

ROBIN HOOD

by

Jonathan Edgington

ROBIN HOOD

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ROBIN HOOD

To the late John Burgess (former director and head of new writing at the National Theatre in London). Thank you for insight and guidance.

ROBIN HOOD

Robin Hood had its world premiere when performed by the Chesil Theatre Company in 2016 as an outdoor production in the gardens of Wolvesey Palace, Winchester, Hampshire, UK.

ROBIN HOOD

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

12 Women, 20 Men (several of the male roles could be played by women and vice-versa. There are also a number of opportunities for doubling.)

GLENDA	An ugly old witch, sister to Ursula and Medea.
MEDEA	An ugly old witch, sister to Ursula and Glenda.
URSULA	An ugly old witch, sister to Glenda and Medea.
ROBIN HOOD	The Famous Outlaw.
LADY GERTRUDE	Maid Marian's Mother.
MAID MARIAN	Lady Gertrude's Daughter.
BESS	Lady Gertrude's and Maid Marian's Servant.
LITTLE JOHN	Robin's Trusty Lieutenant.
MUCH THE MILLER'S SON	One of Robin's Outlaws.
ALLAN A DALE	One of Robin's Outlaws and a Minstrel.
FRIAR TUCK	A Friar who becomes an Outlaw.
SHERIFF OF NOTTINGHAM	An Evil Tyrant.
SIR GUY OF GISBOURNE	Works for the Sheriff.
VILLAGER 1	A Poor Peasant.
WILL SCARLETT	One of Robin's Outlaws.
THE ABBOTT OF ST. MARY'S	A Corrupt Priest.
SERVANT	A Servant to the Sheriff.
THE BISHOP OF HEREFORD	A Corrupt Priest.
GILBERT WITH THE WHITE HAND	One of Robin's Outlaws.
"DANGEROUS" DAVID OF DONCASTER	One of Robin's Outlaws.
THE WIZARD OF WARWICK	An Old Wizard.
THE PRIORESS OF KIRKLEES	An Evil Nun.
SOLDIER 1	One of the Sheriff's Soldiers.

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SOLDIER 2 One of the Sheriff's Soldiers.

SOLDIER 3 One of the Sheriff's Soldiers.

SOLDIER 4 One of the Sheriff's Soldiers.

YOUNG URSULA Ursula transformed into a beautiful young woman.

VILLAGER 2 A Poor Peasant.

GILBERT'S WIFE An Outlaw's Wife.

DANGEROUS'S WIFE An Outlaw's Wife.

KING RICHARD The King of England.

HANGMAN (Non-Speaking Role).

OUTLAWS, VILLAGERS/MAYPOLE DANCERS, SOLDIERS
(non-speaking roles for crowd scenes).

TIME: 12th Century.

PLACE: Nottingham, England.

ROBIN HOOD

LIST OF SCENES

ACT 1

- Scene 1** The Witches' Cauldron
- Scene 2** Lady Gertrude's home in Nottingham
- Scene 3** Sherwood Forest
- Scene 4** Nottingham Town
- Scene 5** The Outlaws' Camp in Sherwood Forest
- Scene 6** Nottingham Castle
- Scene 7** The Witches' Hovel
- Scene 8** Sherwood Forest
- Scene 9** The Outlaws' Camp in Sherwood Forest
- Scene 10** The Golden Arrow archery competition in Nottingham

ACT 2

- Scene 1** Nottingham Castle
- Scene 2** Sherwood Forest
- Scene 3** The Witches' Hovel
- Scene 4** A Village on the outskirts of Sherwood Forest
- Scene 5** Sherwood Forest
- Scene 6** The Witches' Cauldron
- Scene 7** Sherwood Forest
- Scene 8** Lady Gertrude's home in Nottingham
- Scene 9** The Outlaws' Camp in Sherwood Forest
- Scene 10** The Wild Boar Tavern in Nottingham
- Scene 11** The Gallows in Nottingham

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ACT 1
SCENE 1

Thunder and lightning. URSULA, MEDEA and GLENDA sit around their cauldron.

GLENDA. Do we really have to do this now?

MEDEA. In this weather?

URSULA. The portents say now is the time.

MEDEA. You and your portents...

URSULA. You have to take note of the portents.

GLENDA. We know Ursula.

MEDEA. We know we do.

URSULA. And we *do* all want to be young again. Don't we sisters...?

MEDEA. We do Ursula. We do.

GLENDA. Very much. Oh so very much.

URSULA. If the spell works it will help us find the dragon's heart...

GLENDA. To make us young again...

MEDEA. Let's do it!

GLENDA. Never mind the storm!

URSULA. That's better sisters! Ingredients...

GLENDA. (*Holding up a large handbag.*) This is everything we have left...

MEDEA. What do you suggest?

URSULA. Dill Seed Hair of Venus, bat's wing and a slither of crow's foot. All mixed together with a drop of man's bile.

MEDEA. Sounds good to me...

GLENDA. Personally, I'd add a pinch of Marsh Mallow Chocolate Flower...

URSULA. Whatever for?

GLENDA. It sharpens up the spell. We're trying to summon someone to help us find the dragon's heart. We want to make sure we summon the right person.

URSULA. If you must. Have we got all the ingredients we need?

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GLEND A. Think so. (*Rummages around in her handbag and produces five jars.*) Haven't got a whole bat's wing. (*Holds up jar for Ursula to look at.*) Will that do?

URSULA. It will have to. Let's get on with it! Medea, you start.

MEDEA. Is it a rhyming spell?

URSULA. Of course. (*Medea throws the slither of crow's foot into the cauldron.*)

MEDEA. We start with a throw. And in goes the crow. (*Glenda drops the piece of bat's wing into the cauldron.*)

GLEND A. Add some of that. A foul piece of bat.

URSULA. This is where it gets tricky! (*Ursula drops the Dill Seed Hair of Venus into the cauldron.*)

GLEND A. You can do it!

URSULA. Pray spirits who have seen us. Here goes our Dill Seed Hair of Venus!

GLEND A. Good rhyme! Your turn Medea... (*Medea drops the Marsh Mallow Chocolate Flower into the cauldron.*)

MEDEA. Freshly gathered Marsh Mallow Chocolate Flower. We put you in for added power!

URSULA. Last one. (*Glenda pours the man's bile into the cauldron.*)

GLEND A. And last we add a drop of bile. To bind our spell although it's vile! (*Medea and Ursula wince at Glenda's bad rhyme. They then all chant together.*)

M/G/U. Oh ancient pot. Used quite a lot. Please search and find what's on our mind. Summon someone to play their part. To help us find the dragon's heart! (*Smoke and various different coloured flames shoot out of the cauldron. Ursula, Medea and Glenda sit staring at the cauldron for a while.*)

MEDEA. Hope it's going to work...

GLEND A. (*Excited.*) Someone's coming. I can hear them!

URSULA. Shush... (*Enter a bedraggled and confused looking ROBIN HOOD, struggling to see through all the smoke. The smoke clears. He sees the three witches and nearly jumps out of his skin.*)

ROBIN. Who are you?

URSULA. Ursula.

MEDEA. Medea.

ROBIN HOOD

GLENDIA. (*Very attracted to Robin.*) More importantly, who are you young man?

ROBIN. Robin of Loxley.

MEDEA. And where, Robin of Loxley, are you going?

ROBIN. To Nottingham. To marry Lady Marian and claim my inheritance from my father.

URSULA. Sisters, our spell has worked. We've summoned the Earl of Loxley's son!

MEDEA. He doesn't look much like an Earl's son to me. In those clothes...

ROBIN. I've been fighting for King Richard in the Crusades. I got captured. I've spent the last two years in Saladin's dungeon. It's a miracle I escaped and got home. That's why I'm dressed like this!

GLENDIA. Do we believe him Ursula? (*Ursula arthritically walks over to Robin Hood and stares him full in the face.*)

URSULA. He's telling the truth. He's on his way home to Nottingham.

ROBIN. You're going to try and stop me, aren't you?

URSULA. On the contrary Robin of Loxley. Our spell has summoned you because somehow you are going to help us find the dragon's heart we need to make ourselves young again.

ROBIN. How am I going to do that?

MEDEA. The spell doesn't tell us.

URSULA. All it tells us is that you are inexplicably linked to our heart's desire.

MEDEA. We have to work out how.

GLENDIA. The spell just gives us a clue.

MEDEA. You're it!

URSULA. We'll be watching you closely from now on...

MEDEA. Now the spell's revealed how important you are to us...

GLENDIA. We need the dragon's heart for another spell...

URSULA. A spell to make us young...

MEDEA. Not just young...

GLENDIA. Young and beautiful...

URSULA. Irresistible to men...

MEDEA. Like we used to be...

GLENDIA. Before...

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URSULA. Before we ran out of dragon's heart...

GLENDIA. And got old...

MEDEA. So on you go Robin of Loxley.

GLENDIA. On your merry way.

URSULA. About your business.

GLENDIA. Do what you have to do.

URSULA. Whatever that is will somehow help make us young again.

MEDEA. It's written.

GLENDIA. Somewhere.

URSULA. Our destinies are inexplicably linked.

MEDEA. You won't remember us tomorrow morning.

GLENDIA. We'll remember you though.

URSULA. We'll be watching you.

GLENDIA. We'll work out what your role is...

MEDEA. Then when we're young again, we'll pay you a special visit.

Won't we sisters?

URSULA. We will.

GLENDIA. A *very* special visit.

MEDEA. Now go. *(Robin Hood exits.)*

GLENDIA. That seemed to go well.

MEDEA. Very well.

URSULA. What a handsome young man.

GLENDIA. Very...

MEDEA. Lovely...

GLENDIA. How's he going to help us...?

MEDEA. No idea.

URSULA. All will soon be revealed. I can feel it in my bones.

GLENDIA. Your bones, Ursula?

URSULA. My bones, Glenda. *(Ursula, Medea and Glenda exit.)*

SCENE 2

Lady Gertrude's home in Nottingham. MARIAN is fencing with a tailor's dummy. BESS is tidying the room. LADY GERTRUDE enters.

LADY G. I do wish you'd stop that for a moment Marian and listen to what I'm saying.

ROBIN HOOD

MARIAN. *(Continuing to fence and stab the dummy with her sword.)* I am listening Mother.

LADY G. I said I think you ought to marry him. *(Marian stops fencing.)* Thought that would get your attention.

MARIAN. Marry who?

LADY G. Why do you need to learn sword fighting and archery? Why can't you do sewing and embroidery like all the other girls?

MARIAN. Because I'm my mother's daughter! That's why! Tell me who you want me to marry.

LADY G. The Sheriff of Nottingham.

MARIAN. *(Angry.)* Are you out of your mind! He's the most obnoxious, evil man that ever existed.

LADY G. That's a "no" then?

MARIAN. He's an evil tyrant and a bully!

LADY G. Most men have *some* bad habits.

MARIAN. I couldn't marry the Sheriff of Nottingham, even if I wanted to. I'm already betrothed to Robin.

LADY G. Robin of Loxley's chained up in a dungeon. You won't ever see him again.

MARIAN. You don't know for certain he's still in a dungeon. Even if he is he'll escape one day!

LADY G. *(Looks sad/tearful. Walks over to Marian and hugs her.)* You don't escape from those sort of places and even if he did, he wouldn't be the same Robin who left here to fight in The Crusades. They do terrible things to men in dungeons. *(Beat.)* He was a wimp when he left! I can't imagine two years in a dungeon will have improved him!

MARIAN. He'll be fine.

LADY G. I doubt it. Not when he finds out that his father's been hanged by the Sheriff of Nottingham and his castle and inheritance confiscated by Prince John. That should finish him off completely!

MARIAN. He might be alright...

LADY G. You never really wanted to marry him. You said he was weak and insipid!

MARIAN. I said he was gentle and loving!

LADY G. Same thing.

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MARIAN. Marrying him would be better than marrying the Sheriff of Nottingham!

LADY G. I don't seriously intend you to marry the Sheriff. I'm just asking you to pretend that you're considering his proposal of marriage. Lead him on a bit...

MARIAN. Why?

LADY G. To buy me some time to pay back the money I owe him! He told me he'd throw us both out on the street unless you agree to marry him! Just be nice to him. Play him along a bit. That's all I'm asking!
(Lady Gertrude exits.)

BESS. Don't look so sad M'Lady.

MARIAN. I don't want to have to pretend to the Sheriff that I'm thinking about marrying him. I can't stand the man. I don't want to have to spend time with him!

BESS. You'd only need to do it for a little while, until your home is saved. You could marry Robin after that. If he ever gets home. Or marry someone else...

MARIAN. Why wouldn't I want to marry Robin of Loxley?

BESS. Because he'd be penniless M'Lady. He'd be no good to you now!

MARIAN. He'll get his money and his lands back from Prince John.

BESS. I'd be very surprised if he did. But it's not just that...

MARIAN. What else is there?

BESS. Forgive me for speaking out of turn M'Lady but, he's not the man for you. You need a real man. Loxley's a wimp. *(Beat.)* He writes poetry!

MARIAN. He's been fighting for King Richard in The Crusades. He may have changed...

BESS. I doubt it M'Lady. I very much doubt it... *(Marian and Bess exit.)*

SCENE 3

Sherwood Forest. Robin, looking weary, sits down by a small bridge.

ROBIN. *(Sighs.)* Now I'm completely lost! *(Looks at bridge.)* I'll see where this takes me. *(He gets up and goes to cross the bridge.)*

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LITTLE J. (*Off stage voice.*) You can't cross the bridge unless you pay the toll. Who are you?

ROBIN. (*Looking around.*) Robin of Loxley. (*LITTLE JOHN enters holding a long quarterstaff.*)

LITTLE J. In that case you can pay double. You're a rich man Loxley. Your father's an earl!

ROBIN. And who are you big man with an even bigger stick asking me for money?

LITTLE J. John Little and these (*MUCH and ALLAN enter.*) are two of my merry men!

ROBIN. Well John Little and his merry men I don't pay money to strangers for the privilege of crossing a bridge in King Richard's forest and even if I did I couldn't pay you as I have no money. I've just found out that the Sheriff of Nottingham has hanged my father and Prince John has stolen my inheritance.

LITTLE J. (*Surprised.*) Is that right Much? You know all the gossip...

MUCH. Yes. His father refused to join up with Prince John against King Richard so the Sheriff had him hanged as a traitor. His lands and gold were confiscated and given to Prince John.

LITTLE J. We have no love for the Sheriff of Nottingham or Prince John here and I'm sorry for your loss lad but rules are rules. No one crosses my bridge without paying the toll. What have you got?

ROBIN. Nothing. I told you, I'm penniless.

LITTLE J. You have a fine sword and bow and arrows. The toll is six arrows.

ROBIN. No-one touches my arrows.

LITTLE J. Then you'll have to fight me to get past. (*Little John steps on to the middle of the bridge and stands there menacingly brandishing his quarterstaff. Robin takes off his sword, his bow and a quiver full of arrows and throws them on the ground. John Little is astonished.*)

LITTLE J. You're gonna fight me?!

ROBIN. Yeah. Will my bow and sword be safe?

LITTLE J. You have my word.

ROBIN. I don't have a quarterstaff.

LITTLE J. Much... (*Much throws a quarterstaff which Robin catches.*) I don't suppose a gentleman's son has had much experience of this type of fighting?

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ROBIN. (*Expertly brandishing the quarterstaff and speaking to himself.*) You might be surprised. (*Speaking to Little John.*) Any rules?

LITTLE J. If you knock me off the bridge you can cross. If I knock you off the bridge you can still cross but you'll have to give me the six arrows first. That's it.

ROBIN. What about rules for the fight?

LITTLE J. Rules? In a quarterstaff fight? You must be joking! (*Robin immediately kicks Little John in the groin. Little John collapses on the bridge in agony.*)

ROBIN. Well, if there's no rules, let's get the fight started. Someone count "1,2,3 go".

MUCH. 1,2,3, go! (*Robin pushes Little John off the bridge. He falls in some water.*)

ALLAN. He can't swim! (*Much and Allan rush to grab hold of Little John and try and drag him out of the water.*)

MUCH. He's not breathing!

ALLAN. He must have hit his head on a rock! (*Robin rushes to help Much and Alan.*)

MUCH. (*To Robin.*) He's too heavy for us!

ROBIN. (*Grabbing hold of Little John.*) We can get him out if we all work together! Grab him tight! One, two, three, heave! (*They start to slowly drag Little John out of the water.*)

ALLAN. He's still not breathing... (*They succeed in dragging Little John out of the water.*)

MUCH. He's dead! You've killed him!

ROBIN. He'll be fine. I hope... (*Robin thumps Little John on the back a few times and, after a while, Little John coughs and starts to breathe.*)

LITTLE J. (*Groaning, holding his groin with one hand and his head with the other.*) What happened?

ALLAN. He saved you. Robin of Loxley saved your life. You'd drowned. You weren't breathing!

LITTLE J. In that case lad I'll say thank you and excuse you the toll. (*Little John stands up and shakes hands with Robin.*) Are you hungry?

ROBIN. A bit.

LITTLE J. Come back to our camp and have some venison.

ROBIN. The King's venison?

ROBIN HOOD

MUCH. We're all loyal servants of King Richard...

ALLAN. So we reckon it's fine for us to eat his venison.

ROBIN. Is your camp far?

ALLAN. Not far but we'll have to blindfold you so you can't ever find it again. *(Allan blindfolds Robin. Robin, Little John, Allan and Much exit.)*

SCENE 4

The town of Nottingham. Enter Lady Gertrude and Bess. Bess is carrying a basket full of meat and other foodstuffs.

LADY G. Now I remember why I don't usually accompany you on trips to the meat market Bess. *(Holding her nose.)* Nottingham smells!

BESS. It's bad today M'Lady! *(Enter Friar Tuck carrying a very heavy sack over his back.)*

FRIAR T. Bess my old friend! I thought it was you!

BESS. Tuck you old scoundrel! I haven't seen you for ages! *(Beat.)* Pardon me M'Lady. This is an old friend of mine, Friar Tuck. Tuck, this is Lady Gertrude.

LADY G. Delighted to meet you Friar. Which monastery are you from?

FRIAR T. *(Bowing.)* I have no permanent home Lady Gertrude. I live the simple life of a hermit in Sherwood Forest. I have renounced property and all worldly goods to travel the country and preach. My existence depends entirely on the generosity of strangers.

LADY G. *(Looking at Friar Tuck's sack.)* It looks like some strangers have been extremely generous to you! I remember listening to you preaching in the market at Christmas...

FRIAR T. I'm flattered you remember my preaching. Excuse me this is very heavy. *(He lifts the sack of his back and places it on the ground. There is a very loud clunking sound, signifying that the sack is full of bottles.)*

LADY G. As I recall your sermon was on the sins of the flesh and *(giving Friar Tuck's sack a quizzical look.)* overindulgence...

FRIAR T. Indeed Lady Gertrude. Indeed.

ROBIN HOOD

LADY G. I trust you practice what you preach. *(Beat.)* It was a very good sermon. Delighted to have met you Friar. Bess, you may stay and chat with your friend. I can make my own way home.

BESS. I'll come back with you now M'Lady.

LADY G. Are you implying that I'm not capable of walking home on my own?

BESS. I didn't mean that M'Lady. It's just that there're lots of nasty people out and about in Nottingham.

LADY G. Bess. I'm Lady Gertrude. I can take care of "nasty" people. I'll see you back at the house later. *(Lady Gertrude exits.)*

FRIAR T. She's a strong woman!

BESS. They don't come much stronger. *(Looking down at the sack.)* You're a fine one to preach about overindulgence!

FRIAR T. Did she realize what was in my sack?

BESS. Of course she did! *(Looking over Friar Tuck's shoulder.)* Better make ourselves scarce. Here comes the Sheriff!

(Bess and Friar Tuck exit as the SHERIFF OF NOTTINGHAM enters with GISBOURNE, SOLDIER 1 and SOLDIER 2.)

SHERIFF. *(Looking around and preening himself.)* Tell me Gisbourne, why does everyone seem to disappear when I arrive?

GISBOURNE. I think they're frightened of you Sheriff.

SHERIFF. You think Gisbourne! You think! That's something you don't do! People do seem frightened of me. I don't understand it. I'm such a kind person... *(Gisbourne rolls his eyes.)* Did you just roll your eyes Gisbourne?

GISBOURNE. Not at all. Just a twitch. A nervous twitch.

SHERIFF. You'll do more than twitch if I see you do that again. As I was saying... *(The Sheriff is interrupted by VILLAGER 1 entering and throwing himself on his knees in front of the Sheriff.)*

VILLAGER 1. Forgive me! Forgive me! My Lord. I beg your forgiveness for interrupting you...

SHERIFF. And what have we here? Stand up. Stand up. You're not frightened of me? Are you?

VILLAGER 1. *(Standing up trembling and stuttering.)* N-N-N-No. M-M-My L-L-Lord.

SHERIFF. My Lord Sheriff is the correct form of address. But never mind, let's not get too caught up with protocol. How may I help you?

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VILLAGER 1. *(Still trembling and stuttering.)* My Lord Sheriff. We're starving. My family and me are starving. We've had to sell everything to pay your taxes. We've got no food. Please, please help us.

SHERIFF. How many of you are there?

VILLAGER 1. Six. Me, my wife and our four sons.

SHERIFF. Too many mouths for your wife to feed?

VILLAGER 1. Yes. Yes My Lord Sheriff.

SHERIFF. *(To Gisbourne.)* Gisbourne. I'm going to show you the kind side of my nature. The kind side of my nature that you appeared to be questioning just now. I'm going to help this poor fellow.

VILLAGER 1. Thank you! Thank you!

SHERIFF. *(To Villager 1.)* I have the ideal solution to your problem. Guards! Take this man away! Throw him in the dungeons and leave him there until he rots! *(Soldier 1 and Soldier 2 grab hold of Villager 1 and drag him away.)*

VILLAGER 1. *(Screaming as he is dragged away.)* No! No! You said you were going to help me... *(Soldier 1, Soldier 2 and Villager 1 exit.)*

SHERIFF. Don't look so shocked Gisbourne. I did what I said. I helped him. I was kind.

GISBOURNE. How did that help him?

SHERIFF. Gisbourne, Gisbourne, Gisbourne. It's such a good job that I don't pay you to think. His wife had too many mouths to feed. She's got one less now. I've eased her burden. I was being helpful. I was being kind. Let's get back to the castle. All this kindness is making me hungry! *(The Sheriff and Gisbourne exit.)*

SCENE 5

The Outlaws' Camp in Sherwood Forest. Several outlaws are milling around. Enter Little John, Much, Allan and Robin. Robin is still blindfolded.

LITTLE J. *(Removing Robin's blindfold.)* There you are lad. Home sweet home!

ROBIN. That venison smells good.

LITTLE J. Much and Allan. Look after him. I'll be back in a minute.

ROBIN HOOD

(Little John exits. Robin, Much and Allan sit down and chat.)

MUCH. So, where have you been Loxley?

ROBIN. Call me Robin. Fighting in The Crusades.

MUCH. How long?

ROBIN. Five years.

ALLAN. Long time to be away.

ROBIN. Only fought for three years. Spent the last two in Saladin's dungeon!

MUCH. Sounds grim.

ROBIN. Never thought I'd see England again. Still can't believe I escaped and got back home. *(An outlaw hands Robin, Allan and Much plates of venison and jugs of ale which they eat/drink with much gusto. They carrying on talking whilst eating/drinking.)*

ALLAN. So you're a rich man's son with no father and no riches. What you planning on doing?

ROBIN. No idea. How do you get by?

MUCH. We're outlaws. We live off the forest.

ROBIN. *(Holding up his mug of ale.)* Where's the ale from?

ALLAN. We liberated it.

ROBIN. Liberated?

MUCH. From a cart on its way to the Monastery.

ROBIN. So this is the Abbot's ale. Here's to the Abbot. *(Raises mug in a toast.)* Suppose you steal lots of stuff that comes through the Forest?

ALLAN. There's loads of stuff we could steal. It's the only route into and out of Nottingham.

ROBIN. So why do you all look poor and starving?

ALLAN. We don't actually steal anything...

ROBIN. What about the ale?

MUCH. It rolled off a cart when the wheel axle broke. We found it in some bushes.

ROBIN. Why don't you steal? You're outlaws!

ALLAN. We're only outlaws 'cos we can't pay our taxes! We've had to run away from our villages and live in hiding. If the Sheriff ever catches us we're dead men!

ROBIN. Why don't you rob the carts and carriages that come through the Forest?

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ALLAN. They're all heavily guarded by the Sheriff's men. They're Norman soldiers! We're no match for them. We've got no weapons...

MUCH. Just sticks.

ROBIN. Sounds like you need some help! *(There is a brief pause as they let their food settle. Allan picks up his lute. Much and the other outlaws look horrified.)*

ALLAN. While we're waiting for John to come back I'll sing you my new song. It's called "The Ballad of Sherwood Forest". *(Before Allan can play a single note Much snatches the lute away from him and throws it to one of the other outlaws who runs off with it.)* Philistines! *(Re-enter Little John with WILL.)*

ROBIN. *(To Little John.)* Thanks for the venison. It was delicious.

LITTLE J. Robin, this is Will *(Beat.)* Will Scarlet. Will, this is Robin of Loxley.

ROBIN. *(Goes to shake hands with Will.)* Pleased to meet you Will. I was just saying that it sounds like you could do with some help...

WILL. *(Refusing to shake hands.)* You won't be helping anyone. Liar!

ROBIN. What!?

WILL. You're not Loxley.

ROBIN. I am!

WILL. My mother was a servant at the Earl of Loxley's Castle. I grew up there. I saw Robin of Loxley nearly every day. You're not him. No way are you him. He read books and wrote poetry. All the servants used to laugh at him. Loxley was a wimp!

ROBIN. *(Angry.)* No one calls me a wimp! *(Robin grabs Will by the throat. Little John, Much and Allan rush over and drag Robin away from Will.)*

WILL. You've just proved my point. There's no way Loxley could have done that to me! I'd swear on my life you're not Loxley.

ROBIN. *(Calming down.)* I remember you. At the castle. I remember your mother. She was a kitchen maid wasn't she?

WILL. Yeah. You could have guessed that!

ROBIN. I'll tell you something I couldn't have guessed. Your sister's name was Kate and she lost a toe on her left foot when she was four.

WILL. That doesn't prove you're Loxley. There's no way Loxley could have turned into *(Beat.)* into *(Beat.)* you!!!

ROBIN. I remember your mother's nickname for you.

ROBIN HOOD

WILL. You couldn't possibly... *(Looking horrified.)* You wouldn't... *(Robin whispers something in Will's ear. Will goes white and says nothing.)*

LITTLE J. Will. Is he Loxley?

WILL. He could be. But only if a miracle has taken place. It doesn't matter though. Even if he is, he's no different to us now. He's a pauper and an outlaw!

ROBIN. I might be for now but one day I'll get back what's rightfully mine, avenge my father's death and marry Lady Marian.

LITTLE J. That's the spirit lad. Don't give up.

ALLAN. Why don't you just marry Lady Marian now and get rich that way?

MUCH. She's got no money. Her mother's in debt to the Sheriff of Nottingham. Everyone knows that. It's the talk of The Wild Boar!

ALLAN. I don't drink in The Wild Boar.

WILL. You did until that night they threw you out for singing! "Allan A Dale. A song and a tale"! Call yourself a minstrel! I've heard tom cats with better voices than you!

LITTLE J. *(To Will and Allan.)* Pack it in you two! *(To Robin.)* If you're who you say you are, your father was loyal to King Richard. When Richard gets back from The Crusades he may well overturn what Prince John has done and give you back your inheritance. You can stay with us for now lad. We'll look after you.

ROBIN. What's in it for you?

LITTLE J. If we help you get your riches back you can share some of them with us. You scratch my back...

ROBIN. I'd need a step ladder to scratch yours!

LITTLE J. Will you join us?

ROBIN. On one condition...

LITTLE J. What's that?

ROBIN. That I take charge. Sort you all out. Turn you all into proper outlaws who rob and steal.

LITTLE J. You want to take charge of me lad!

ROBIN. And your men.

LITTLE J. You'll have to fight me and beat me first. Fair and square. Not like last time. *(Little John picks up his quarterstaff and looks threatening.)*

ROBIN HOOD

ROBIN. How about sword fighting?

LITTLE J. I don't have a sword.

ROBIN. An archery competition? *(Little John smiles. Will, Much and Allan and all the other outlaws laugh loudly.)*

LITTLE J. Aye lad, an archery competition would be just fine. I'll go and get my longbow. *(Little John exits.)*

ROBIN. *(To Will, Much and Allan.)* What's so funny?

ALLAN. John Little is the best archer in the county. He's won trophies.

MUCH. No way will you beat him. *(Little John re-enters carrying his bow and arrows.)*

LITTLE J. What's the target?

ROBIN. *(Pointing to a tall tree.)* That apple?

LITTLE J. That'll do nicely lad. You mean the yellow one in the middle?

ROBIN. No, not that. The red one up above.

LITTLE J. *(His face falls. He mutters to himself.)* Looks more like a cherry than an apple. *(To Robin.)* Short straw goes first. *(Much holds out his hand with two straws sticking out. Robin and Little John draw the straws together. Little John gets the short one.)*

LITTLE J. Right lad, I'll go first. Whoever wins gets to be leader.

ROBIN. One more thing. If I win you have to stop calling me "lad" and call me Robin.

LITTLE J. *(Laughing as if defeat was out of the question.)* As you wish lad. *(Starts to draw his bow.)*

ROBIN. And I get to re-name you!

LITTLE J. Re-name me!?

ROBIN. Give you a new name.

LITTLE J. Anything you like lad. *(Little John takes careful aim and fires an arrow. Robin, Much, Will and Allan watch the arrow very carefully. A leaf flutters down. They all applaud.)*

MUCH. Good shot John Little. Your arrow grazed the apple and removed the leaf next to it. Couldn't have been closer.

WILL. *(To Robin.)* Beat that Loxley! *(Robin takes careful aim and fires an arrow. A tiny red apple falls to the ground. Little John, Will, Much and Allan look stunned.)*

LITTLE J. How did you manage that lad? Earl's sons aren't archers.

ROBIN HOOD

ROBIN. Robin.

LITTLE J. *(Reluctantly.)* Robin.

ROBIN. I enlisted as an ordinary soldier in The Crusades under a false name. I didn't want to tell anyone who I was. Everyone knew the Earl of Loxley's son was a wimp! I got taught to be an archer. I was really good at it. The first time in my life I'd ever been good at anything!

LITTLE J. You're better than good...

WILL. Just being good at archery couldn't have changed you from the Loxley I remember to the Loxley you are now...

ROBIN. Many things that happened in The Crusades changed me. Archery was just the start. *(Changing subject.)* I seem to be in charge. As my first act of leadership John Little, I'm going to re-christen you. In future you will be known as Little John.

LITTLE J. Really?

ROBIN. Yes. Really. And now Little John take me to meet the rest of your "merry" men. We have work to do. Let's see if we can't turn you all into proper outlaws!

LITTLE J. What did you call yourself when you were pretending to be an ordinary soldier in The Crusades?

ROBIN. Why do you want to know that?

LITTLE J. Cos you can't go around calling yourself Robin of Loxley now you're an outlaw like us.

ROBIN. Fair enough. I'll use the name I used when I was an archer in The Crusades *(Beat.)* Robin Hood... *(Robin, Little John and the others all exit.)*

SCENE 6

Nottingham Castle. Enter the Sheriff of Nottingham (in a very bad mood.) with THE ABBOTT OF ST. MARY'S followed by a terrified SERVANT.

SHERIFF. *(Shouting at Servant.)* Get us some wine! Make it a good wine and make it quick. If it's not a good one I'll have your guts for garters. And I mean that literally. Send in Gisbourne on your way out. *(Servant exits quaking with fear.)*

ROBIN HOOD

SHERIFF. *(To Abbott.)* I'm sure there's been a misunderstanding. We'll soon have this sorted out. *(Sir Guy of Gisbourne enters.)*

SHERIFF. Gisbourne. I take it you know the Abbott of St. Mary's?

GISBOURNE. Of course. I trust you are well Father?

ABBOTT. I have felt better My Son.

SHERIFF. The Abbott feels his recent loss most keenly.

GISBOURNE. The Sherwood Forest loss?

SHERIFF. I think it's fair to say that The Abbott is somewhat upset about *(Putting his face very close to Gisbourne's face and suddenly shouting.)* the eight hundred pounds he had stolen in Sherwood Forest yesterday!!! *(Servant nervously returns with the wine.)*

SERVANT. How many goblets my lord?

SHERIFF. Two! *(To Gisbourne.)* Not for you Gisbourne – you're working! *(To Servant.)* Spill one drop and you're dead! *(Servant, albeit trembling a lot, manages to fill two goblets of wine and hand one to the Sheriff and other to the Abbot without spilling anything.)*

SHERIFF. *(Sipping the wine.)* It will do. Your guts are safe for now. *(Servant goes to exit. The Sheriff stops him.)*

SHERIFF. Stay and await further instructions! Now where were we? Oh yes! Sherwood Forest where the Abbott had his eight hundred pounds stolen. Sherwood Forest, Gisbourne, which I pay you to look after and keep free of outlaws!

GISBOURNE. There's always been a few outlaws in the Forest but they've never stolen anything before, apart from a deer or two. We've always hanged them when we've caught them. I've kept things under control up until now. We've just got a small problem at present which I'm dealing with.

SHERIFF. And what small problem would that be?

GISBOURNE. A new outlaw has arrived in the Forest. He's gathered all the outlaws together. Become their leader and trained them!

SHERIFF. Trained them! Trained them to do what?

GISBOURNE. Trained them to rob people travelling through the Forest.

SHERIFF. These were monks travelling through the Forest that were robbed. You don't need training to rob monks!

GISBOURNE. He's training them to do more than rob monks.

ROBIN HOOD

SHERIFF. You've got soldiers under your command! Norman soldiers with swords and shields and armour! My Norman soldiers with my swords, my shields and my armour!

GISBOURNE. He's quite cunning this new leader. Elusive. Hard to track down.

SHERIFF. Do we have a name for him?

GISBOURNE. People are calling him Robin Hood.

SHERIFF. Do we know his real name?

GISBOURNE. (*Hesitating.*) I have been told a name.

SHERIFF. Don't keep it to yourself. Share it with us. Let the Abbott know the name of the man who's stolen his eight hundred pounds. The eight hundred pounds that his monks were taking to Prince John to pay the Abbey's taxes! The eight hundred pounds that Prince John will be very upset about not receiving!

GISBOURNE. I have a name. It was extracted under the threat of torture.

SHERIFF. What torture?

GISBOURNE. The rack.

SHERIFF. You always were a man of little imagination Gisbourne.

ABBOTT. What is the robber's name, My Son?

GISBOURNE. (*Very quietly.*) Robin of Loxley.

SHERIFF. Who!?

GISBOURNE. Robin of Loxley.

SHERIFF. (*Collapses laughing. He laughs so much that tears run down his face.*) Robin of Loxley! Robin of Loxley! That wimp! He couldn't lead a choir of nuns at evensong let alone a band of blood-thirsty outlaws in Sherwood Forest!

GISBOURNE. It's true. I threatened to torture two more men. They all said the same thing. And...

SHERIFF. And *what*...?

GISBOURNE. They say he's the best archer in England!

SHERIFF. (*To Servant.*) Has Lady Marian arrived for my next appointment?

SERVANT: Yes my lord.

SHERIFF. Then get her in here now! (*Servant exits.*)

SHERIFF. (*To Abbott.*) Lady Marian used to be betrothed to Loxley. Let's get her opinion as to whether she thinks he's capable of leading a

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bunch of ruthless cut-throats and vagabonds! Let's see if she thinks he's the best archer in England! (*Servant re-enters with Maid Marian.*)

MARIAN. How can I help you Sheriff?

SHERIFF. (*To Marian.*) My vision of loveliness! My garden of heavenly delights! Now we're virtually engaged you can call me George...

MARIAN. I'll call you George when we are engaged which won't be for a while Sheriff. A girl can't be rushed into these sorts of things.

SHERIFF. Tell us about Loxley, my oasis of beauty in a desert of ugliness!

MARIAN. Loxley?!

SHERIFF. You know, the man you were going to marry (*Beat.*) before you took a fancy to me. What was he like?

MARIAN. In what sense?

SHERIFF. Was he man's man? A brave, swaggering hero, a leader of men?

MARIAN. Not at all. He was a quiet, gentle man. He liked reading books.

SHERIFF. Not the type to lead a bunch of villains and cutthroats on a mission to rob and kill? Not the best archer in the whole of England!?

MARIAN. Not at all. All he ever wanted to do was to read his books and write poetry.

SHERIFF. I rest my case. The man was a wimp. Whoever is leading these outlaws in Sherwood Forest most definitely isn't Robin of Loxley!

MARIAN. (*Excited.*) Is Robin of Loxley back in England, living in Sherwood Forest?!

SHERIFF. Someone called Robin Hood is living in Sherwood Forest and pretending to be Loxley. Do you agree Father?

ABBOTT. Who leads these outlaws is of little consequence to me. All I want is my eight hundred pounds returned and the guarantee of a safe passage through Sherwood Forest for my monks on any future journeys they make.

GISBOURNE. I will catch and kill whoever is leading these outlaws and guarantee your monks future safe passage but I very much doubt if you will ever see your eight hundred pounds again Father.

ABBOTT. Why ever not? He won't have had time to spend it yet.

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GISBOURNE. He doesn't spend the money he steals. He gives it to the poor.

ABBOTT. He does what! He gives money to the poor! I've never heard anything so ridiculous in all my life!!

SHERIFF. You'd better get cracking, Gisbourne, I'm travelling through the Forest on Friday with Lady Marian and the Bishop of Hereford. I'm dropping the Bishop off at his Palace and then I'm taking Lady Marian to meet Prince John. He'll be most impressed that I'm marrying into the aristocracy! If I don't get safe passage through the Forest there'll be hell to pay! *(Beat.)* If you'll forgive the expression, Father.

ABBOTT. Of course, My Son.

SHERIFF. I think that's everything covered Father. Don't worry, we'll get your eight hundred pounds back, regardless of what Gisbourne says! *(Speaking to servant.)* You! Garter guts. Show the Abbott and Gisbourne out. Marian, please stay. I want to talk to you. *(Servant, Gisbourne and the Abbott exit.)*

SHERIFF. *(To Marian.)* Marian, my ray of sunshine on a winter's day, come and sit next to me. We have much to talk about...

MARIAN. I'm not sure we do Sheriff...

SHERIFF. George.

MARIAN. Sheriff.

SHERIFF. Has your mother explained the *situation* to you?

MARIAN. She has.

SHERIFF. And...?

MARIAN. I'm in a difficult position. I'm still betrothed to Robin of Loxley. What's more, it sounds like he's home.

SHERIFF. Nonsense my dear. For a start your mother, a most charming lady, told me that it was more of an understanding between the two of you, not a betrothal. Consequently there's no legal obligation on your part, nor indeed on his, for the two of you to marry.

MARIAN. Why do you want to marry me? I've got no money. My mother's got no money. Her home is mortgaged to the hilt. To you!

SHERIFF. Because Marian you are the most beautiful woman I've ever met. I want you and I always get what I want! Besides I don't need money from you! I can get all the money I want from the people of Nottingham!

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MARIAN. All this because you find me attractive...

SHERIFF. Yes. *(Beat.)* However the fact that you're a Lord's daughter does bring a little extra something to the table. I wasn't born with a silver spoon in my mouth. I was born on the wrong side of the River Trent! I'm a self-made man. Marrying you will cement my entry into the aristocracy! It will be the icing on the wedding cake...

MARIAN. But my betrothal to Loxley...

SHERIFF. Not worth the paper it wasn't written on! And, in any event, the person who's returned from The Crusades claiming to be Loxley clearly isn't Loxley!

MARIAN. This Robin Hood person could be Loxley.

SHERIFF. Even if he is it doesn't matter. He won't be around much longer! I'm going to set up an archery tournament in Nottingham next month. The prize will be a Golden Arrow! A prize like that will attract the top archers in England! If Robin Hood is meant to be the best, there's no way he'll be able to resist coming to my tournament and trying to win the prize. My men will catch him and I'll hang him. Should provide some extra entertainment for the crowd...

MARIAN. Your point being?

SHERIFF. My point, my dear Marian, is that, whichever way you look at it, the path for us to marry is totally clear. I'll book the Cathedral and get the Bishop of Hereford to do the honours! You'd better run off and get yourself a wedding dress! *(Beat.)* And something nice for our wedding night...

MARIAN. But I'm not ready to...

SHERIFF. Better get ready then. It's either that or you and your mother are out on the street! *(Exit Marian and Sheriff.)*

SCENE 7

The Witches' Hovel. Ursula is reading a small roll of parchment. Medea and Glenda look on anxiously.

GLEND A. What does it say Ursula?

MEDEA. Who's it from?

URSULA. The Sheriff of Nottingham.

GLEND A. The Sheriff of Nottingham!

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MEDEA. The Sheriff of Nottingham!!

URSULA. I've been summoned to attend a "high level" meeting in his castle on Friday! To discuss something of "mutual benefit".

GLENDIA. Maybe this is about Robin of Loxley?

MEDEA. The link we've been waiting for...

GLENDIA. Will you go Ursula?

URSULA. I'll have to. I don't like being summoned by mortals but this could be important. I can feel it in my bones.

GLENDIA. Your bones Ursula?

URSULA. My bones Glenda.

MEDEA. I still can't work out how that Robin of Loxley person is going to help us find the dragon's heart...

GLENDIA. Maybe our spell didn't work properly. Not enough bat's wing...?

URSULA. It worked. I could feel it in my...

MEDEA. Your bones Ursula?

URSULA. My bones Medea.

GLENDIA. So you think this meeting with the Sheriff will somehow show us the link between Robin of Loxley and the dragon's heart we need to make us young again?

URSULA. Most definitely.

MEDEA. I'm getting excited...

GLENDIA. We're going to be young again...

MEDEA. I can't wait...

GLENDIA. What's the first thing you'll do? When you're young again...
(*Medea whispers something in Glenda's ear.*)

GLENDIA. (*Shocked.*) Medea!

URSULA. (*Clapping her hands.*) Sisters! We're getting a little ahead of ourselves!

GLENDIA. You're right Ursula.

MEDEA. As always.

GLENDIA. (*To Ursula.*) How will you get to Nottingham on Friday?

MEDEA. Broomstick?

URSULA. Don't be ridiculous Medea. I haven't been on a broomstick since the last century! The farmer down the road goes to the market in Nottingham every Friday. I'll get a ride in his cart.

MEDEA. (*Sighing.*) It's not like the old days...

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GLEND A. When we were the toast of Kings and Princes...

URSULA. Those days will be back soon. I can feel it in my...

(Medea and Glenda roll their eyes at each other.)

URSULA. I can just feel it!

GLEND A. Shall we have a little drop of something to celebrate?

MEDEA. To celebrate what?

GLEND A. Finally making some progress!

URSULA. Is there anything left Medea? *(Medea fumbles around on a shelf containing lots of old jars and bottles and picks up a dirty, cobwebbed bottle with a cork in it.)*

MEDEA. There's a drop left in this one.

GLEND A. What is it?

MEDEA. Better not to ask...

URSULA. We'll drink it.

GLEND A. Whatever it is!

MEDEA. *(Pouring what's left in the bottle into three dirty old glasses from the shelf.)* Just enough for half a glass each...

URSULA. *(Picking up a glass.)* Cheers sisters! Here's to Robin of Loxley somehow getting us the dragon's heart!

MEDEA. *(Looking at the contents of the glass.)* This'll put hairs on our chins...

GLEND A. Sadly, I already have several... *(Exit Ursula, Medea and Glenda.)*

SCENE 8

Sherwood Forest. Enter the Sheriff, Gisbourne, the BISHOP OF HEREFORD, Marian, Bess and six soldiers. The Sheriff paces anxiously up and down.

SHERIFF. I don't like it Gisbourne. I don't like being stranded in Sherwood Forest!

GISBOURNE. We're not stranded Sheriff. The wheel's come off our coach. The driver will soon have it fixed.

SHERIFF. He's taking ages.

MARIAN. Are you worried about Robin Hood, Sheriff?

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SHERIFF. Of course not! I just don't want to be late for our meeting with Prince John...

GISBOURNE. We've got six of my best men with us. We'll be fin...
(Four arrows hit four of the soldiers and they drop down dead. Little John, Will, Much and Allan enter brandishing quarterstaves. They start fighting with the Sheriff, Gisbourne and the remaining two soldiers. During the course of the fight Will, Much and Allan pick up and use the swords belonging to three of the dead soldiers. Little John continues to fight with his quarterstaff.)

MARIAN. *(Looking at the remaining dead soldier's sword lying on the ground and speaking to Bess.)* I'm tempted to pick that sword up and join in but I don't know whose side I'd be on!

BESS. I'd just carrying on pretending you're a defenceless woman. For now anyway M'Lady! *(After a while the two remaining soldiers are killed by the outlaws and Little John knocks the Sheriff's and Gisbourne's swords out of their hands with his quarterstaff. The Sheriff and Gisbourne hold up their hands in surrender.)*

MUCH. Shall we finish them off?

LITTLE J. No. Tie their hands. Blindfold them and escort them back to camp. That's what Robin told us to do. We'll let him decide what to do with them. Will, you go and make sure the driver of their coach isn't going anywhere. *(Will exits. Much and Allan tie the hands of the Sheriff, Gisbourne, the Bishop of Hereford, Marian and Bess behind their backs and blindfold them all. When this is done, they all exit.)*

SCENE 9

The Outlaws' camp in Sherwood Forest. Enter the Sheriff, Gisbourne, the Bishop of Hereford, Marian and Bess escorted by Much, Allan, Will and Little John. The Sheriff, Gisbourne, the Bishop of Hereford, Marian and Bess are still blindfolded with their hands tied behind their backs.

SHERIFF. I don't believe it Gisbourne! You guarantee me safe passage through Sherwood Forest. We have six Norman soldiers to guard us and

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we get robbed by a bunch of thieves and vagabonds armed with sticks and bows and arrows! (*Enter Robin Hood.*)

ROBIN. (*Aside to Little John.*) I take it the shouty one is the Sheriff of Nottingham? (*Little John nods.*)

ROBIN. Remove the blindfolds, Much. (*Much removes blindfolds.*) I think some introductions are in order.

SHERIFF. If you think we're introducing ourselves to outlaws, you've got another think coming!

ROBIN. Will, do the honours.

WILL. This is the Sheriff. That is Sir Guy of Gisbourne. He works for the Sheriff. That's the Bishop of Hereford and that, as you of course already know, is Lady Marian.

ROBIN. And who's the other lady?

BESS. I'm Bess, Lady Marian's servant.

ROBIN. (*Bowing.*) Welcome to our humble camp, Bess.

BESS. (*Obviously very taken with Robin.*) Charmer!

ROBIN. (*To Marian.*) Lady Marian. More beautiful than ever. Much, untie Lady Marian and Bess. In fact, untie them all. Dinner is nearly ready.

GISBOURNE. Dinner!

ROBIN. You will stay for dinner. Won't you?

SHERIFF. We don't dine with robbers!

ROBIN. No-one is robbing you Sheriff. You are dining with us. You're our guests. We're not robbing you. You will however be expected to pay for your dinner. We'll call it a contribution to charity. Much, remind me what were they carrying through the forest?

MUCH. There're three carts. One's full of silver coins, another full of gold and the third one's packed with swords, axes and shields!

ROBIN. Excellent. The silver coins will pay for the starter, the gold for the main course and the weapons for the dessert. That just leaves the ale and the wine. We'll have to think about a payment for that. Marian, we have lots to catch up on.

MARIAN. You'll have to tell me who you are first. Before I catch up on anything with you...

ROBIN. Don't you recognise me?! It's me. Robin. Robin of Loxley...

MARIAN. (*Disbelieving.*) Robin of Loxley!

BISHOP. (*Disbelieving.*) Robin of Loxley!

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GISBOURNE. *(Disbelieving.)* Robin of Loxley!

SHERIFF. *(Disbelieving.)* Robin of Loxley!

BESS. *(Lustful.)* Phwoar! Robin of Loxley!

SHERIFF. You're not Loxley!

GISBOURNE. Loxley was a wimp!

ROBIN. No one calls me that. Give him his sword back, Much.

(Much throws a surprised Gisbourne his sword with which he faces up to Robin. Robin draws his sword.) Let's see who's a wimp now.

ALLAN. *(Pointing to Gisbourne.)* He's the one who burnt down my village.

SHERIFF. Only because I told him to...

GISBOURNE. *(Looking very confident/conceited.)* This won't take long Sheriff. Our little irritation is about to be scratched!

(A fight ensues which Robin wins fairly easily, making a fool of Gisbourne in the process. Finally, Gisbourne's sword flies out of his hand and Robin moves in for the kill. Little John grabs hold of Robin and stops him killing Gisbourne.)

LITTLE J. You can't kill him. He's our guest. Kill him another day.

(Robin struggles but Little John is too strong for him.)

ROBIN. *(Calming down.)* You're right. He's our guest. Anyway, I need to talk to Lady Marian. We don't want blood all over the place! *(Robin catches the Bishop's eye.)* You're not very talkative my Lord Bishop.

BISHOP. I have nothing to say to you My Son. You look beyond salvation.

ROBIN. I hear you had a lot to say to Prince John about my father. You accused him of treason and got him hanged. *(Robin picks up some rope lying on the ground and looks menacingly at the Bishop.)* I've a good mind to string you up from that tree!

LITTLE J. *(Taking the rope away from Robin.)* It's bad luck to kill a bishop...

ROBIN. *(To Little John.)* I know. You're right. I'll behave. *(To the Merry Men.)* Escort our guests to the banqueting table. Give them some ale, or wine if they prefer. Lady Marian and I will join you later. *(The outlaws, the Sheriff, Gisbourne and the Bishop exit. Bess stays with Marian.)*

BESS. Shall I stay with you M'Lady?

MARIAN. Go and sit with the others Bess. I'll be fine. I'll join you

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shortly.

BESS. (*Calling out to the outlaws as she exits.*) Save me a place next to that big man!

ROBIN. Do you really not remember me, Marian?

MARIAN. I remember Robin of Loxley. I don't remember him being like you...

ROBIN. Don't I look like Loxley?

MARIAN. You have the same colour eyes, the same colour hair and you're the same height. There the similarity most definitely ends!

ROBIN. Fighting in The Crusades has changed me. It has made a man of me. I'm Loxley. Ask me anything only Loxley would know, so I can prove I'm him.

MARIAN. My mother's name?

ROBIN. Gertrude.

MARIAN. My father's name?

ROBIN. Godfrey.

MARIAN. The name of the first dog I ever owned?

ROBIN. Rusty.

MARIAN. You're good. (*Beat.*) Do I have a birthmark?

ROBIN. Yes.

MARIAN. What shape is it?

ROBIN. A tiny strawberry.

MARIAN. Where is it?

(*Robin whispers something in her ear.*)

MARIAN. How could you *possibly* know that?!!

ROBIN. Anything else?

MARIAN. Yes. You can write me a poem.

ROBIN. (*Shocked.*) A poem!

MARIAN. Surely you haven't forgotten those wonderful poems you used to write for me when we were young? The ones where you told me how much you loved me.

ROBIN. How could I forget those?

MARIAN. Write me a poem and give it to me before we leave here. That will prove to me you're Loxley. I take it we are going to be allowed to leave?

ROBIN. Of course.

MARIAN. I'll go and join the others. What's on the menu?

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ROBIN. Bread. Venison. Cherries, elderberries and hazelnuts.

MARIAN. Very nice. Hope the Sheriff chokes on his venison.

ROBIN. I can't write you a poem.

MARIAN. Why ever not?

ROBIN. We don't have quill or parchment. Things are primitive here. It's an outlaws' camp!

MARIAN. Make up something and recite it to me. You don't have to write it down. Memorise it. That venison smells good. I'll leave you to it. *(Marian exits.)*

ROBIN. *(Pacing up and down.)* Poetry! I can't write poetry anymore. The old me wrote poetry. The old, pathetic me wrote poetry. He's long gone. *(Sighs.)* She'll never believe me now... *(Enter Allan with GILBERT and DAVID.)*

ALLAN. *(To Robin.)* Robin, can I introduce you to Gilbert with the White Hand and "Dangerous" David of Doncaster. They're merry men you've not met before. *(To Gilbert and David.)* Here he is lads. This is our new leader, Robin Hood.

ROBIN. *(Shaking hands with Gilbert and David.)* Good to meet you lads. Gilbert with the White Hand? Why do they call you that?

GILBERT. *(Boring voice.)* I'm an archer. I've always worn a glove on my bow hand. It never sees the sun, so it's white.

ROBIN. Are you any good?

GILBERT. Not bad.

ROBIN. Excellent. And "Dangerous" David of Doncaster. Why do they call you "Dangerous"?

DANGEROUS. *(Another boring voice.)* Cos I'm not.

ROBIN. Right. *(Sarcastic aside to Allan.)* These two are a bundle of laughs! *(To Allan, Gilbert and David.)* I need a bit of help here. I'm trying to think of some nice things to say to a beautiful woman.

GILBERT. Tell her she looks nice.

DANGEROUS. Compare her hair to the golden sun, her eyes to the bluest sky and her skin to the whitest snow.

ROBIN. Bloody Hell! Talk about hidden depths. It's good but *(Beat.)* I need something that rhymes.

GILBERT. Rhymes!

ROBIN. Yeah...

GILBERT. Like *(Disgusted.)* poetry!!

ROBIN HOOD

ROBIN. Don't get me wrong. I don't write poetry! I just need a few lines that rhyme to impress a lady. It's a long story...

GILBERT. (*Looking at Allan.*) He should be able to help. He's a minstrel. He writes songs. He should be able to write poetry.

ROBIN. I've never heard him sing.

DANGEROUS. We try not to let him...

ALLAN. Philistines! You don't appreciate the finer things in life. Certainly not my singing and lute playing!

ROBIN. Never mind lutes! Can you write words that rhyme?

ALLAN. Of course.

ROBIN. Words telling a lady that's she's beautiful? Like Dangerous said?

ALLAN. Yes.

ROBIN. Make up something quick and tell it to me so I can learn it before it's too.... (*Enter Little John, Much, Will, the Sheriff, the Bishop, Guy of Gisbourne, Marian and Bess. Little John and Bess are chatting and getting on very well together.*)

ROBIN. ...late!

SHERIFF. Are you going to let us go or not? We've played your silly game. We've eaten your dinner. Now give us back our three carts and put us back on our coach and we'll pretend this never happened. You steal one silver coin, one piece of gold or one sword from us and you're all dead men!

ROBIN. It seems you didn't understand me Sheriff. Like I said, the silver coins will pay for your starter, the gold for your main course and the weapons for your dessert. That just leaves the drinks. We went to a lot of trouble to get that ale and wine for you. Now what could we possibly take in payment? (*Beat.*) That's a very nice pair of trousers you're wearing Sheriff. They look my size.

SHERIFF. You're not going to...

ROBIN. Indeed I am. Get 'em off!

SHERIFF. There is no way I'm...

MUCH. (*Approaching Sheriff with a large knife.*) Do as he says or your trousers won't be the only thing you'll be losing! (*The Sheriff reluctantly removes his trousers and throws them at Robin.*)

ROBIN. Off you go then.

SHERIFF. What!

ROBIN HOOD

ROBIN. It's a long walk back to Nottingham.

SHERIFF. You are joking.

ROBIN. Not at all. Best get going if you want to get back before dark. You as well Gisbourne and you Bishop. Looks like the exercise will do you good. Will, blindfold them and escort them to the forest road. Not you ladies. We'll take you back in your coach. *(Will, the Sheriff, Gisbourne and the Bishop exit.)*

MARIAN. How's my poem coming along?

ROBIN. It's not... *(Allan, who is standing behind Marian and Bess indicates to Robin that he will mime the poem to him.)*

ROBIN. ...been difficult to write.

MARIAN. Let's hear it then. *(Allan mimes, Robin tries to lip read but not very successfully! Marian doesn't see Allan standing behind her miming the words and making gestures to Robin. When Allan says words like "hair" he points to his hair and when he says "lips" he points to his lips. When he says "kissed" he mimes being kissed and so on...)*

ROBIN. Your hair is *(Struggling to understand Allan.)* big. No! Not big! Long. That's it - Your hair is long and something. *(Beat.)* Flowing. Your hair is long and flowing. Your smile I've so much *(Alan mimes firing an arrow that misses its target.)* fired an arrow at. No, not fired an arrow at. Missed! Your smile I've so much missed! Your teeth are warm and tender. Lips! Your lips are warm and tender. Just waiting to be kissed!

MARIAN. Is that it?

ROBIN. All I could think of. *(Allan starts miming more words and making more gestures.)* Hang on! There's more. The muse is with me! Your eyes are *(Allan mimes eating a bowl of stew.)* stew *(Allan mimes "sounds like stew".)* blue! Your eyes are blue and something. Sparkling! Sparkling, that's it! Your eyes are blue and sparkling. Your laugh is full of fun! *(Allan pinches the skin on his forearm to show "skin".)* Your forearm as white as snowflakes. No! Not "forearm"! Skin! I meant skin. Your skin as white as snowflakes. My darling you're the one! *(The Merry Men cheer and applaud.)*

MARIAN. Can you run that past me again?

ROBIN. *(Taking a deep breath.)*

Your hair is long and flowing,

ROBIN HOOD

Your smile I've so much missed.
Your lips are warm and tender,
Just waiting to be kissed.
Your eyes are blue and sparkling,
Your laugh is full of fun.
Your skin as white as snowflakes,
My darling, you're the one.

(The Merry Men cheer and applaud loudly.)

MARIAN. I'm beginning to think you are Loxley. Your poetry is still dreadful! Are you taking us home or not?

ROBIN. We'll drive you back in your coach now. Much can you take them home please? It was a pleasure to see you again Marian, after all this time. *(He kisses her hand and exits along with everyone else apart from Much, Marian and Bess.)*

BESS. He's not Loxley. He *can't* be Loxley. Can he?

MARIAN. I'm not sure. If he is, I much prefer the new Loxley to the old Loxley.

BESS. He's gorgeous. Mind you, I've quite got the hots for that Little John. *(Much, Marian and Bess exit.)*

SCENE 10

The Sheriff and Gisbourne are seated at a table looking out towards the audience. An archery target has been placed at the front of the stage. Throughout this scene there are lots of off-stage crowd noises including clapping and cheering, suggesting that the crowd watching the competition are drinking lots of ale and enjoying themselves. There is a "Golden Arrow" trophy on the table in front of the Sheriff.

SHERIFF. He must be here! The first prize is a Golden Arrow. There's no way this so-called Robin Hood could resist the chance to prove himself the finest archer in England and win a Golden Arrow from me for doing it!

GISBOURNE. I don't see him. He's not one of the final six.

ROBIN HOOD

SHERIFF. Damn the man to eternal damnation! He's got to be here! We've planned this trap so carefully. He's got to walk into it!

GISBOURNE. It better work otherwise you'll be in trouble! Prince John wants revenge for the money and weapons Robin Hood stole from him and the Bishop of Hereford wants revenge for his gold!

SHERIFF. I want revenge for my trousers! What about you Gisbourne, don't you want revenge as well?

GISBOURNE. *(Making signal of cutting his throat.)* I'll get my revenge!

SHERIFF. Hanging Robin Hood would be a much better spectacle. It would also send out a message to all those other would-be outlaws out there! *(Three archers enter. One is dressed in very old clothes with a hood pulled over his face.)*

GISBOURNE. You've misjudged him. He's not here. There's only three left to shoot for the Golden Arrow. One of them's your man Wat. The other's George of Garston. I've got money on him to win and the third one is some smelly beggar. Goodness knows where a smelly beggar learnt to shoot a longbow so well!

SHERIFF. At least if my man wins I can get the Golden Arrow back off him! *(Marian enters and sits down with the Sheriff and Gisbourne.)* What are you doing here?

MARIAN. You asked me to present the Golden Arrow to the winner. Looks like it's nearly time for the presentation.

SHERIFF. I'd forgotten. This Robin Hood business is doing my head in.

MARIAN. What's happening down there?

GISBOURNE. There's three men in the final. Wat, the Sheriff's man, George of Garston, the man I've wagered on and some smelly old beggar. They've all got one shot left at the target to decide who wins.

MARIAN. That smelly old beggar looks vaguely familiar.

SHERIFF. Maybe it's an old servant of yours your mother can no longer afford to employ!

MARIAN. That wasn't very nice!

SHERIFF. It's not very nice keeping a man who has proposed to you waiting for an answer!

GISBOURNE. Here we go. Your man's shooting first Sheriff. *(Wat fires his arrow and hits the bull's eye.)*

ROBIN HOOD

GISBOURNE. He's won. It's in the very centre of the bull's eye. No-one can beat that!

SHERIFF. At least I get to keep the Golden Arrow. Here's George of Garston. *(George of Garston fires his arrow and completely misses the target.)*

GISBOURNE. He's missed the target altogether! So much for my wager. Here goes the smelly beggar. *(The smelly beggar fires his arrow which splits George of Garston's arrow in two. The crowd cheer wildly.)* I don't believe it! His arrow has spilt your man's arrow in two and embedded itself in the very centre of the bulls eye!

SHERIFF. That smelly beggar is a better archer than Robin Hood! I'll ask him to join my guard. He'll be useful to me! Every cloud...

MARIAN. Am I presenting this trophy or not?

SHERIFF. Do it. *(Marian stands up, picks up the trophy and gets ready to present it to the "smelly beggar" approaching the table. The "smelly beggar" is, of course, Robin Hood in disguise.)*

MARIAN. *(Handing the trophy to Robin.)* Here you are. Well done. *(Aside to Robin.)* Excuse the Sheriff. He's very upset. He wanted Robin Hood to win the trophy so he could arrest him and hang him but it seems he was too cowardly to turn up! You're a better archer than Robin Hood anyway! Do I know you?

ROBIN. I don't think so my lady.

MARIAN. A word of advice. A good bath wouldn't come amiss *(Lowering her voice so neither the Sheriff nor Gisbourne can hear her.)* Robin! *(Robin starts to exit with the trophy.)*

SHERIFF. *(Shouting at Robin.)* Wait! *(Robin stops and turns to look at the Sheriff.)* You are an excellent archer. Better than that Robin Hood. I want you in my guard.

ROBIN. No thank you Sheriff. I prefer to remain a free man. *(Robin exits.)*

SHERIFF. *(Enraged/dumbfounded.)* How dare he! How dare a smelly beggar turn down a gracious offer like that! Get him back Gisbourne. Get him back and hang him!

GISBOURNE. I can't do that. Not now. Not here. That crowd's almost out of control. They've had far too much ale! He's won the competition fair and square. He's beaten your man. He's their hero. They'd riot if we tried to hang him!

ROBIN HOOD

SHERIFF. You're useless Gisbourne! As it happens it doesn't matter that Robin Hood didn't turn up. I've got a back-up plan. I'm meeting some really evil people tomorrow. At least, that's what my people tell me. Apparently they're so evil they make me look caring and generous! I'm gonna hire them to sort out Robin Hood, once and for all!

(An arrow with a message attached to it embeds itself in the table. The Sheriff jumps with fright. Gisbourne removes the message and looks at it.)

GISBOURNE. He was here! He was here! Robin Hood was here! He won the Golden Arrow!

SHERIFF. What!

GISBOURNE. He was the smelly beggar. It's here. In the message. *(He reads the message aloud.)*

Thanks for the Golden Arrow,
With which I'll do some good.
That lovely Golden Arrow,
Just won by Robin Hood!
P.S. Looking good Marian!

MARIAN. His poetry's improving... *(Exit Gisbourne, the Sheriff and Marian.)*

END OF ACT 1

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—
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