

William Tell

Dm **G** **capo III**
In a pleasant wooded valley lived a huntsman, tall and able,
Dm **Am** **G**
He relied on skill and cunning for the food upon his table;
Dm **C** **Em**
He would walk the forest shadows with his little son in tow,
Am **G** **F** **G**
Teaching him the archer's art and all that he should know...

Dm **Em**
Chorus: Keep your eye clear and keen, like a falcon on the wing
F **C** **G**
Keep your heart strong and steady, like your hand upon the string;
Dm **C** **Am**
Never bow to a tyrant while your people are laid low,
Dm **F** **C** **Dm**
For the highest head may fall to the man who wields a bow.

In the valley there was freedom, and a man was left to living,
But as year gave way to year, the ruling men grew less forgiving;
On a day as black as death, a governor to rule them came,
Turning landsmen into slaves, and Gessler was his name.

In the center of the village Gessler set a lofty pillar,
And he ordered every subject, be he serf or be he miller,
To do homage to the hat that Gessler placed atop the pole,
Or to forfeit to the crown his life, if not his soul.

But the huntsman, William Tell, came into town the morning after;
William heard of Gessler's order and could only roar with laughter,
"Honest men should hold a rank above a petty autocrat.
I would never bow to him—I'll not bow to his hat!" CH

Gessler's soldiers seized the huntsman and his little son for treason,
But the people of the village cried for mercy and for reason.
Gessler stays the execution, but a cruel test contrives;
"Prove to me your skill and you may ransom back your lives.

I have heard it said you have no peer with longbow and with arrow,
That your shaft can find the quickest hare and fell the smallest sparrow;
On the head of your young son I'll place an apple, ripe and red,
Split it with one shot, or at my word, you both are dead."

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William Tell went to his son and said, "I swear I will not hurt you;
Courage will not bow to fear, nor shall this evil conquer virtue;
Turn your face towards our home and stand as still as any tree
I will split the apple—we shall soon be home and free." CH

Every tongue was still and silent as the archer paced the distance,
Gessler's soldiers lined the square, and there was no hope of resistance.
William nocked a single arrow, put his shoulders back, and drew--
Then the arrow sang and split the apple clean in two.

All at once the crowd erupted into cheers, and into chatter,
And a second arrow fell from William's quiver with a clatter.
Gessler said, "Why hold two arrows when I bid you shoot but one?"
"That one would have found your heart if I had shot my son."

"Take the archer now and hang him!", Gessler to his men was crying,
But before the soldiers moved, the archer and his son were flying.
From the shelter of the wood, the hunter loosed a final dart;
Gessler died with William's arrow buried in his heart. CH

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