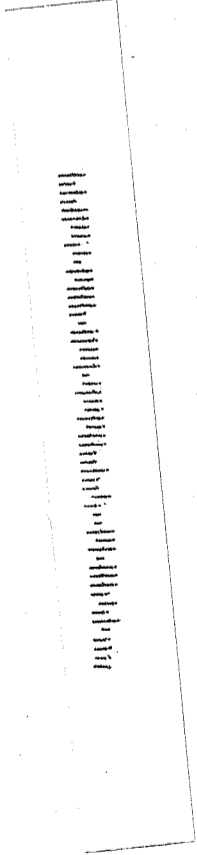


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Dear Friends of the Prison University Project/  
Mt. Tamalpais College

I HOPE AND PRAY THIS LETTER FINDS YOU ALL AND YOUR LOVED ONES IN THE VERY BEST OF HEALTH AND SPIRITS, AS WELL AS ALL THOSE WONDERFUL PEOPLE WORKING WITH THE PRISON UNIVERSITY PROJECT / MT. TAMALPAIS COLLEGE, AND I HOPE AND PRAY YOU ARE ALL BEING SAFE AND KEEPING THE CORONAVIRUS AT BAY.

THANK YOU ALL SO MUCH FOR THE CARE PACKAGES YOU SENT TO US! RECEIVING SUCH A GIFT REALLY BOLSTERS THE SPIRITS. TO KNOW SOMEONE CARES IS A BIG HELP AND GIVES US ALL HOPE. THE ARTICLES YOU SENT WERE QUITE INFORMATIVE AND ENLIGHTENING.

IN A SITUATION WHERE ISOLATION IS THE ORDER OF THE DAY, A LITTLE CORRESPONDENCE IS VERY HELPFUL. EVEN TODAY, WE ARE UNDER QUARANTINE, WHICH MEANS THE SOCIAL DISTANCING MODIFIED PROGRAM WE HAD IS DONE FOR AT LEAST FIVE DAYS. IN CDCR, THE SOLUTION TO INFECTION IS ISOLATION, AND WHILE THAT CAN BE EFFECTIVE, IT DOES NOT WORK IN EVERY INSTANCE, ESPECIALLY NOW WITH A LACK OF SOCIAL DISTANCING. THE MEDICAL STAFF HERE HAS EVEN COME WITH DIAGRAMS REGARDING SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS FOR "WHEN SOCIAL DISTANCING IS IMPOSSIBLE," AS THE DIAGRAMS SAY. THE CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS STATED THAT ONE OF US SHOULD SLEEP WITH THEIR HEADS TOWARD THE BARS, THE OTHER TOWARD THE SINK. NOT EFFECTIVE AT ALL, ESPECIALLY SINCE BOTH PEOPLE IN THE CELL ~~GO~~<sup>GO</sup> TO CARSON (THE HOLE) IF SOMEONE IS SICK - NOT THE HOSPITAL, BUT ADMINISTRATIVE SEGREGATION AS A THREAT TO THE SAFETY AND SECURITY OF THIS INSTITUTION. PLUS, IT IS EXPECTED THAT UPWARDS OF 180 PEOPLE SHOWER IN THE SPAN OF ABOUT AN HOUR IN COMMUNAL SHOWERS. WHERE'S THE SOCIAL DISTANCING IN THAT?

ENOUGH OF MY RANTINGS! THANKS AGAIN FOR YOUR CARE AND SUPPORT. PLEASE FEEL FREE TO SHARE MY RAMBLINGS WITH ANYONE AND EVERYONE. PLEASE FIND ENCLOSED A STORY I WROTE INSPIRED BY ALEX NAEVE AND THERESA ROEDER. ENJOY!

I REMAIN, MOST RESPECTFULLY, Mesro Peace!

## Little Red Robin Hood

The town of Pond Rock was known for its landmark boulder next to River Pond, where the shiniest rainbow trout could be found. Its waters flowed from the Westlake River, which flowed through Sherwood Forest from points beyond. Founded by Richard Terrill, Pond Rock was built near that boulder, dubbed Terrill Boulder, and was full of hardworking fishermen, builders, and cultivators that took advantage of the Westlake River and its many trade routes for their income.

Pond Rock was full of buildings made of wood, clay, straw, and brick. Thatch roofs were reinforced with shingles and held steady by timber from Sherwood Forest. Every tree cut was replaced by three, replanted thanks to Pond Rock farmers and ranchers at the outskirts of town that raised vital crops, cattle, sheep, and other livestock, and worked in tandem with the stonemasons, the builders of Pond Rock responsible for the carpentry, stonemasonry, clothing, and blacksmithing as needed. They kept Pond Rock fed, clothed, and sheltered together.

Pond Rock had lots of festivals, including the Vernal Equinox, where dancing and music welcomed the renewal of the land, and the Harvest, where crops were collected and a feast was enjoyed after that which was needed to sustain Pond Rock for the year was stored. The most dreaded day was Tax Day, where the Sheriff of Nottingham sent tax collectors to carry tribute to Prince John. If taxes were not paid, violence would follow.

For that cause, Mayor Gerald Terrill made certain a good portion of their income was set aside for those tax collectors, and he also made certain to get a receipt to prove tax collection took place.

Today was Tax Day.

Pond Rock did not have an official militia, but the able-bodied men and women living there had armor and weapons ready for defense. It had been reported that the Sheriff's men had been increasingly violent with townspeople when tax rates were raised. To that end, those who could armed themselves as the elderly and infirm herded the children indoors until the tax collectors made their visit. Mayor Terrill himself wore a breastplate along with sword and shield, just in case of hostilities, and helped his fellow townspeople place their taxes near the town square.

Around noon, the tax collectors arrived.

EIGHT TAX COLLECTORS IN FULL-PLATE ARMOR AND CARRYING HEAVY SHIELDS RODE DESTRIERS IN PLATED BARDING AHEAD OF A LARGE CARRIAGE DRAWN BY SIX CLYDESDALES. FOUR MORE TAX COLLECTORS RODE A SHORT DISTANCE BEHIND THE CARRIAGE, WHICH WAS WHITE WITH BLUE AND GOLD TRIM AND DECORATED WITH THE SHERWOOD FOREST ARMS: A TALL ELM WHOSE ROOTS GREW AS SWORDS THRUST THROUGH GOLDEN SOIL THAT HAD THE NAME 'NOTTINGHAM' CARVED INTO IT. EACH TAX COLLECTOR WORE A MATCHING TABARD OVER THEIR ARMOR AND THEIR SHIELDS BORE THE SAME ARMS. TWO MEN IN WHITE, BLUE, AND GOLD BREASTPLATES SAT ATOP THE CARRIAGE, ONE DRIVING THE HORSES, THE OTHER CARRYING A LOADED CROSSBOW WITH A METAL CYLINDER ON IT. THE ENTIRE GROUP GROUND TO A HALT IN THE TOWN SQUARE.

AS THE DUST OF THEIR ARRIVAL SETTLED, FOUR TAX COLLECTORS DISMOUNTED AND MARCHED TO THE CARRIAGE. TWO OF THEM PUT THEIR SHIELDS ON THEIR BACKS, THEN OPENED THE RIGHT-SIDE DOOR. A RAIL THIN MAN IN GOLDEN CHAINMAIL STEPPED OUT, HIS FROWN PULLING DOWN THE REST OF HIS FEATURES. HE HAD WATERY BLUE EYES AND HIS WEAK CHIN GAVE HIM A LOOK OF GAZING DOWN HIS PINCHED NOSE AT ALL HE SURVEYED.

"MAYOR TERRILL," HE SNIFFED, HIS VOICE NASALLY CULTURED, "THE TAXES HAVE COME DUE."  
"WE KNOW THE DAY, ALDERMAN TASKER," TERRILL SAID, NODDING TO THE CHESTS NEARBY. "WE HAVE YOUR TAXES HERE, SIR, IN THE AMOUNTS AGREED UPON IN THIS MISSIVE," HE HELD UP A ROLLED PARCHMENT EMBOSSED WITH THE SHERWOOD FOREST ARMS. "COLLECT YOUR TAXES, FURNISH OUR RECEIPT, AND BE ON YOUR WAY."

"AH," TASKER SNERED, HIS THIN LIPS TWISTING AS THOUGH HE JUST BIT A LEMON. "SO VERY METICULOUS." HE SNAPPED BEJEWELED FINGERS. A SMALLER MAN AND FOUR OTHERS IN SILVER CHAINMAIL EMERGED FROM THE CARRIAGE, TWO OF THEM CARRYING A SCALE BETWEEN THEM. ONE OF THEM DREW A BLACK QUILL FROM HIS CHAINMAIL AND GRABBED A SHEAF OF PARCHMENT LATCHED TO A METAL SHEET AS THE OTHERS BEGAN COUNTING COIN AND COMMUNITIES, SOME OF IT NEEDING TO BE WEIGHED. "WE ALL HAVE TO BE METICULOUS THESE DAYS."

"TRUE," TERRILL SAID, NOTING THAT THE TAX COLLECTORS THAT OPENED THE DOOR HAD REPLACED THEIR SHIELDS ON THEIR ARMS, AND MANY HANDS HOVERED NEAR THEIR SWORDS. IN HIS PERIPHERAL VISION, TERRILL COULD SEE RANGERS ON THE ROOF OF THE SCHOOLHOUSE HIDING, BOWS AT THE READY. "LOTS OF PREDATORS AND OUTLAWS ABOUT LATELY."

"INDEED," ALDERMAN TASKER SAID AS ONE OF HIS ASSISTANTS BROUGHT THE TALLY WITH A SHAKE OF HIS HEAD. "IT WOULD SEEM YOU ARE A BIT SHORT," TASKER TSKED.

"SHORT? BUT WE OVERPAID!" TERRILL BARKED, STOPPING FORWARD. THE RING OF SWORDS BEING

DRAWN STOPPED HIS PROGRESS AS TASKER STEPPED CLOSER TO THE CARRIAGE.

"I'M AFRAID THE TAX ON POND ROCK HAS DOUBLED IN THESE TRYING TIMES," TASKER CHUCKLED AS HIS ASSISTANTS BEGAN LOADING UP THE TAXES. "WE WILL NEED THE REST FORTHWITH."

"I WON'T TAKE FOOD OUT OUR CHILDREN'S MOUTHS!" TERRILL ROARED. "SO YOU'LL GET NONE OF IT!"

THE OTHER TAX COLLECTORS DISMOUNTED AS ARROWS RAINED ON THE TOWN SQUARE. FOUR ARROWS CAUGHT THE TAX COLLECTORS CLOSEST TO THE MAYOR AS HE LEAPT AWAY. THEY TOOK THE ARROWS HIGH, ABOVE THEIR GORGETS. TERRILL READIED HIS SHIELD AS THEY COLLAPSED. TASKER GESTURED FOR TWO OF THE TAX COLLECTORS TO HELP HIS ASSISTANTS AS HE BLEW A WHEEZINGLY SHRILL NOTE FROM A SILVER WHISTLE.

SOME FORTY NOTTINGHAM DEPUTIES RODE INTO TOWN AS MORE TOWNSPEOPLE GREW WEAPONS AND TOOK AIM WITH BOWS. THE DEPUTIES GUIDED THEIR MOUNTS WITH THEIR KNIVES AS THEY FIRED CROSSBOWS WITH ROTATING CYLINDERS FROM HORSEBACK. MANY TOWNSPEOPLE DROVE FOR COVER, THEN CHARGED AS THE CLYDESDALES DRAWING THE CARRIAGE NEIGHED AND REARED, THEIR WIDE EYES ROLLING AS TOWNSPEOPLE FOUND THEMSELVES FENDING OFF NOTTINGHAM STEEL.

TWO TOWNSPEOPLE CREEPT UP THE LEFT SIDE OF THE CARRIAGE WITH SHARP DAGGERS, THEIR BOILED LEATHERS MAKING LITTLE SOUND AS THEY APPROACHED THE CARRIAGE'S DRIVETRAIN. ONE OF THEM CUT REINS AS THE OTHER REMOVED THE PEGS HOLDING THE DRIVETRAIN ATTACHED TO THE CARRIAGE PROPER. TWO OTHER TOWNSPEOPLE DRAGGED DOWN THE DRIVER AND HIS PARTNER TO THE WAITING EMBRACE OF A FEW OTHERS, WHO PROCEEDED TO STOMP THEM INTO THE GROUND. METAL CLASHED AND ARROWS FELL ALL AROUND AS CHAOS REIGNED IN POND ROCK.

A HOWL TORE THROUGH THE IMPROMPTU BATTLEFIELD, STOPPING ALL MOVEMENT. A CRUNCHING AND RUSTLING FROM THE ENCRDACHING FOREST BEYOND THE MAYOR'S HOUSE REVEALED A HUGE WOLF THE COLOR OF DIRTY SNOW EMERGING FROM THE CANOPIED SHADOWS, ITS HEAD LOW, ITS HARKLES HIGH, AND ITS TEETH BARED IN A SNARL THAT MADE THE EARTH TREMBLE. IT STOOD SOME SEVEN AND A HALF FEET AT THE SHOULDER, ITS BUSHY TAIL HANGING LOW AND STILL. IT WORE AN IRON COLLAR WRAPPED IN THICK LEATHER AROUND ITS WIDE NECK, THE LOOP OF SOME SNARE THAT FAILED TO TRAP IT. ROPES OF SALIVA HUNG FROM THOSE TERRIBLE JAWS, ITS WIDE, FLAT TONGUE FLICKERING OUT SLOWLY AS THE GROWL DEEPENED.

"THE BIG BAD WOLF," TERRILL WHISPERED.

AS IF ON CUE, THE WOLF LUNGED, ITS JAWS SNAPPING AROUND THE NEAREST DEPUTY. IT CLAMPED ON THE DEPUTY'S LEG WITH A SOGGY CRUNCH, AND THE DEPUTY WORRIED AT HIM, SLINGING

HIM BACK AND FORTH RAPIDLY BEFORE THROWING HIM INTO AND THROUGH THE FRONT WALL OF THE MAYOR'S HOUSE SHORT ONE LEG. PANIC ENSUED AND BATTLE RESUMED AS THE WOLF SNARLED AND BIT ANYONE FOOLISH ENOUGH TO BE NEARBY, TOWNSPEOPLE, DEPUTIES, AND HORSES ALIKE. ARROWS AND SWORDS COULD BARELY PIERCE THE WOLF.

THE CLYDESDALES REARED AND BUCKED WITH RENEWED TERROR AS PEOPLE AND DESTRIERS FLEW PAST. FOUR WOMEN IN LEATHER ARMOR THAT RESEMBLED VERY WIDE LEAVES CREEPT TOWARD THE CARRIAGE, BOWS AT THE READY AS DEPUTIES TRIED TO SURROUND THE ENORMOUS WOLF. THE WOMEN TOOK AIM AND PUT ARROWS INTO TASKER AND HIS ASSISTANTS, STOPPING THE MOVEMENT OF THOSE TAXES. BY THIS TIME, THE TOWNSPEOPLE WORKING AT THE DRIVETRAIN FREED THE CLYDESDALES, WHO WASTED NO TIME GALLOPING AWAY FROM THE BATTLE AND THAT WOLF WITH WARBLING WHINNIES.

MORE METAL CLASHED AND ARROWS FELL AS TOWNSPEOPLE AND DEPUTIES FOUGHT, BUT THEY ALL PAID MORE ATTENTION TO THE WOLF RAMPAGING THROUGH POND ROCK. TERRILL DEFLECTED MOST OF A VOLLEY OF ARROWS WITH HIS SHIELD AS HE RAN A DEPUTY THROUGH AND SPUN ABOUT AS TWO ARROWS PLUNGED INTO HIS RIGHT HIP. HE SWUNG HIS SHIELD UP AS A TAX COLLECTOR TRIED TO PLUNGE HIS SWORD INTO HIS BELLY.

"LOOK!" SOMEONE SHOUTED. "IT'S HER!"

HIGH ON TERRILL BOULDER, A SLENDER WOMAN WEARING A RED HOODED CLOAK TURNED AROUND SLOWLY, HER COMPOSITE LONGBOW NOCKED WITH TWO ARROWS. HER STUDDED LEATHER ARMOR WAS RED WITH GREEN AND BROWN ACCENTS, AND THE RED MANTLE SHE WORE ABOUT HER SHOULDERS WAS DRAPED OVER LEATHER STRAPS CINCHING A PICNIC BASKET LOW BEHIND HER HIPS. HER WEAPON HAD STEEL PULLEYS AT ITS SLEEK ENDS, AND HER ARROWS HAD WICKEDLY BARBED TIPS. A QUIVER WITH ABOUT SIXTY ARROWS WITH RED BUTTERFLY FINISHES COULD BE SEEN OVER HER RIGHT SHOULDER. BENEATH HER HOOD, ONE COULD BARELY SEE DANCING BLUE EYES AND PURSED RUBY LIPS CURLING UNDER HER RISING CHEEKBONES AS SHE SMILED. THE WOLF HOWLED AS ALL EYES TURNED TO HER.

SHE LOOSED SIX ARROWS IN A BLUR, TAKING DOWN THREE DEPUTIES QUICKLY. THE WOMEN AT THE CARRIAGE BEGAN SHUTTLE TAXES BACK TO THE PILE FROM WHICH THEY CAME AS MORE WOMEN IN LEATHERS, CHAINMAIL, AND BREASTPLATES WIELDING LONGBOWS, SWORDS, RAPIERS, DAGGERS, AXES, AND SHIELDS RUSHED THE REAR FLANK OF THE DEPUTIES. THE BATTLE RESUMED, THE WOLF SNAPPING AT ALL CORNERS AS THE WOMAN IN RED SKIPPED TO THE FRONT OF TERRILL BOULDER, FIRING MORE ARROWS AT MOUNTED DEPUTIES. SHE LEAPT TO THE GROUND, TUMBLING TO A ROLL AND REGAINING HER FEET AS THE CLYDESDALES CONTINUED THEIR ESCAPE.

THREE STONECUTTERS DRAGGED TERRILL BACK TOWARD A LONGHOUSE WITH A RED CROSS HANGING

FROM SIGNAGE READING 'GENERAL STORE'. DESTRIERS WITHOUT RIDERS FOUND THEMSELVES EITHER REINED IN BY WOMEN WHO CAPTURED THEIR BITS AND BRIDLES OR AT THE TENDER MERCIES OF THE BIG BAD WOLF. MORE WOMEN JOINED THE FRAY, HELPING THE INJURED COME AWAY WHILE OTHERS ENGAGED DEPUTIES BRANDISHING STEEL AND TRYING TO TEND TO THEIR OWN FALLEN. ARROWS FOUND WEAK POINTS IN THE ARMOR OF DEPUTIES AND TAX COLLECTORS, LANCING SWORDARMS, PEPPERING HELMETS AND GORGETS, AND SKEWERING HIPS AND GREAVED KNEES, MANY OF THE ARROWS BEARING RED BUTTERFLY FLIGHTS.

THE BATTLE ENDED FASTER THAN IT BEGAN, THE TOWNSPEOPLE CHEERING AS THE LAST TWO DEPUTIES FELL AS THEY TRIED TO ESCAPE WITH LOOSE ARMOR PLATES FALLING FROM THEIR BODIES.

"ALEX MARIAM, GET THAT CARRIAGE HOOKED UP AND OUTTA HERE," THE WOMAN IN RED TOLD A TALL WOMAN WITH HER BROWN HAIR IN A HIGH PONYTAIL. ONE COULD SEE SHE HAD A HORSESHOE UNDER ONE EAR WITH MULTIPLE PIERCINGS. "PUT THOSE DESTRIERS TO WORK!"

"NEXT TIME, GIVE ME SOMETHING HARD TO DO!" ALEX CHUCKLED AS SHE HEADED TOWARD A FEW WOMEN DOING THEIR BEST TO CALM THE WAR-TRAINED MOUNTS.

THE WOMAN IN RED UNSLUNG THE PICNIC BASKET, WHICH WAS MADE OF A MESH OF TANNED LEATHER STRAPS, AND SHOUTED, "THERESA! WITH ME!" AS SHE HEADED FOR THE GENERAL STORE, A SHORTER WOMAN WITH SHINY BLACK CURLS FELL IN STEP BESIDE THE WOMAN IN RED.

THE GENERAL STORE HAD BEEN PREPARED IN ADVANCE, WITH FOOD BINS PUSHED TO THE WALLS AND CLAPBOARDS NAILED TO THE WINDOWS, SOME OF WHICH HAD ARROWHEADS JUTTING THROUGH THEM. COTS WERE LAID ON THE MAIN FLOOR, MORE THAN HALF OF THEM OCCUPIED BY THE DEAD AND DYING. WHEN THEY MOVED TOWARD THE MAYOR, HIS TWO GUARDS MOVED TO INTERCEPT THEM. TERRILL WAIVED THE GUARDS BACK, WHO KEPT THEIR HANDS ON THEIR SWORDS BUT STEPPED BACK.

"IT'S REALLY YOU," TERRILL COUGHED, WINCING AS HE CRADLED A GASH ACROSS HIS BELLY.

"YEAH, IT'S REALLY ME," SHE SMILED. "LITTLE RED ROBIN HOOD." SHE ROLLED HER EYES. "MY MOTHER NAMED ME ROSIN LOXLEY. THIS," SHE GESTURED AT THE WOMAN WITH BLACK CURLS WITH HER, "IS FRIAR THERESA TUCK. WE HAVE SOME MEDICINE HERE THAT WILL HELP YOU AND YOUR WOUNDED."

THERESA NODDED WITH A SMILE, HER CURLS WAVING WITH THE MOTION AS SHE TOOK THE PICNIC BASKET FROM ROBIN. "WE'RE GONNA TAKE CARE OF YOU." THERESA REACHED INSIDE THE PICNIC BASKET AND WITHDREW A SMALL VIAL FULL OF SHIMMERY PURPLE FLUID. "HERE, DRINK THIS. I'LL BE BACK TO CHECK ON YOU." ROBIN TOOK THE VIAL WITH A NOD.

AS THERESA BEGAN MAKING ROUNDS, TERRILL'S EYES GOT WIDE.

"I SAW THE BIG BAD WOLF OUT THERE!" HE FLEETED. "WE'VE GOT TO--"

"DON'T WORRY ABOUT HIM," ROBIN SAID, HANDING TERRILL THE VIAL. "DRINK." THE MAYOR

eyed her suspiciously, then took the vial and unstopped it with a wince. Purple vapors slithered from the vial, and when he sniffed, he smiled. "Grandma's old recipe." With a smile, he took a sip, then downed it like a shot of whiskey.

"What was that stuff?" he asked, rubbing his belly. When he looked down, the gash had closed itself. "Amazing! It doesn't even hurt!"

"Your taxes have been restored," Robin smiled at him. "The sheriff's men should not return, but if they do, so will we."

"Thank you so much for your help," Terrill said, standing and strapping on his breastplate, which had a new plate hammered and sealed onto it. "What of the other taxes?" he asked as Robin waved more women inside.

"Fightin' evil ain't cheap," she smiled, then skipped outside, where the Big Bad Wolf was waiting, bounding around like the world's biggest puppy. The wolf licked her face, eliciting a giggle from her. "Easy, Little John, easy. Let's go help the others!" She skipped toward the square, Little John right on her heels as the carriage trundled out of Pond Rock.