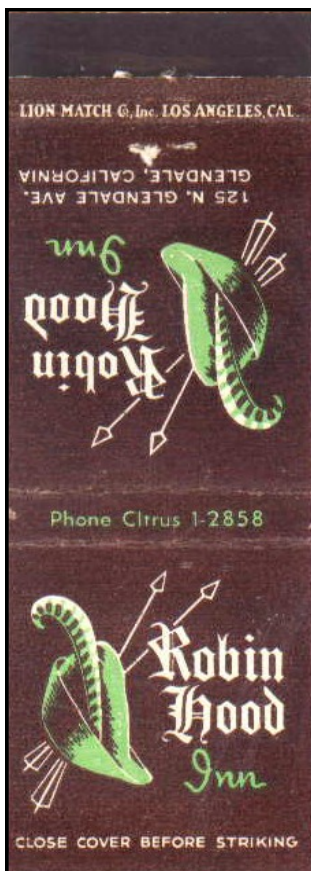


Robin Hood:

Almost all literate people in Western civilization know of Robin Hood and the ensuing story. But, how many of us actually know the *end* of the story? For most of us, that story has always ended where the movies inevitably end...Richard I, just returned from the Third Crusade, rides up, takes the reins of England back from evil Prince John, pardons Robin for his banditry, gives Robin Lady Marion's hand in marriage, and everyone lives happily ever after. Yet, that *wasn't* the end of the story...and few of the major characters lived happily ever after.

Robin and Marion *did* marry, and they *did* live happily...for five years. In the meantime, despite all of Prince John's nefarious machinations to rule England while Richard had been away, he was forgiven by Richard, who then began preparations to battle Philip Augustus, King of France, convinced, as he was, that Philip had plans to take over Richard's ancestral lands in Normandy. So it was that Richard, who had already been an absentee King of England, left England once again, and this time John went with him.

In 1199, Richard was killed while laying siege to a French castle, leaving John, the youngest and last of the four royal brothers, the legitimate King of England...and John hadn't forgotten his many grudges against Robin of Locksley. John had the Sheriff of Nottingham quietly arrest Robin in ambush, and Robin was sealed up in a small tower room, there to slowly die of thirst and starvation. But, our stalwart hero managed to signal the outside world, and the signal was seen by Little John. Little John got a rope to Robin, who then climbed out of the tower window and began the perilous descent down the outside tower wall. And, he made it...sort of. The rope was some 20 feet short, and Robin suffered some internal injuries from the resulting fall, injuries that he would never recover from.



Upon escaping, he and Little John rode straightaway to warn the lovely Lady Marion, and then they all fled into the countryside, with the bad guys hot on their heels. Robin told Marion to seek sanctuary at a nearby convent while he drew Prince John's men away, and that's what happened. Robin eventually made it to a coast town and escaped his pursuers by taking a job as a sailor on an outbound fishing ship. And *that*, oddly enough, is why Robin Hood's last adventure is on the deck of a ship, rather than in Sherwood Forest.

The *Rest Of The Story*

Well, Robin eventually makes it back to merry old England and heads back to that convent to find out what's become of Marion. Now, Marion has been safe and sound it turns out, because even King John wasn't willing to bring down the ire of the Church upon him by violating the custom of sanctuary. However, Marion fell prey to the cunning plots of the evil abbess in charge of the convent. She had since told Marion that Robin had been killed and convinced her to become a nun...and thereby give up the lands of Locksley to the convent.

So, Robin shows up at the convent, inquiring as to the whereabouts of his lady love. The abbess, realizing who he is, spins him a yarn about Marion leaving for parts unknown and convinces him to rest at the convent so that she can tend him back to health (he's obviously suffering from those internal injuries by this point). According to the medical traditions of the time, she 'bleeds' him (opening a wound and letting him bleed in order to let out some of the 'bad blood' that was considered a common cause of unseen illnesses then). Nothing out of the ordinary there, but, after Robin falls asleep, the abbess steals in and removes the dressing, and Robin begins to bleed to death.

Little John had become a laborer at the convent in order to protect Marion, and he finally found Robin, and so did Marion...but, alas, it was too late, for Robin Hood had lost too much blood by then...and he sadly died in the presence of those he loved most of all. Marion went on to become the head of the convent, and when she died, she was buried next to Robin. As the story goes, two rose bushes, one red, one white, were planted over their graves. In time, they grew together, forming one bush that produced both red and white roses.

King John went on to become the worst king in England's history, eventually seeing his nobles revolt against him and forcing him to sign the Magna Carta, which limited his power, and the power of all subsequent English monarchs.

Only Little John and Friar Tuck continued on. Little John migrated to Ireland, where he later became known as a legendary archer. Friar Tuck continued a quiet existence as a hermit and gently faded from the pages of history.

Perhaps it's not surprising after all that Hollywood has traditionally decided to portray only *half* the story.

