Killing for Nothing

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Summary

Set in the pre-series to the show. Robin of Locksley is in the Holy Land. He has to participate in the massacre of three thousand prisoners taken hostage by King Richard after the capture of Acre. Robin is not happy, and he considers it killing for nothing.

I'm re-posting this story because I deleted my account and then registered at AO3 again. If you can give me the kudos and comments back, I will be very grateful. Thanks!

Notes

This is a short story about Robin in the Holy Land. I am not sure that it could happen while Robin served in the Holy Land, but I came up with this idea while discussing Robin’s life in Acre with my great friend, Penelope Clemence.

I don't own Robin Hood BBC and the characters. I also introduced certain characters by myself.

See the end of the work for more notes.
To kill or not to kill?

Killing For Nothing

Chapter 1

To kill or not to kill?

After the siege and capture of the city of Acre, about three thousand Saracen prisoners were locked in the vast, damp cellars deep below the city. King Richard the Lionheart decided to keep them hostage until Saladin paid ransom for them. He also demanded to give the Christians a genuine piece of the True Cross, the actual cross on which Jesus Christ was crucified, which the Saracen had captured in earlier clashes with the crusaders.

Sir Robin of Locksley, the Earl of Huntingdon, the Lord of Locksley, Hero of Acre, and Captain of King Richard's Private Guard, visited the prisoners several times in their dungeons. Every time he saw the pleading eyes and thin faces of the ragged and thin condemned prisoners – men, women, and children, his heart skipped a beat. They were imprisoned in terrible conditions. He pitied these people, though they were the King's enemies and the infidels.

Robin desperately hoped that Saladin would pay the ransom for these poor people. However, he heard from his King that Saladin was purposefully delaying the payment in hope that the large approaching Muslim army would allow him to retake the control of Acre. Time was passing, but nothing was changing.

King Richard additionally demanded from Saladin to give him the list of the names of the important Christians held in captivity by the Saracens, but the Sultan refused. That refusal enraged Richard who thought that Saladin didn't want to have negotiations about the possible exchange of the prisoners. Robin heard several times that Richard interpreted Saladin's actions as a simple delaying tactic. Richard insisted that the ransom payment and the prisoner exchange must take place within one month. Saladin again did nothing, and Richard turned berserk with rage.

The King of England convened the Council of Generals. The situation with the held prisoners was on the agenda. The King planned to march south in order to recapture Jerusalem, but it wasn't possible with so many prisoners in the train. Saladin's silence about the ransom created the solid pressure on King Richard who wanted to resolve the matter in the shortest possible time. The generals were supposed to vote on the subject of what to do with the prisoners.

Robin hoped that they would decide to not to execute the prisoners or at least delay the execution. But the Council voted for massacring the prisoners so as to show the infidels that the King of England wasn't going to tolerate the Saracens' intransigence. The King of France laughed in response and agreed with King Richard that it would be the right course of action. Only Robin and another Captain – Sir Robert de Beaumont, the Earl of Leicester and Captain of the Second Column, King Richard's second grand favorite – voted against the execution of the prisoners.

Robin didn't approve of his liege's intention to execute so many unarmed men, children, and women. After the meeting of the Council of Generals, the King only smiled at him with a tight smile and joked that Robin had always been straightforward and honest, saying that he valued those qualities in Robin. Richard didn't comment on Locksley's opposite opinion about the execution. Richard also didn't give any sign of his displeasure with Robin, neither in private nor in public, and it seemed that Robin didn't lose the King's favor and trust. Robin was grateful to the King for that.
Robin tried to reconcile himself with the thought that he would have to murder the unarmed Muslim people in the bloodiest massacre which the Holy Land had ever seen in the past years. He told himself that it was his liege's will and he had to obey as the king's loyal soldier and subject. He persuaded himself that there was nothing wrong in killing England's enemies and following the King's orders. The King of England was an anointed and crowned monarch, and his wishes were the law for his subjects. He told himself that it wasn't a sin to kill the infidels and the Church approved of that. After all, they came to the Holy Land to remove the infidels and retake Jerusalem for Christians.

Yet, Robin's soul was troubled, his heart heavy. He couldn't imagine himself killing unarmed men not on the battlefield or in the Saracen raids. He was accustomed to gruesome bloodshed on a massive scale, and he killed many Saracens since they had arrived in the Holy Land. He lost the count of his victims that haunted him in his nightmares. Robin earned the reputation of the brave Captain Locksley in the wake of his numerous heroic deeds he had committed during the siege of Acre and the city’s capture, when the storm of his arrows had killed so many Saracens near the central Gates of Acre that Richard's armies had passed through the city walls without many difficulties.

Taking lives of these weaponless prisoners was different from killing in battle. It was not the same as killing on the battlefield to survive and protect the king. For several days, Robin tried to resign himself to the thought that the prisoners would die for a sacred reason – for the liberation of Jerusalem. He said to himself that the King knew what he was planning to do and that the Lord couldn’t be mistaken. However, then doubts returned to Robin's head with the ferocity of a rabid wolf. He no longer was sure that he would be able to murder all these prisoners in cold blood. Nevertheless, he had to kill them or at least command their killing, but he couldn't find any moral strength to do that.

As Robin no longer believed in the holy cause, he killed not for God, but for King Richard and out of his loyalty to his liege, for his fallen comrades, and for their victory so that they would be able to return home. Robin knew that his potential for ruthlessness was very deep, and he did many brutal things in Palestine, but massacring all those people was beyond him. There was no honesty in that slaughter. He wasn't sure that he would be able to live with a huge load of horrible guilt and remorse which he would surely have if he had raised his hand at those prisoners.

It was a late night, Robin and Much, his ever-loyal squire and his childhood friend, were in Robin's tent. Robin stretched his body across his wide, wooden bed, with a headboard carved in an elaborate design. As the Captain of the King's Private Guard, Robin enjoyed much better living conditions than the guards had. He didn't have to sleep on a narrow cot or a straw mattress strewn on the sand. Robin never cared about these few luxuries, which his status of the Captain of the Private Guard and King Richard's grand favorite brought to him.

Only Much was happy that their living conditions were much more convenient than those in other tents. Indeed, they had a spacious tent, some splendid and handsomely carved pieces of furniture inside, warm woolen covers, silk bed sheets and pillowcases, feather pillows, one large Turkish rug with numerous soft, silk pillows spread on that rug. For Much, the comfort in Robin's tent reminded him of his life at Locksley Manor, and the servant felt closer to home, to England, and that knowledge also filled Robin's heart with joy.

Much slipped under the warm bedcovers and groaned in pleasure. It was so very nice to put his tired body on the bed after a long day. "Master, you have been strangely silent in the past days."

Robin blinked and stared into space. "It's nothing."

Much drew a deep breath. "I know what you are thinking about."
Robin laughed with a cynical laugh. "You have a simple mind. You don't understand."

Much flinched and turned away from Robin's intense stare. "I'm trying to help you."

For a long time, Robin didn't speak. He only stared fixedly at Much, his blue eyes piercing his friend's face. His eyes were vacant, his expression strained. "I'm sorry," he broke the silence.

"You shouldn't be," Much said, trying not to show how offended he was. He cared for Robin very much. He understood everything and watched Robin slip into melancholy after all bloody battles and Saracen raids. Robin's mood swings and emotional withdrawal were usual, and Much got accustomed to them a long time ago.

Robin spoke in a voice that was laced with sadness and guilt. "I killed so many people in battles! I will never wash their blood from my hands. I will never forget the faces of the many Saracens whom I slaughtered on the battlefield. I killed for the glory of God, for King Richard, and for our victory. But later I was disappointed in the holy war, and I began to kill only to defend the King and win the war because we would be able to live this place only if we win this war." He paused and sighed. "I never thought about being killed – I only killed, killed, and killed," Robin murmured, his voice almost a whisper. He again trailed off and swallowed painfully. "But the massacre is different. This is killing for nothing." He brushed a lock of his unruly hair from his forehead. "I'm not sure that I will be able to kill them."

Much sighed heavily. He understood his Master's train of thoughts. "These are the King's orders."

"I'm not sure I will obey," Robin repeated. There was a note of despair and vulnerability in his voice.

"Master…" Much said and stopped himself.

Robin managed a wistful smile, which only darkness could see. "I will be alright, Much. Sleep."

Eventually, the horrible day came. It was the early morning hours of August 20, 1191. It was the day of the bloody and merciless execution. The sun was high in the blue, unclouded sky, and the heat was oppressing. The air was so warm and so heavy that it was impossible to breathe. The stark, sun-bleached landscape, sandy and spare, was around. Even at the early hours, it glowed with the threat of the brutally hot day to come.

King Richard the Lionheart ordered the Private Guard and his other troops to gather at the small hill Ayyadieh, a few miles from the walls of Acre, at eight in the morning. Sir Hugh III, the Duke of Burgundy, also commanded his soldiers to come there at the same time. As King Philip II of France had already departed from Acre, he left Hugh III, the Duke of Burgundy, in charge of the French troops. Hugh was King Richard's most trusted ally in the Holy Land.

King Richard and Hugh of Burgundy stood on the hill, watching their armies assembling and discussing the execution. The soldiers assumed their formations, the English lining at Richard's side and the French at Hugh's. The soldiers were about to commit the bloodiest massacre during the Third Crusade. Robin of Locksley stood next to King Richard and other generals, looking at the crowd of the prisoners and sighing deeply.

*It is wrong, and it is against God. These prisoners shouldn’t be killed in cold blood, Robin thought.*

The Saracen prisoners were unceremoniously thrown on the yellow-tinted sand. Each of them was bound tightly and forced to kneel with their heads extended. The prisoners were hemmed in on three sides by the ranks of the Christian army, and there could be no hope of escape.
The upcoming execution of these unnamed and helpless people made Robin's blood run cold in his veins and his heart freeze in dread. His heart jumped into his throat at the thought that he would have to execute them with his Saracen curved sword. Robin had never felt so helpless, so angry, and so guilty. He was angry that these people had been sentenced to death. He blamed himself for coming to the Holy Land, and he felt guilty of leaving Locksley and his people behind to do his duty to his King. Robin blamed himself for breaking Marian's tender heart so that he could be with the King on the holy Crusade that turned to be so very unholy.

He caught himself on the thought that he mistrusted the Christian faith as he couldn't understand how the King, the holy representative of God on earth, could encourage Christian knights and warriors to slaughter the unarmed people, going against the code of chivalry. Robin loved and respected King Richard, and he was grateful to his liege for his friendship and favor. However, at such fateful moments, he wasn't sure that he understood his King's motives for the Great Holy Pilgrimage. The thought that maybe his King had been misguided by Pope Gregory crossed his mind.

Yet, Robin couldn't distrust the Christian faith and his King: it couldn't be Jesus Christ's teachings that were at fault, and it couldn't be the King's fault either. The evil did not come from Christ or King Richard, but from Saladin who manipulated the Christians to distract them from their march to Jerusalem while gathering new forces against the Christian armies. Still, Robin couldn't bring himself to kill the prisoners in cold blood. Even enemies deserved some mercy and respect, especially those who couldn’t defend themselves and were disarmed.

As Captain of the Private Guard, Robin of Locksley had to command the beginning of the brutal slaughter at King Richard's signal. Holding his breath, his heart in tatters, Robin stood straight, his hands at his sides. He solemnly observed his King conversing with Hugh of Burgundy, undoubtedly discussing the execution.

Robin's men stood around him, armed and ready to begin the unholy killing.

Robin inwardly shuddered in horror and revulsion. He did his best to maintain an outward façade of calmness, keeping his true emotions to himself. He again told himself that he would have to kill for Richard and England. But the very thought that he would command his men to start the execution made Robin feel sick in the pit of his stomach. The massacre was only not killing for nothing, but also was a totally dishonorable action that would damn the souls of all the executors because it was the murder of the unarmed, starving, beaten, haggard people. There was no glory and humanity in killing all those people, and instead, this evil deed was all about brutality and dishonorable bloodshed.

“For several weeks, we tried to negotiate the terms of the exchange of these prisoners with Saladin,” King Richard's booming voice resonated. He spoke in Norman-French, his native tongue. “We demanded that Saladin give us the True Cross. However, the Saracens insulted us and ignored our demands. There are rumors that the True Cross was sent to Damascus. Saladin deceived us and is trying to manipulate us, but he will not succeed.”

All eyes were glued to King Richard as the soldiers waited for the King of England to speak.

"The Saracens demonstrated that they don't care for their countrymen captured in Acre,” Richard continued, looking at Hugh of Burgundy, who smiled and nodded vigorously. "Saladin knows that we have the greatest, most powerful army of the Crusaders in the world. The infidels know that they are doomed and that Jerusalem will soon once again be safe in Christian hands. To delay our march to Jerusalem, Saladin has been deliberately disregarding all our demands and attempts to negotiate. He doesn't wish to save these prisoners. Saladin's behavior is dishonorable."

His dark blue eyes stony, King Richard looked at the guards, who nodded in agreement.
Hugh of Burgundy stepped forward and swept his eyes over the prisoners. His face was blank, his eyes full of loathing for the Muslims. "The infidels were given a chance to begin to worship our true Almighty Lord – Jesus Christ. Instead, they kept their loyalty to their barbarian God, which condemns them to burning in the nethermost fire." He raised his voice. "Now we offer them the last chance to take the path to redemption by converting to Christianity."

Robin held his breath, knowing that nobody of the Turkish prisoners would agree with Hugh's offer. These speeches were a mere theatrical act for King Richard and Hugh of Burgundy who needed to say something to justify the atrocity they were going to commit. The fate of the prisoners had long been determined by Richard and his allies.

King Richard swept his eyes over the prisoners. "They are unable to break the spell of their fake God. Their souls will be damned to be burnt in hellfire for eternity." His gaze shifted to Robin. "Captain Locksley, we may start."

"Let’s finish this." Hugh of Burgundy looked at the Captain of his Guard. "You may begin."

At Hugh's command, the French guards ripped their weapons from their scabbards. They paused as they saw that something was not right among the English soldiers.

Sir Robert de Beaumont, the Earl of Leicester, stood near the King of England and watched. He was happy that his men didn’t have to participate in the execution. He didn't know how he would be able to obey his King if he was ordered to kill so many weaponless people. He didn't envy the members of the Private Guard and, particularly, Robin of Locksley, his best friend. He knew Robin's true opinion about on the matter, and it concurred with his own.

Robin’s heart sank into his throat, and a tight knot formed in his gut. Duty, loyalty, and obedience dictated him to obey his liege and to kill the prisoners, but he just couldn’t do that because it went against everything he believed in, against his nature. He couldn't lose the last humanity he still had in his heart. Robin solemnly stared at the King, his expression detached and cold. He didn't move and didn't order the Guard to sheathe their swords and prepare other weapons for the slaughter. He couldn't bring himself to give the command. The words refused to slip from his tongue.

Sir James of Kent, Robin's second-in-command, stared at Robin, his eyes imploring his Captain to speak. But he could guess what thoughts were racing through Robin’s head. He observed the shifting emotions on Robin’s face for several days. “Robin, give a command,” James whispered into Robin's ear.

Robin looked at James, his eyes full of pain. “I cannot.”

The guards were bewildered and simply stared at their Captain. Robin's close friends suspected what had just happened in Robin's head, and they were worried about him. It was well-known that King Richard had held Robin in the greatest favor and loved his captain, but Robin's actions could still easily condemn him to death.

"What is going on? We must begin!" Hugh of Burgundy shrilled, his voice annoyed.

"Captain Locksley?" King Richard called, his voice loud and unemotional.

"Robin, listen to me," James addressed his Captain. "You must give a command!" He grabbed Robin's hand. "Think what you are doing! Give a command! Speak! Snap out of your doubts! Then take a sword and begin." He lowered his voice. "It may be interpreted as insubordination or even as an act of treason."
Everyone was silent. They waited, their eyes riveted on Robin.

Robin pushed James away. He directed at the King a cold glance; then his eyes flew to James. "Give a command, James, if you can do that. You are my second-in-command, and soon you will be the Head of the Private Guard after the King punishes me for insubordination. If I kill these people, I will be unable to live with guilt, and I will stop respecting myself. It is *killing for nothing*, and I cannot do this." His voice was quiet, but firm and resolute.

"Robin, my friend, think of your life and the consequences," James spoke in a beseeching voice.

"Master, please give a command! Please!" Much begged.

Robin didn't hear their pleas. At last, he had the answer to the question whether he could kill the Saracen prisoners: if he murdered all these unarmed people in cold blood and in the most brutal way, he wouldn't be able to live with this guilt. He suspected what the consequences for him would be like, but he couldn’t go against his honor and conscience.
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Chapter 2

Disobedience

Robin of Locksley made up his mind: he couldn't kill almost three thousand unarmed Saracen prisoners. If he murdered them himself or gave the command to begin the slaughter, he would be no better than a wild animal. Killing these people so brutally went against his honor and everything he believed in. Killing them would have destroyed his heart and soul.

Robin strode towards King Richard and dropped to one knee in front of his liege. The guards stared at the young Captain in amazement; they began gossiping and discussing.

"Silence!" King Richard's voice boomed. "Captain Locksley, you may speak."

Robin bowed, struggling to keep a calm façade. When he lifted his eyes, his gaze locked with the King's. He spoke in Norman-French in a high voice. "My liege, I humbly apologize for my disobedience. I don't ask you to pardon me. I know that my behavior is a great offence to you. I realize that there will be consequences. I willingly submit myself to your fair judgment."

Still standing on his knee, Robin bowed again his eyes downcast. A long silence ensued, and the guards stared at their Captain, openmouthed and shocked with Locksley's bold and honest speech.

More shocked than startled, Hugh of Burgundy waited for King Richard to speak, condemning the Captain's foolish behavior. Although he was much older than Richard and had led martial life for years in France, Hugh had never seen anything like this, especially from the King's favorite.

Robin felt a rising tide of panic fill his soul with mortal terror. He half expected that the King would order to arrest him right there. He tried to speak eloquently and clearly, putting as much humbleness, reverence, and devotion in his tone and words as it was possible. However, it wasn't enough to compensate for his crime – insubordination and, perhaps, even treason.

The Earl of Leicester watched the King of England and Robin. Like everyone, he was fearful of Richard's hot Angevin temper that could flare up. As he noticed that the King's eyes were not angry, he chuckled to himself. Leicester knew the King very well, and now he was sure that there would be no harsh consequences for Robin. Robin could be spared even a public reprimand from the King, if it was what Leicester supposed – the King's test of Robin's humanity.

"Very well, Lord Locksley," King Richard replied coldly. His expression was unreadable, but his eyes danced with mischief; Robin didn't notice that as his head was bowed. "Rise and go to your tent. Take Much with you."

Robin was at a loss. Did the King dismiss him without an arrest? Will he be arrested later? He blinked and rose from his knees and looked at King Richard. As their eyes locked, Robin saw the strange blue fire in the King's gaze. Yet, he no longer felt as frightened as he was when Robin decided to stand against the King's order.

King Richard referred to him as Lord Locksley. Did the King already strip his position of the Captain of the Guard from him? Most likely, Robin was no longer than a disgraced nobleman at that
stage. If the King addressed to him as Lord Locksley, maybe the King would be merciful and send Robin and Much home in disgrace because of Robin’s insubordination. Maybe Robin would be let keep his title and lands. It would be the best outcome, but he didn't dare to hope for that.

"My lord, you may arrest me whenever you wish. I am at your disposal." Robin bowed again.

"Leave now, Locksley," the King said sternly, but a crooked smile curved his lips. His eyes were not angry and cruel: there were curiosity and something else in his gaze.

Robin nodded. "As you command, sire."

The Earl of Leicester's eyes met Robin's, and Leicester winked at Robin, signaling that all would be alright. The King noticed Leicester's signal and frowned at him. Richard shouldn't have been worried because Robin didn't understand the true sense of Leicester's wink.

Robin turned to face Much whose eyes were full of fear and pain. Much expected Robin to be detained after his speech. Then Robin hurriedly walked away from the King and the congregation of soldiers without a backward glance. Confused and frightened, Much trailed behind his Master.

After Robin and Much had disappeared from the hill, King Richard himself ordered the Private Guard to begin the massacre. The English and French guards unsheathed their swords and stalked towards the prisoners. They were not allowed to kill the Saracens with arrows because wood was a luxury in the desert. The guards used curved swords, broadswords, and axes for the execution.

"Humanity doesn't have a place in war," Hugh of Burgundy told the King of England.

King Richard inclined his head. "The Earl of Huntingdon doesn’t agree with you, milord."

"Huntingdon did a stupid thing today. He showed his disrespect to the holy war."

"Captain Locksley respects our war and his King," Richard parried in a flat voice.

"A soldier, all the more Captain of the Private Guard, cannot do such things," Hugh snapped.

The King's lips curled into a wry smile. "We do appreciate Captain Locksley's bravery, boldness, and honesty. We don't think these qualities are weaknesses."

Hugh chewed his bottom lip. He was also impressed by the boldness and challenge of Locksley's actions, but he, the bloodthirsty old warrior, didn't like them. "Sire, if I may ask a question, are you going to punish Huntingdon? He deserves a harsh punishment, maybe a flogging."

"Lord Locksley won't be punished. We will do nothing to him. He is and will remain Captain of the Private Guard," the King replied unhesitatingly.

"Sire, I know that you hold him in such high favor, but he gave a bad example to your soldiers."

"We respect and value Locksley too much to let this small incident change our attitude to him."

"He showed ignorance of your orders."

"It was disobedience, but not disloyalty." The King shook his head. "Robin is utterly loyal to us. He loves and respects us. But his heart is kind and gentle, although he is a man of duty and fights for his country and his king. He couldn't kill these unarmed prisoners, but he would have killed all our enemies in battle. He will gladly sacrifice himself for his King. It is difficult to find a man as loyal to his King as he is. His loyalty can never be bought, and this is what we value the most."
Hugh of Burgundy heard many tales about Locksley's humanity, and he knew that Captain of Richard's Guard had saved Saracen women and children from being massacred after raids on villages and towns, but he never saw that himself. He also heard about Robin's staunch loyalty and deep affection for King Richard. "Then, he is a rare man," he commented.

Richard smiled. "Robin is an unusual man. We have known this since our first meeting."

The Lionheart suspected that Robin wouldn't be able to order the guards to begin the slaughter. He expected Robin to do something unusual or foolhardy, and he was correct. The King didn't send Robin away on any mission that day because he wanted to test Robin and to see how his favorite would behave before the execution. Everything was as the King had anticipated! Richard didn't intend to punish Robin as he loved Robin and as he himself put Robin into this situation.

Richard was impressed with Robin's speech. He was secretly pleased that Robin had managed to keep his humanity even after all the bloody battles he fought on the Crusade. The same was with the Earl of Leicester, who also voted against the execution of the prisoners. Richard was proud of Robin's boldness, chivalry, and honesty, but he would never admit that aloud. He had never met knights who were as chivalrous, brave, loyal, and honorable as Robin. Robin was a unique man.

The King's heart hardened after many battles he had fought for his survival and for the throne. Locksley and Leicester's chivalry and humanity reminded Richard of what he himself had wanted to keep in his heart but had failed because royals can rarely be as compassionate and merciful as common people. Richard loved Huntingdon and Leicester more like brothers than his favorites; he especially loved in these two men those features which he didn't have or lost in bloody battles.

Huntingdon and Leicester's compassion and chivalry made the King's heart beat faster and filled it with warmth. The Lionheart, the greatest warrior King among all Christian Kings, couldn't reveal to the world that he didn't consider humanity a weakness. Some things had to remain unsaid.

The slaughter was gruesome and appalling. At first, the male prisoners attempted to endure the agony bravely, but soon some began to beg their executioners in Arabic for mercy. Women and children were screaming, weeping, and beseeching Allah to help them. The guards ignored all these cries and continued doing the evil deed, and there was no mercy for the infidels. The spilled Saracen blood painted the yellow sand in a crimson hue, and cries and screams of horror and pain echoed in the hot air like an anathema for those who were committing this atrocity.

Robin and Much didn't return to Robin's tent. They stopped on the vantage point, a little afar from the place of the execution, and silently watched the murderous slaughter. The execution was continuing in accordance with the plan, like a well-rehearsed performance. The soldiers finished one row of the prisoners, and then started cutting a new row of the Saracens. Sometimes, the guards paused to clean the red filth from their swords with hands, and then began their job again. More and more the Saracens dropped dead, their heads rolling over the ground.

Much threw up his breakfast and dissolved into tears. “I cannot believe that they are murdering them!” He swallowed a sob. “I cannot believe! I cannot–” He broke off abruptly.

Robin observed the massacre with empty and cold eyes, his face as of carved from marble. He wanted to imagine that it was a hideous nightmare, but he couldn’t. He was shuddering inwardly, and his heart was bleeding. His blood burning with a feverish rage from the pain and helplessness he was feeling at the moment, for he couldn’t stop the execution. He was also incensed at himself, thinking that he should have done something to save the unfortunate prisoners.

Who is guilty: God, King Richard, or Saladin? What should I do now, Robin asked himself.
Robin didn't know whom he could blame for this terrible injustice, and stubbornly he didn't want to blame God and his beloved King Richard. He tried to banish these thoughts from his head. Richard was his king, and his actions were beyond reproach. As God's incarnate, King answered only before God, and subjects had no right to question their King's decisions.

Much vomited again as they saw how one executioner – a young member of the Private Guard – missed the head of his victim, whacking into backbone, which caused the laughter of the other soldiers. Unbearable pain coursed through Much's heart, and he began to cry harder. He couldn't believe that such a cruel massacre could take place in front of him.

"Much, don't watch," Robin recommended; his face was inscrutable.

Much stepped aside from the place where he had thrown up. He swiveled so that he didn’t see the massacre in the distance. "It is a good idea."


"Why didn't they use arrows? It would make a prisoner's death less painful!"

Robin sneered. "Don't be naive, Much. We are not in Sherwood – we are in the desert. There is almost no wood here." He laughed bitterly. "And our noble knights don't possess my deadly accuracy with bow. They cannot shoot better than me. After the King had allowed me to leave the spectacle, they had no choice and decided to use swords to kill the Saracens."

"You are still able to jest, Master." Much did really appreciate Robin's dry humor at the moment. "Master, what will happen to you, to us?" he asked as he finally got his emotions under control. At last, he turned to face the execution and cast a sideway glance at Robin.

"I don't know." Robin's voice was edged with chillness that made Much flinch.

"Will the King arrest you? Will he do something else?"

"Maybe." Robin took a deep, painful breath. "What has happened to the world? Why didn't God stop this? The more I think about the Crusade, the more I doubt that we should have come to Acre. Now we are trapped in this unholy place, without any mercy and hope for atonement."

Much sighed deeply. "Soon we will be in the cold cell. We will be executed. I will always be with you, Master. I won't leave you alone in trouble. I promised near the grave of your parents that I would be at your side during the Crusade. We will never return home, to Locksley. You will never see Marian again." He raised his voice. "But we will die together if the King wants to execute us. I will ask him by myself to take my life if he condemns you to death for treason."

"Much, shut up!" Robin said between clenched teeth. "At least we are not participating in this madness." He glanced away. "I feel hollow. I don't even care what the King will do to me."

"It is awful," Much muttered.

Robin tried to soothe his friend's fears. "Much, don't worry before we have word from the King. Maybe our liege will be merciful to me and will send us home in disgrace."

"But the King must have been shocked with your actions, Master!"

Robin managed a smile. "King Richard wasn't pleased with me today. But he surely remembers what I did for him here, in the Holy Land. I saved his life many times. I won many battles. The King is always grateful and generous to those who are loyal to him and serve him well."
"I hope against any hope, Master."

"We should return to our tent, Much. Let's obey the King and do at least this."

Much gave a nod. "Let's go. I hate this place. I hate it more than anything else!"

"Much, don't grumble!" Robin growled.

As Robin and Much disappeared, the slaughter went on and on. Screams of bleeding and dying people filled the air, sounding like a hollow echo marking death. Soon only lifeless bodies that resembled carcasses of butchered animals remained from the prisoners.

In spite of Robin and Much's fears, nothing happened in the evening. Robin wasn't arrested, and he wasn’t dismissed from his position of Captain of the Guard; he wasn’t stripped of his titles and lands. On the contrary, on the same evening, King Richard invited Robin and the Earl of Leicester to his tent for a private dinner. They devotedly discussed their plan to liberate Jerusalem and Saladin's strategy aimed at tricking them and delaying their march. Nothing was said about Robin's disobedience in the morning, as if it had never happened.

During the next few days, King Richard didn't change his attitude to Robin and favored him as much as before. The guards were amazed with the absence of the King's reaction and even public comments, but they tried not to discuss the matter in public. Robin was Captain of the Guard and the King's grand favorite, and many men simply thought that the King had valued and loved Robin too much to punish him. Some of them secretly admired Robin's boldness and ability to stand for his principles at any cost; others thought that he was stupid as he had risked his life, his titles and lands, and his favor. Their thoughts didn't matter: King Richard didn't disfavor or even publicly reprimand Robin, and everyone accepted that nothing serious had happened.

A perplexed Robin didn't expect that the King would be ignorant of his serious transgression. He was grateful to his liege for the granted forgiveness. Robin knew that his case was special: he wasn't punished only because King Richard loved him a lot. His admiration for Richard increased, and Robin felt that he loved his King even more because he knew that Richard had understood his inability to kill those helpless men and, thus, had allowed him to not participate in the execution. After all, the King was probably the only man who understood the grown-up Robin very much and offered him a fatherly guidance which Robin needed so much in his early adulthood.

The King of England was able to order the ruthless execution of the Muslim prisoners, but he also showed his mercy to his loyal subjects, who loved and respected him. The King's generosity towards Robin impressed the young Captain a lot, making him more loyal to King Richard and England. He felt that he was in debt to his liege, and he also felt guilty that he had put the King in that embarrassing situation as everyone had probably thought that Robin had been pardoned only because of being in the King's favor; that was true, and Robin didn't deny that.

Robin didn't like many of the King’s decisions, but he would never question his liege’s decision and would always protect Richard. He hoped that he would always have the understanding which he had reached with the King, and that in the future, his liege would keep him away from staining his hands with blood of innocents. Yet, Robin was convinced that if he were ordered to execute innocents, he wouldn’t do that, and that could even cost him his life. Robin swore that he would never betray King Richard, and he hoped that the king would never place him in the situation when he would have to betray this loyalty in order to remain loyal to his own code of honor.

Chapter End Notes
I hope you liked it. I think Robin wouldn’t have been able to kill these prisoners.

Please read and review. Reviews are greatly appreciated! Let me know what you think.

End Notes

Hope you liked the first chapter. I personally don't think that Robin could kill the unarmed prisoners with his own hand.

If you can find a minute to let me know what you think, I will be very grateful.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!