

ARROW THROUGH THE HEART

DAVID BIRD



AN HONORS EBOOK FROM MASTER POINT PRESS

Text © 2016 David Bird
Cover images and illustrations © 2016 Marguerite Lihou

All rights reserved.

Honors eBooks is an imprint of Master Point Press. All contents,
editing and design (excluding cover design) are the sole
responsibility of the author.

Master Point Press
214 Merton St. Suite 205
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
M4S 1A6
(647)956-4933

Email: info@masterpointpress.com

Websites: www.masterpointpress.com
www.bridgeblogging.com
www.teachbridge.com
www.ebooksbridge.com

ISBN: 978-1-55494-562-7

Layout and editing: David Bird
Cover design: Olena S. Sullivan/New Mediatrix

1 2 3 4 5 6 19 18 17 16

CONTENTS

1.	New Year's Day in Sherwood	5
2.	The Sheriff's Oversight	11
3.	Maid Marian's Excellent Defence	18
4.	Wise Wynfryth's Judgement	26
5.	The Sheriff's Invitation	34
6.	Robin Hood's Charitable Mission	42
7.	Nazir in the Spotlight	49
8.	Simon de Gautoy's Trap	54
9.	Guy of Gisborne's Assignment	59
10.	The Prestwich Bequest	66
11.	Sister Hildegard's Prayer	73
12.	The Unexpected Visitors	81
13.	Nazir Twists the Knife	88
14.	Maid Marian's Inspired Play	93
15.	The Sheriff's Poor Result	99
16.	Imelda Baze's Obvious Lead	106
17.	Wise Wynfryth's Successful Spell	115
18.	The Sheriff's Ill-Judged Double	122
19.	Robin Hood's Long Journey	131
20.	Nazir's Contribution	137
21.	The Cathedral Raid	142
22.	Close Encounter with the Sheriff	150
23.	The Bishop's Instruction	158
24.	Maid Marian's Excellent Play	163
25.	Gisborne's Foolish Opening Lead	170
26.	Alvina Durden's Best Night of the Year	176
27.	Henrik Haggel's Plan	181
28.	Robin Hood's Awful Hand	187
29.	Wise Wynfryth's Birthday	192

Once again I would like to thank my great friend and fellow writer, Tim Bourke of Australia. The world's best constructor of bridge deals, he gave me many of the most unusual and imaginative deals in this book.

Many thanks also to Simon Cochemé and Paul Goldfinger, who proof-read the book and discovered a good number of errors that had escaped me.

DB

1

NEW YEAR'S DAY IN SHERWOOD

It was early morning in a small glade deep in Sherwood Forest. Those outlaws still asleep were gradually aroused from their dreams by the wonderful smell of bread cooking over the open fires.

‘Any idea what day it is, Tuck?’ asked Robin Hood, who was stoking one of the fires.

Friar Tuck was never at his best before mid-day. ‘I believe it may be the day celebrated for Saint Almachius the Martyr,’ he replied. ‘I wouldn’t wager my life on it, though.’



Hood laughed. ‘The answer I was looking for is New Year’s Day,’ he said. ‘You know, the day when we’re all expected to give up some undesirable habit, like... well, like gluttony, for example.’

‘There’s no need to look at me as you say that,’ Friar Tuck replied. ‘It’s common knowledge that a large man requires more food than a small man.’

‘He’s right,’ added Much the Miller’s son. ‘My father has two horses, one twice as big as the other. The big one eats at least twice as much.’

‘Not a convincing proof,’ an amused Robin Hood replied. ‘You might as well say that a drunkard needs twice as much beer as a man who drinks modestly.’ He sprung to his feet. ‘Anyway, Nazir and I need to hone our bridge skills before we play in the big-money game at Nottingham Market tonight. Who amongst you are willing to take us on?’

‘Count me in,’ said Friar Tuck. ‘Are you with us, John?’

Little John wiped the sleep from his eyes. ‘Not until I’ve ‘ad me breakfast,’ he replied. ‘Let young Much have a go.’

Much, the Miller’s son, could not believe his luck. He had never before been allowed to join such good players. Perhaps Robin Hood would teach him some of the game’s secrets.

A coarsely-woven blanket was laid out on the ground and the four outlaws sat down cross-legged. This was an early deal:

Neither Vul. ♠ 6 4 2
Dealer South ♥ A 6 5 3
 ♦ K Q 4
 ♣ A Q 10

♠ K Q 10 8
 ♥ 10 8 4
 ♦ 8 7 5 3
 ♣ 6 2

♠ 9 7 3
 ♥ 2
 ♦ A 10 9 6
 ♣ K 9 7 5 3

♠ A J 5
 ♥ K Q J 9 7
 ♦ J 2
 ♣ J 8 4

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
<i>Much</i>	<i>Nazir</i>	<i>Friar</i>	<i>Robin</i>
—	—	<i>Tuck</i>	<i>Hood</i>
Pass	4♥	—	1♥
		All Pass	

Much, who had only recently celebrated his 15th birthday, was out of his depth in this exalted company. They would forgive him if he made a silly mistake or two, but he was determined to gain their respect with a sound performance. Now, what should he lead against the heart game? His spade honours were nearly in sequence. Perhaps the ♠K would be a good lead? He would try that.

Nazir the Saracen looked into Robin Hood's eyes as he displayed his dummy. 'Good hand,' he declared. 'In future times, if Allah wishes it, there may be some special bid to show such power. Then we could bid more slams when your hand is also good.'

Hood nodded. 'Perhaps that should be our New Year's resolution,' he suggested. 'To improve our slam bidding.'

'It would make more sense than any of your silly ideas about eating less,' declared Friar Tuck. 'Why would the bountiful Lord provide us with the means to cook joints of meat and bake fruit pies if He didn't intend us to enjoy them to the full?'



Friar Tuck played the ♠3 on the first trick and Robin Hood contributed the ♠5. Much was pleased with the success of his opening lead. What a great start he had made in this high-level game! He was about to play another spade when Hood leaned towards him. 'You saw Tuck's ♠3?' he said. 'It was a signal to tell you he has nothing good in the suit. You should play something different now.'

Much could not believe what he was hearing. Defenders were allowed to signal to each other? If he could pick up a few more secrets from these great players, he would quickly become an expert himself.

As instructed, Much looked for another suit to play. His father, the miller in Gorsthorpe Village, had often mentioned how well it worked to 'lead through dummy's strength'. Maybe a club would be a good idea.

Robin Hood paused for thought when the ♣6 appeared. If he took a losing club finesse, Tuck would be able to return a spade through his ♠A-J. This

would set up a fourth trick for the defence before he could establish a discard on the diamonds.

Hood reached forward to play the ♣A. After drawing trumps with the king, queen and jack, he led the ♦J. When Friar Tuck allowed this to win, he continued with a second diamond to the queen and ace. He won the spade return with the ace and crossed to the ♥A to discard his spade loser on the ♦K. The game had been made.

‘You defended well, young Much!’ Robin Hood exclaimed. ‘That club switch made it awkward for me.’

Much looked modestly downwards. His defence had been praised by none other than Robin Hood — it was a moment to savour. How proud his father would be!

The winter sun was soon in evidence and several other outlaws gathered round to observe the play. Robin Hood reached another game contract on this deal:

Both Vul.	♠ K 10 8 4	
Dealer South	♥ K 10 9 5	
	♦ K 7 5	
	♣ K 9	
♠ 3 2		♠ A Q 7 6
♥ 4 3		♥ A Q 6 2
♦ 10 9 8 6 4 2		♦ 3
♣ Q 6 3		♣ J 7 4 2
	♠ J 9 5	
	♥ J 8 7	
	♦ A Q J	
	♣ A 10 8 5	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
<i>Much</i>	<i>Nazir</i>	<i>Friar Tuck</i>	<i>Robin Hood</i>
—	—	—	1♣
Pass	1♥	Pass	1NT
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

Robin Hood won the ♦10 lead in his hand. He had five top tricks and, given time, he would doubtless be able to set up at least four more from spades and hearts. At Trick 2 he led the ♥8, running the card.

Friar Tuck won with the ♥Q, noting that the defensive prospects were far from bright. He might well score his four major-suit honours but where was a fifth trick coming from? There was just room for young Much to hold the ♣Q. Perhaps the defenders could conjure a club trick.

At Trick 3, Friar Tuck made the fine play of switching to the ♣J. When Hood won with dummy's ♣K and played a second round of hearts, Tuck rose with the ace and played another club. There was little alternative but to run this to the nine and Much won with the ♣Q. Robin Hood took the diamond return and had only eight tricks at his disposal. When he played a spade, Friar Tuck claimed two tricks in the suit for one down.

'What a defence you made there, Tuck!' exclaimed Robin Hood. 'The jack of clubs? Who taught you that one?'

'Such plays come easily to a well-sustained human brain,' Friar Tuck replied. 'Have you never wondered why most dullards are so thin? Their brains are starved of essential nutrients.'

Robin Hood did not have long to wait for another chance to win the rubber. This was the lay-out:

Both Vul.	♠ A J 9 2		
Dealer North	♥ K Q 8 3		
	♦ 10 5		
	♣ 10 6 4		
♠ 6 4 3		♠ 7	
♥ 9 5		♥ A J 7 6 4 2	
♦ J 8 7 6 4 2		♦ K Q	
♣ 8 3		♣ K Q J 9	
	♠ K Q 10 8 5		
	♥ 10		
	♦ A 9 3		
	♣ A 7 5 2		

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
<i>Much</i>	<i>Nazir</i>	<i>Friar Tuck</i>	<i>Robin Hood</i>
—	Pass	1♥	1♠
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♠
All Pass			

This time Much had little to think about when choosing his opening lead. It was more than his life was worth not to lead the suit that Friar Tuck had bid. Imagine how the onlookers would laugh at him if he chose to lead diamonds, his own best suit!

The ♥9 landed on the rough grey blanket and Hood studied the dummy that Nazir put down. It seemed natural to play one of dummy's honours on this trick, but this would waste the power of his ♥10. He leaned forward and played the ♥3 from dummy.

Several of the onlookers exchanged glances. That was a strange play to make. Still, Robin must know what he was doing.

Friar Tuck won the trick with the ♥J and switched to the ♣K. After a few moments, Hood played a low club from his hand.

A puzzled Little John, who had joined the group of outlaws watching the game, nudged Will Scarlet. Why on earth had Robin not won with the ♣A?

Robin Hood won the second round of clubs and drew trumps, ending in the dummy. Friar Tuck covered the ♥K with the ♥A and Hood ruffed with his penultimate trump. He then gave up a club trick, won by Friar Tuck in the East seat.

‘I guess I’m too late to play this card,’ said Friar Tuck, switching to the ♦K.

‘Afraid so,’ Robin Hood replied. He won with the ♦A and ruffed his last club to reach the dummy. Away went his two diamond losers on the established ♥Q-8 and the game was made.

Nazir flashed his perfect white teeth by way of congratulation. ‘Nice move, ducking first club,’ he said.

Few of the onlookers had understood the play. Maybe someone would explain it.

‘Yes,’ agreed Friar Tuck. ‘If he takes the ace immediately, I win two club tricks subsequently and can set up a diamond winner in time.’

Little John nudged Will Scarlet again. ‘You see it now?’ he asked. ‘I was going to explain it to you before, but I thought they’d hear.’

Will Scarlet had not been paying attention. ‘Yeah, clever,’ he replied.

‘It was difficult for our young friend here,’ Friar Tuck continued. ‘If Much happens to choose a diamond for his opening lead, the contract can’t be made.’

‘That’s really unlucky,’ Much replied. ‘Just this morning I made my New Year’s resolution. Always lead partner’s suit!’



David Bird's third book of Robin Hood bridge stories provides a feast of entertainment for his fans. The 27 stories contain 113 splendid deals and provide the laugh-aloud humor and painless instruction for which the author is renowned.

The cast list features Robin Hood, Maid Marian and the Outlaws — also their arch-enemies, the Sheriff of Nottingham and his hapless side-kick, Sir Guy of Gisborne — not to mention a host of nuns, priests, soldiers, ill-smelling serfs, horse traders, bishops, barmaids, young girls and ladies of the court to join in the fun. The deals played are ingenious and the adventures hilarious.

Illustrator Marguerite Lihou is well known for her humorous touch and attention to detail. This is David's first book of stories to be illustrated.



DAVID BIRD (England) has written over 130 bridge books, a record number, including over 50 for Master Point Press. He is well known for his humorous bridge fiction, including the Abbot series, which has run for nearly 40 years.



MARGUERITE LIHOU is an illustrator based in Bristol, UK and is also a bridge player. In her work she aims to capture the foibles of human nature with gentle humour and affection.