

YE OLDE ROBINHOOD STORIES

Grandmother's Visit

All was quiet on the hill just before reveille would be sounded and campers would awake to participate in Nottingham Fair Day, the eagerly anticipated end-of-season highlight. It was the last day for senior counselors, most of whom had been assigned to the same cabin for many years, to engage in their gentle collegiate but competitive shenanigans.

As the early morning sun rose over Sherwood Forest a ~~some what petite but~~ ³ (reportedly) ample-bodied woman dressed in her Sunday-best dress and mesh stockings slipped out of Locksley Hall, strode across the baseball field then nervously navigated in her high heels up the hill to the front door of Will Scarlet cabin where I resided as a nine-year-old in 1953. Will Scarlet and its campers were guarded by P. A. Wales, a gentle but serious man who had safely led many generations of campers in their canoes through the Reversible Falls on the Bagaduce River.

A soft knock on the door roused the ever-vigilant P.A. who shuffled to the door curious to see who could be there at this early hour. Not waiting to be invited, the woman barged inside pushing aside P.A. announcing, "I am David's grandmother, I have come to see him, where is he? I have struggled to climb up this steep hill and over slippery rocks in my high heels and I want to see him now." The suspicious P.A. momentarily resisted while figuring out how to deal with this unusual intrusion.

Not to be deterred, the grandmother deliberately marched to my bed at the rear of the cabin, calling softly, "Hello David, it's grandmother and I have come to see you." Everyone was now awake and 'all ears.' Upon catching up to Grandmother at my bed, P.A. noticed her hairy legs and askew wig. His amusement quickly turned into consternation then recognition then rage. Clearly, this was not my grandmother but Norman Stettbacher, assistant camp director, dressed in his wife's apparel – now an unwanted imposter in HIS cabin.

Speaking softly so not to alarm the other boys, P.A. said, "Madame, you are not allowed in cabins before visiting hours later this morning – you must leave." Caught, but needing to make a grand exit, Grandmother exclaimed, "You must let me see David now. Nasty man, how can you be so impolite to throw this old woman out of David and his little friends' cabin on this wonderful day?"

Not to be upstaged, P.A. acted swiftly to sustain his no-nonsense reputation asserting, "Madame, thank you for coming but I am asking you say goodbye to David and leave now." Knowing the jig was up, Grandmother blew a kiss to each now wide-awake camper as she stumbled to the front of the cabin – closely followed by the very upset P.A.

Pausing on the front porch, Grandmother pondered if she could 'visit' another cabin or stumble down the hill undetected as reveille was imminent. P.A. whispered, "Stett, you damn fool, how did you get up the hill in those high heels with hairy legs and wig askew? What other cabins did you visit before me? Get out of here!" With lost dignity as one of her heels had broken, Grandmother vanished into legend with reputation intact as she had fooled P.A. Wales.

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