to do something about Robin Hood.

For the next three months I pieced together what seemed to me an infallible plan. There was an upcoming tourney for the hand of one of our most successful cleric's daughter. She was a good-natured, good-looking girl, someone who'd surely attract quite the crowd of young lads hoping for the chance to win her favor. But I had a much more important mission. The man who won the tourney, most likely to be another noble's son, would receive her hand in marriage along with a hefty dowry. Robin Hood wouldn't be able to resist that kind of a prize. In fact, I expected him to be competing. The lure of a contest of skills and a reward beyond any he's thefted yet is sure to bring him directly to me, I reasoned. I'll employ a huge amount of mercenaries, along with many, very well-paid spies in the crowd. I anxiously awaited the day.

Soon enough, the morning of the tourney arrived. The town square was packed and bursting with traveling merchants and carts- capitalizing on the influx of people. The inns were filled completely, the meadows around the town were set up for the competitions. I was almost as anxious as the bride to be, my deputy reckoned teasingly. It was all fine for him, of course; *his* head wasn't on the line, and I told him so. He slapped me good naturedly on the back and offered to buy us tickets overseas should it come to it. I told him I had no intention of failing, and he cheered when I said it.

"Ah, there's the confidence you need!" He nodded approvingly. "You'll catch him, sheriff. Your plan is genius. I'll treat you to a whole tavern's worth of drink once you do."

Against my will, the corners of my mouth relaxed into a small grin. Deputy Borton had that effect on me like no other. His was the only advice I sought out while making my plan. I

trusted him like no one else, and I relied on his loyalty to help make sure the day goes off without a hitch. “Sure, Henry,” I acquiesced. “We’ll make a day of it.” Laughing, he clapped me on the shoulder again and left to enjoy the market.

The day passed quickly. With each passing event, I grew tenser and tenser. Robin Hood was nowhere to be seen. I spent the day searching the surrounding woods, looking desperately for any sign of the archer. Eventually, just before the tourney victor was announced, I had to admit defeat. I trudged to a nearby table, slumping across from my deputy where he was positioned on the end, staring at the wood. “Henry,” I sighed. “Are you still up for those tickets?”

He pursed his lips. “I don’t understand,” he admitted at length. “This should have worked. It was perfect. You even have guards posted at all the nobles’ houses in case he takes advantage of the lull in security.” He glanced furtively at the woods, as if he could force the delinquent into sight through sheer will. “This should have worked,” he repeated.

I reached out and clasped his arm; a facsimile of comfort for us both. “The year isn’t over,” I reasoned. “We still have more time. This was just a setback.”

He stared at me bleakly, desperately—searchingly. Like he was seeking something only I could give him. The pittance of confidence I had mustered threatened to slip away in an instant; a rain shower in the desert that fades before it ever really begins. I swallowed harshly; unspeakably nervous all of a sudden. Before either of us could say anything else, a sudden chorus of shouts could be heard from the town square. I was on my feet in an instant. “Is it him?” I gasped out. Anything Henry might have responded with went unheard as I immediately darted off towards the hubbub. Behind me, I could hear Henry scrabbling to follow, tripping over the bench in his haste. I raced towards the market, hand on my scabbard eagerly. Panting and

out of breath by the time I made it to the vendors, I shoved my way through the milling crowd. The sight before me nearly brought me to my knees.

Thrashing, desperate and vicious, was a lashed and bound bundle of green cloth. I watched, rapt, as he threw himself over the hands of my mercenaries, spitting insults and pulling at his constraints. I felt a sudden lightening in my chest- the relief of a years-old pressure I wasn't aware I was carrying. I felt nearly faint, and swayed backward into something solid. Turning slightly, I saw Henry, whose chest I had fallen back into. Red-faced and heaving for breath, but looking nearly as elated as I felt.

"Look, Sheriff," he huffed, slinging an arm around my shoulder. "Told you it'd work. Like a charm, I said."

I sighed, almost a laugh. "You were right, as usual." I couldn't tear my eyes away from the sight. Robin Hood had by now caught sight of me, and was directing his fury my way. He cursed, spat and generally insulted any relative of mine a man could have and some I wasn't sure existed; but he didn't move. He was caught, firmly beneath the honestly unreasonable number of mercenaries I had hired for this precise purpose. I straightened a little, taking some of my weight off my deputy. He squeezed my shoulder reassuringly, but didn't remove his arm. "Take this thief to jail," I commanded, voice surer and stronger than I remembered it being for a very long time. "Put him in the innermost cell. Watch him all throughout the night. Don't take your eyes off him for a second, and gag him so he can't signal his little band of criminals." Robin Hood's eyes flashed furiously, but to my smug joy he remained helpless. "Tomorrow," I announced, "he will be taken to the city, and tried by the king's court." A few of the townspeople cheered, mostly nobles. Few, I noted happily, looked truly upset. Most just looked bored, as if the game they had been watching suddenly and abruptly ended. The crowd slowly dispersed,

finding other things to busy themselves with. Robin Hood was unceremoniously hauled away. I felt immeasurably lighter, as if I was no longer tethered to the ground, free to float away contentedly. A laugh in my ear brought me back.

“So,” Henry grinned. “How about that tavern?”