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ROBIN HOOD & THE RAVEN’S REVENGE

By John Chambers

CAST

ROBIN HOOD

MAID MARION

BIG JOAN

FRIAR TUCK

MUCH

GUY OF GISBORNE

PRINCE JOHN

SHERIFF OF NOTTINGHAM

MOTHER MAUDLIN

1st GUARD

2nd GUARD

Prince John and Sheriff can double as 1st and 2nd Guards.

ACT ONE

A GLADE IN A DARK PART OF SHERWOOD FOREST. THE WIND HOWLS, THE LAST OF THE AUTUMN LEAVES SCUTTER ALONG THE GROUND. A LONG GONE WOLF MOANS, A RAVEN CROAKS. A MIST DESCENDS.

MOTHER MAUDLIN, A WITCH, ENTERS - UNSEEN TO OTHERS, SHE WILL WATCH AS A NUMBER OF SHORT SCENES DEPICT LIFE IN AND AROUND SHERWOOD.

MAUDLIN: These are the times when wolves still cry in dark and lonely parts of Sherwood Forest. These are the times when people can see magic. These are the times when England is a green - but NOT so pleasant land... (CACKLES) These are times when love has no place.

LIGHTS UP ON WEDDING SCENE. ROBERT, EARL OF LOXLEY (ROBIN) AND MARION FITZWALTER ARE ABOUT TO BE MARRIED. THEY STAND BEFORE THE BISHOP.

BISHOP: We are gathered here today to witness the marriage between Sir Robert, Earl of Loxley, and Lady Marion Fitzwalter...

GISBOURNE AND GUARDS CRASH IN (AS IN THE WHOLE OF THIS OPENING MONTAGE, THEY ARE NOT COMIC).

GISBOURNE: Robert, Earl of Loxley, I arrest you in the name of His Highness Prince John.

MARION: What charge, Gisbourne?

2nd GUARD: Treason.

ROBERT: Treason!

GISBOURNE: Seize the traitor.

GUARDS GO TO SEIZE ROBIN, BUT AFTER A FIGHT, HE MANAGES TO ESCAPE, PURSUED BY GUARDS AND GISBOURNE.

MARION: Robert...

SHE FOLLOWS, AND EXITS.

MAUDLIN: These are times when rebellion is in the air.

JOAN ENTERS. SHE SEES A NOTICE PINNED TO A TREE.

JOAN: So blessed Prince John says if we don't pay our Poll Tax we'll be jailed. (PULLS NOTICE DOWN) Well, I for one am not going to put up with it - there must be others who feel the same way.

JOAN EXITS.

AN ABBOT IS BROUGHT ON IN A SEDEN CHAIR. THE FRONT BEARER IS FRIAR TUCK. HE'S TIRED, HOT AND FED UP. THE REAR BEARER IS A HOODED MONK (ROBIN).

TUCK: (GRUMBLES) Bah - I'll be glad when I'm an Abbot.

ABBOT: Do stop griping, Tuck - it's so tiresome.

TUCK: (GRUMBLES) Tiresome! You should try carrying this.

ABBOT: Well, hurry, there are outlaws in this area.

TUCK: (MUMBLES) Outlaws - what twaddle. I think we better rest for a while, my lord.

ABBOT: I'm not tired.

TUCK: You wouldn't be - sitting on your fat.... (CHECKS HIMSELF) Besides the talkative chap at the back looks as if he's on his last legs.

ABBOT: Oh, very well - a short break. And I mean short - I don't want some varlet running off with my gold. (HUGS A BAG OF MONEY) I think I'll have a snack. (PRODUCES A CHICKEN OR SIMILAR TO EAT)

TUCK: They do say it's very Christian to share things.

ABBOT: I've not heard that one, Tuck.

TUCK: That's pretty obvious.

THE HOODED (NO PUN) CHAIRBEARER SUDDENLY PRODUCES A SWORD. IT IS ROBIN, BUT WE WON'T KNOW THIS. TUCK MIGHT CATCH A GLIMPSE OF HIS FACE BUT THERE IS NO CONNECTION.

ROBIN: (DISGUISED VOICE) Your gold.

ABBOT: Good man - brought a sword to protect me have you?

ROBIN: In a way.

ABBOT: Fine fellow - you should follow this chap's example, Tuck.

TUCK: Humph.

ROBIN: (CONTINUES) To protect you from your greed - hand over the gold.

ABBOT: What?

ROBIN MOTIONS WITH SWORD, ABBOT HAS NO CHOICE BUT TO HAND OVER GOLD.

ABBOT: (TO TUCK) Tuck - do something.

TUCK: I most certainly will. (LOOKS ABOUT, THEN DOES A RUNNER)

ABBOT: Where are you going?

TUCK: Where it's safe!

AND TUCK'S GONE. ROBIN, STILL DISGUISED,
LEAVES WITH GOLD.

ABBOT GOES TO LEAVE.

ABBOT: (MOANING TO THE HEAVENS) Lord, these are terrible
times indeed.

HE EXITS.

MAUDLIN: (LAUGHS) Indeed they are. When one is not even safe in
ones home.

SCREAMS AND SHOUTS OF TERROR ARE
FOLLOWED BY THE GLOW OF A FIRE AS A
BUILDING IS TORCHED IN THE DISTANCE.

MUCH, A BOY, ENTERS, RUNNING FROM THE
DIRECTION OF THE FIRE. HE HIDES. TWO GUARDS,
MASKED AND SINISTER, ENTER IN PURSUIT.

1st GUARD: The runt's escaped.

2nd GUARD: Ah, leave him. (LAUGHS) He won't be going back home.

1st GUARD: Unless it's to warm himself by the burning embers.

2nd GUARD: With the Mill in ashes we'll starve the peasants out of
Sherwood.

1st GUARD: And it serves that trouble maker Much the Miller right for
not paying his taxes.

2nd GUARD: (LAUGHS) He's paid a far greater price - his life.

MUCH: (DISTRESSED, TO HIMSELF) My father - dead...

1st GUARD: Let's get back to Sir Guy of Gisbourne.

2nd GUARD: I should think we'll get promotion for this.

MUCH FALLS ASLEEP, AND WILL REMAIN WHERE HE IS (UNSEEN BY OTHERS) UNTIL HE AWAKES.

MAUDLIN: These are the times when evil will win, when black spells cast say I - Mother Maudlin. And soon all of Sherwood Forest will be mine. For I have dark powers, and I can take the shape of any person, bird or beast... (SEES SOMEONE APPROACHING) See, I can become an innocent poor, poor old woman.

THE OPENING MONTAGE ENDED, MAUDLIN IS NOW IN REAL TIME. MARION ENTERS. MAUDLIN TRIES TO BE NICE.

MARION: Excuse me.

MAUDLIN: Yes, my dear.

MARION: I'm looking for someone - I wonder if you've seen him?

MAUDLIN: (SNAPS) If you told me who it was, I might be able to help (CHARMS) now wouldn't I? What is your name?

MARION: Lady Marion Fitzwalter... I'm looking for Robert, Earl of Loxley.

MAUDLIN: Never heard of him.

MARION: He was driven into Sherwood Forest by Sir Guy of Gisborne who accused him of being a traitor...

MAUDLIN: (ASIDE) I like traitors...

MARION: Just because he sided with the poor peasants against Prince John.

MAUDLIN: Serves him right then - why would anyone want to help the peasants... dirty, smelly, and worst of all poor. Phewy.

MARION: Robert's a good man... or was. I don't even know if he's alive.

MAUDLIN: No, he's probably dead.

MARION: He might be using a different name, a disguise to avoid capture.

MAUDLIN: No, he'll be dead.

MARION: (GOES TO LEAVE) I must carry on searching for him - we were to be married.

MAUDLIN: Well you won't be marrying no one if they're pushing up the daisies.

MARION: Why are you so horrible to me?

MAUDLIN: Because I don't like nosey parkers coming into my forest.

MARION ABOUT TO EXIT.

MARION: I have heard of a mysterious person, clad in green.

Legends say he helps those in need. D'you think he might help me?

MAUDLIN: (ASIDE) The Green Man? (TO MARION) You are living in false hope. There is no such person, do you hear, *THERE IS NO SUCH PERSON*. Now leave me alone.

MARION LEAVES FRIGHTENED.

MAUDLIN: If anyone else mentions this mysterious stranger, dressed in green, I'll... I'll...

SHE IS INTERrUPTED BY JOAN ENTERING.

SHE SINGS, AND DOES NOT SEE MAUDLIN.

JOAN: (SINGS) I cannot tarry in this dark wood/For I've come to look for... (STOPS TO CONJURE UP THE REST OF THE LINE. TRIES AGAIN) I cannot tarry in this dark wood/For I've come to look for... (SPEAKS) I've come to look for... (TO AUDIENCE) Ah, hello pixies, elves and fairies (BEAT. PEERS AT AUDIENCE) and one or two

hob goblins... Oh sorry sir, I didn't know you were a teacher.

I wonder if you could help me finish my song - I'm something of a composer, you know...

MAUDLIN: (ASIDE) A decomposer by the look of her.

JOAN: (TO AUDIENCE) If I sing the song as far as I've got, maybe you could put the missing words in... (SINGS) I cannot tarry in this dark wood/I've come to look for... (WAITS)

AT WHICH POINT THE AUDIENCE AS ONE WILL SHOUT 'ROBIN HOOD'.

JOAN: Robin who?

AUDIENCE: Robin Hood.

JOAN: Ah yes, you've just reminded me why I'm here. I've come to look for Robin Hood. Have you seen him? (ETC)

SHE THEN SEES MAUDLIN.

JOAN: Maybe you could help me, dear sweet lady.

MAUDLIN: (LOOKS ABOUT) Who you talking to?

JOAN: You, me dear.

MAUDLIN: Don't you 'me dear' me. And don't you go round saying I'm sweet. I'm as sweet as a crab apple. I'm as pleasant as a wet soggy pair of gloves. I'm as nice as a frog's bottom.

JOAN: Bit of an insult to frogs isn't it... Anyway, I bet you're nice underneath all that... all that... gunge.

MAUDLIN: Wrong. I'm even worse.

JOAN: Ah well, you can't have everything. Maybe you could help me.

MAUDLIN: I don't have to.

JOAN: I'm looking for someone.

MAUDLIN: I don't do anything for nothing.

JOAN: You would have the joy of helping a fellow human being.
(SEES THIS IS GETTING HER NOWHERE) One ducket.

MAUDLIN: (GRABS MONEY) Who are you looking for?

JOAN: That good person of whom the legends speak.

MAUDLIN: (ASIDE) I hate good persons.

JOAN: The Green Man of mystery.

MAUDLIN: (WAILS)

JOAN: Is it something I said?

MAUDLIN: Don't mention any Green Man to me.

JOAN: Some call him (TO AUDIENCE FOR HELP) Robin Hood.

MAUDLIN: (FURIOUS) There is no Green Man, there is no Robin Hood.

IN SILHOUETTE, IN THE DISTANCE, A FIGURE APPEARS. MAN? ELF? CERTAINLY A CREATURE OF THE FOREST. HE BLOWS A HORN.

THE FIGURE MOVES OFF QUICKLY.

JOAN: Who was that?

MAUDLIN: I will put a stop to this Green Man nonsense... there is no force for good in this forest.

MAUDLIN EXITS.

JOAN: (TO AUDIENCE) Do you think this Man in Green, this Robin Hood exists? I must carry on searching.

JOAN EXITS.

MUCH STIRS.

WE ARE AWARE OF A PRESENCE - LEAVES RUSTLE, A GENTLE BREEZE, AN ALMOST HEAVENLY LIGHT. MUCH IS UNAWARE OF THIS.

GREEN MAN: (V.O.) The boy, Much, son of a Miller of the same name. He is alone, his father slaughtered by Sir Guy of Gisbourne.
All alone in the dark forest called Sherwood. All alone. And though his ears won't hear my words, his soul will feel my spirit. (WHISPERS) You aren't alone, Much. The spirit of the Green Man will inspire you and others. Together you might lift the darkness and let sunlight dance on the leaves and into your heart.

MUCH STANDS.

MUCH: (TO HIMSELF) Legends tell of the Green Man - I've nobody else in the world - he might be my friend, but where on earth will I find him?

HE LOOKS ABOUT, FRIGHTENED AND HUNGRY.

MUCH: I must be mad. Fancy coming into this forest on me own.

THE GREEN MAN'S PRESENCE IS SEEN AND HEARD.
AGAIN MUCH FEELS IT.

GREEN MAN: (V.O.) If you are hungry, Much, the forest will feed you.

GREEN MAN LEAVES.

MUCH: Aw, brilliant - blackberries.

HE GOES TO A BUSH AND PICKS FRUIT.

MUCH: The juiciest, sweetest blackberries I've ever had.

MUCH CONTINUES SEARCHING AND EATING BLACKBERRIES, HE DOES NOT NOTICE THE RAVEN (MAUDLIN) APPEAR, AND INITIALLY THE RAVEN DOES NOT NOTICE HIM.

MAUDLIN: (AS RAVEN) That's better. Now I can have a bird's eye view. Be a feathery fly on the wall. Things are changing in the Forest - I must make sure the changes are best for me, Maudlin.

SHE SEES MUCH.

MAUDLIN: A boy, a BOY. Eating - no - stealing food... I think I could have a little fun here - and rid the forest of one more pest.

If I'm not mistaken Sir Guy of Gisborne and his men are hunting in a near by glade - I think I should tell them about this teenage trespasser. I'm sure no one will warn the boy (MENACING TO AUDIENCE) WILL THEY! (TO GISBORNE WHO IS OFF STAGE) Yoo hoo - Sir Guy. Look out there's a thief about. (TO AUDIENCE. CACKLES) He's coming. The boy will soon get his desserts. (CACKLES AGAIN)

GISBOURNE AND TWO GUARDS ENTER.

GISBORNE: Who was that? Who said something about a thief? I can't see a thief.

1st GUARD: No, I can't - only that youth over there.

2nd GUARD: Just an innocent youth eating the King's blackberries.

GISBORNE FOLLOWED BY GUARDS, TURNS TO GO. THEY STOP - LOOK AGAIN AT MUCH.

GISBORNE: Dolts! He's stealing, he's the thief.

THEY MOVE UP BEHIND MUCH. SIGNALLING THE AUDIENCE TO 'SHUSH' (WHICH THE AUDIENCE

WON'T) BUT JUST AS MUCH REALISES THEY'RE THERE, HE'S COLLARED.

GISBORNE: So you young varlet, caught in the act, by I, Sir Guy of Gisborne.

MUCH: Let me go.

GISBORNE: You must be jesting. Now then, what shall we do to teach this good for nothing a lesson?

1st GUARD: Hang him.

2nd GUARD: Chop his head off.

GISBORNE: Phh - is that the cruelest thing you can think of. - (SOPPY VOICE) 'Hang him', 'Chop his head off'. Namby pamby. Not only namby pamby - it's boring. Have you no imagination?

MUCH: Have mercy, Sir Guy.

GISBORNE: (THINKS. SARCASTIC) Mercy... Let me see. No. I don't think I know much about 'mercy', do I men?

1st GUARD: Not you Sir Guy. If you aren't the most unmerciful person who's ever prodded me with a spear.

2nd GUARD: What about the Sheriff of Nottingham - he's more black hearted than you, Sir Guy.

1st GUARD: Oh yes - and Prince John, he's a cruel cove if ever there was one.

GISBORNE: (IMPATIENT) Yes, I know, I know - but I'm a pretty dastardly chap.

MUCH: (ASIDE) He's a right dastard.

GISBORNE: So boy...

MUCH: My name's Much.

GISBORNE: I don't care what your name is.

1st GUARD: (TO MUCH) Your father had the same name - Old Much the Miller, and it didn't do him much good.

2nd GUARD: (LAUGHS) Much good.

GISBORNE AND 1st GUARD LOOK AT HIM.

2nd GUARD: (EXPLAINS) Much good... Much...

GISBORNE: Dolt.

MUCH: (DEFIANT) Kill me like you killed my father.

GISBORNE: We'll do just that, boy - that is the penalty for stealing the King's food.

MUCH: The King's food! We only eat what roams free and grows wild in the forest.

GISBORNE: Yes - and it all belongs to the King.

MUCH: Why?

GISBORNE: (TO 1st GUARD) Tell the tiresome boy.

1st GUARD: (THINKS, THEN TO 2nd GUARD) Tell the tiresome boy.

2nd GUARD: (THINKS, THEN TO GISBORNE) Tell the tiresome...

GISBORNE: Dolt. Enough of this twiddling, twoddling, and twaddling.

(BEAT) The boy is guilty and the penalty is death.

DRUMS BEAT.

GISBORNE: Take him away.

JOAN ENTERS.

JOAN: Stop.

GISBORNE: Who is this wench?

MUCH: Don't bother about me, Joan.

JOAN: Let the boy go.

GISBORNE: Why trouble yourself with this thieving urchin.

JOAN: He isn't a thief. You and the Sheriff have murdered his father and burnt down the Mill and bakery which supported them. You are the criminal - a murderer and thief who takes away this boy's means of supporting himself - just as you have done with all the peasants of Sherwood.

MUCH: Go now, Joan.

JOAN: I'm not frightened of greasy Guy of Gisborne and his grisly guards.

GISBORNE: (TO GUARDS) Seize her.

BOTH GUARDS LET GO OF MUCH TO GO AFTER JOAN.

GISBORNE: Not both of you.

1st GUARD: (TO 2nd) Dolt.

2nd GUARD: (TO 1st) Nelly.

GISBORNE: Grab the boy.

GUARDS GO TO MUCH.

GISBORNE: Grab the woman.

GUARDS GO TO JOAN.

JOAN & MUCH: Run for it.

GUARDS CHASE JOAN AND MUCH.

MARION ENTERS.

MARION: Playing 'tag', Sir Guy?

GISBORNE: Lady Marion...

SHE'S OBVIOUSLY AT THE VERY TOP OF HIS CHRISTMAS CARD LIST. HE OOZES AND OILS CHARM.

THE CHASE STOPS.

GISBORNE: How absolutely wonderful and excruciatingly divine to see you.

MARION: You don't intend to hurt that sweet little boy and that poor defenseless damsel?

JOAN: Who are you calling a damsel!

GISBORNE: Hurt them! Of course not Lady Marion - why me. They don't call me cuddly goodly Guy of Gisborne for nothing.

MUCH: No, they don't call you it, that's why.

MARION: So they're free to go...

GISBORNE: (THROUGH GRITTED TEETH) Of course they are... Run along, you two rascallions... and don't forget what I've said.

JOAN: Oh, we won't forget - 'cuddly goodly Sir Guy'. We'll find someone who will put a stop to you and your bullying.

GISBORNE: (FORCED LIGHTNESS, TO MARION) They're a spirited lot. (MUTTERS) You'll pay for this one day.

MARION: (TO JOAN) And who is this person who you hope to find?

JOAN: You'll know in time.

MUCH: (SHOUTS DEFIANTLY) It's the Man in Green.

MARION: Who is the Man in Green?

JOAN: His name doesn't matter to you.

MARION: It might do - what does he look like?

JOAN: We wouldn't tell you. You and your rich friends will never catch him.

MARION: I wonder if it's...

GISBORNE: (BRUSQUE) This Man in Green or Green Man nonsense is just a rumour, a story, a legend, a lie, put about by ignorant peasants.

2nd GUARD: That's true, Sir Guy - I believe in him and they don't come more ignorant than me... apart from him (1st GUARD).

1st GUARD: If there's no Man in Green, Sir Guy, who's been robbing the bishops and barons - and giving their money to the poor?

MUCH: (CHEEKY IMPRESSION OF A SPOOK) Oooo, look out Sir Guy the Man in Green is going to come out of the forest to get you.

GISBORNE AND THE TWO GUARDS LOOK ABOUT.

JOAN: He might be watching you now...

GISBORNE: (BRAZENS IT OUT) What rot. Anyway I better be getting back to the castle - I've got some peasants to hang.

MARION: Sir Guy!

GISBORNE: Did I say 'peasants'...

1st GUARD: You meant 'pheasants', didn't you, Sire.

GISBORNE: No... Yes... that's right - some pheasants to hang.

2nd GUARD: Caught them shooting the king's deer, didn't you, Sire.

GISBORNE CLANGS 2nd GUARD ON HELMET WITH HIS SWORD.

2nd GUARD: I'm a dolt.

GISBORNE: Might we escort you back to Nottingham, Lady Marion?

MARION: No thank you, I want to walk a little further into the forest.

GISBORNE: But will you be safe? - Don't forget this villain Robin Hood is at large.

MUCH: I thought you said he didn't exist.

GISBORNE: (TO MUCH) Scarper.

MARION: I think I can handle Robin Hood... if he exists.

GISBORNE: (KISSES HER HAND) Take care, Lady Marion... You must come and dine with me sometime. My cooks do a very nice roast peasant... pheasant.

GISBORNE AND THE TWO GUARDS LEAVE.

RAVEN: (TO AUDIENCE) Guy of Gisborne is my kind of Guy (CACKLES) - not bad that - my kind of guy.

MUCH: Is it against the law to eat ravens? That scrawny fowl would fend off our hunger.

RAVEN: Time for a sharp exit. Eat me indeed. One day I will rule this forest and rid it of the likes of them.

MUCH FINDS A CONKER.

JOAN: What are you doing with that conker?

MUCH: (ABOUT TO THROW) Knock that raven off its perch.

JOAN: You shouldn't be unkind to animals.

MUCH: I know - but there's something odd about that bird.

LOBS CONKER AND RAVEN DROPS OUT OF SIGHT
WITH A SQUAWK.

JOAN: (TO MARION) I suppose you expect us to be grateful,
just cos you smooth-tongued your way round Gisborne..

MUCH: Lady Marion did help us get free.

JOAN: (NODS) I could have knocked those blockheads out if
you'd given me the chance. (SHE TWIRLS HER
QUARTER STAFF!)

MARION: You shouldn't live in fear of Sir Guy and the likes...

JOAN: One day we won't - when we band together, we'll show
him and the Sheriff...

MARION: Who will lead you?

JOAN: We don't need a leader.

MUCH: Robin Hood will.

JOAN TRIES TO SHUSH HIM.

JOAN: (LIES) Robin Hood doesn't exist - it's a silly legend. All
this Green man nonsense.

MUCH AND JOAN CAN DO AN 'OH YES HE
DOES/DOESN'T' ROUTINE.

MARION: I believe Robin Hood does live in Sherwood. I need to
find him...

JOAN: What, so you can betray him to Gisborne? Haven't you
got enough finery without claiming the reward that's on
Robin's head?

MARION: I wouldn't betray him...

JOAN: (DISMISSIVE) Ha. (AND TURNS TO LEAD MUCH AWAY) Come on Much. This is all a trick - she's in league with Gisborne and she wants us to lead her to Robin.

MUCH WANTS TO BELIEVE MARION.

MARION: I do want you to lead me to Robin.

JOAN: There.

MARION: And I'll tell you why. (BEAT) Because I think he might be able to help me find the man I love.

JOAN: Robin Hood's too busy to be a match maker for the likes of you.

SHE IS INTERRUPTED BY MAUDLIN'S ARRIVAL.

MARION: Oh dear, it's the old woman. I think I might have upset her before.

JOAN: You're upsetting me with your airs and graces and your hoity toity ways.

MUCH: Oy, missus, could you tell us how to find Robin Hood?

MAUDLIN: You're wasting your time - and mine come to that, asking such rum questions. Clear off.

JOAN: What's up with you, you miserable old bat - somebody stolen your teeth?

MARION: You shouldn't speak to her in that tone. She's just an elderly lady - probably a bit grumpy due to rheumatism.

JOAN: If I'm not mistaken that's no lady, that's a witch - Mother Maudlin.

MAUDLIN: (ASIDE) Bit too clever for her own good that one.

MARION: (QUIETER TO JOAN) Mother Maudlin. Is it true she can change her appearance?

MUCH: (LOUD) Blimey - why does she look like that then?

MAUDLIN: The sooner you lot are out of my forest the better.

MUCH: Your forest!

JOAN: When we join up with Robin Hood the forest will belong to us all - not some jumped up Lord, sly sheriff, pompous prince (POINTED) or warty old witch.

MAUDLIN: (ANGRY) Be warned - this is my domain. Listen well...
There is no Robin Hood
No man of Green
No forest force for good
This place is, as I like it, dark, cold and cruel
So clear off you simpering fools.

THEN SOMETHING REMARKABLE HAPPENS - THE SKY TURNS GREEN, THE GREEN MAN THEME PLAYS, THE EARTH SHAKES. ALL ARE AFRAID. THERE IS A MOMENT. AND FROM THE EARTH, STONE, TREES AND LEAVES EMERGES THE MAN OF GREEN, ROBIN HOOD.

MUCH: It's the Man of Green.

JOAN: It's Robin Hood.

MAUDLIN: No - it can't be. (SHE SCREAMS AND GOES TO LEAVE)
I will cut you down, Man of Green - be warned.

AND SHE LEAVES.

ROBIN: Something I said!

MARION: (RUNS TO HIM) Robert.

MUCH: It's Robin.

ROBIN: Marion.

MARION: I've found you.

A MOMENT BETWEEN THEM.

MUCH: Musho!

ROBIN: What are you doing here?

MARION: I had to know you were safe Robert.

JOAN: Are you mutton-jeff - it's *Robin*, Robin Hood. Not Robert. Not Robert Hood, Herbert Hood or any other Hood - it's Robin.

MARION: What do they mean Robert?

MUCH: Blimey, she's at it again with her 'Roberts'.

ROBIN: They're right, Marion. Robert, Earl of Loxley no longer exists.

MARION: Robin Hood does?

ROBIN AND MARION KISS.

JOAN: Right, Robin - shall we start?

MUCH: (ASIDE) Looks as if he's started already.

ROBIN: (TO JOAN) You know my name - What's yours?

MARION: This is Joan Bigg, Robin.

JOAN: Yes, and she can speak for herself. And she likes to be called Big Joan. (BRANDISHES STAFF) And she likes cracking skulls. My husband is Little John but he's stayed at home to look after our six kids.

MUCH: And I'm Much.

ROBIN: I was sorry to hear what happened to your father, Much.

JOAN: Something's got to be done to stop this tyranny.

MUCH: That's why we've come to join you, Robin.

ROBIN: I'm no great hero.

JOAN: Nah, you don't look like one come to think of it.

MARION: Robin is as good and brave as any man.

JOAN: Or woman? (TWIRLS STAFF)

MUCH: They sing songs about you, don't they Robin?

JOAN: They sing songs about fish - doesn't say they can change civilization as we know it.

MARION: If you don't think Robin can help you, why come to him?

ROBIN: Joan's right to be cautious.

JOAN: Still you're our only hope.

ROBIN: Your only hope is yourselves.

JOAN: Oh that's great that is - we come traipsing all this way and you say we'll have to get on with it ourselves.

ROBIN: I'll do as much as I can.

JOAN: (SARCASTIC) That's good of you.

MARION: So. Robin, where is the woodland army you've set up.

ROBIN: You're looking at it.

THEY LOOK ABOUT.

MUCH: Is it invisible?

ROBIN: This is it - just me.

JOAN: Where are your Merry Men?

ROBIN: It's not so much Merry *Men* - more of a Merry *Man*... me. I'm not that 'Merry' either come to think of it.

JOAN: So there is no band of outlaws.

ROBIN: I've got one or two mates.

MUCH: Where are they, Robin - the legendary Will Scarlet, called Scarlet because he was drenched in the blood of his enemies.

ROBIN: Poor old Will's in Strangeways for pinching the Sherriif's cabbages...

MUCH: That legendary minstral, Alan A'Dale...

ROBIN: Home in bed with a sore throat.

MUCH: The legendary George A'Greene?

ROBIN: Gone to Wakefield to visit his mother - she's got a bad leg.

THEY'RE ALL DESPONDENT.

ROBIN: (OPTIMISTIC) Come on, there's no need to be down-hearted.

JOAN: Why not?

MUCH: Guy of Gisborne takes all our land, our food. He tortures us. Imprisons us.

JOAN: And that's when he's feeling charitable.

ROBIN: Stay - leave, the choice is yours... If you stay you will expose yourself to danger. Guy of Gisborne has sworn to kill me.

MUCH: Sworn to kill you!

JOAN: Yes - he said, 'I'm going to damn well kill him.'

MUCH: 'Damn' isn't swearing. Now if he said, 'I'm going to...'

ROBIN: (CUTS IN) Yes, we know what swearing is, Much... Anyone who joins me will be in danger.

JOAN: We're in danger if we don't - from Gisborne's bullies, from starvation...

ROBIN: So you'll stay.

JOAN: We might as well.

MARION: (TO ROBIN) You've no need to stay in Sherwood now.

ROBIN: I can't go back to Nottingham - there's a reward on my head.

MARION: We don't have to go there.

ROBIN: We?

MARION: We could go right away, France. Where we could live in peace.

ROBIN: You'd give up your home for me?

MARION: For us.

MUCH: You can't do that - just clear off.

MARION: If Robin is captured he'll be executed.

JOAN: You better hop it then - both of you. Go and live in your chateau...

JOAN AND MUCH TURN AWAY, DEJECTED.

ROBIN: I have to stay Marion... I can't turn my back on all that's going on here. (BEAT) But you don't have to put yourself in danger. Go back to Nottingham - maybe when all this is over we could meet again.

MARION CONSIDERS.

MARION: I will go back to Nottingham...

JOAN: You'll be happier there, living in the lap of luxury.

MARION: I'll go back because if you're to fight Gisbourne you're going to need to know what he's up to. I'll spy for you. You could be hung as a traitor if you're caught. That's my choice - anyway, they'll have to catch me first.

JOAN: Good for you.

ROBIN: I'll walk to the edge of the forest with you. (TAKES MARION'S HAND)

MUCH: I'll come too...

JOAN: Three's a crowd, dummy...

MUCH: What d'you mean... oh... yeah...

ROBIN: (TO JOAN AND MUCH) I'll meet you at the great oak, we'll set up camp there.

JOAN AND MUCH HEAD IN ONE DIRECTION, AND EXIT. MARION AND ROBIN IN ANOTHER.

MARION: I wonder what Gisbourne is planning...

ROBIN AND MARION EXIT.

GISBORNE'S CASTLE.

GISBORNE PACES ABOUT, NERVOUSLY EXPECTING THE ARRIVAL OF IMPORTANT GUESTS.

A MAID (MAUDLIN), HER FACE UNSEEN, BUSIES HERSELF IN THE BACKGROUND.

GISBORNE: Oh dear - I'm so nervous. I've got two very important guests coming - well, one of them is. Not only are they extremely important, they are extremely cruel - make me look like a choir boy. And whenever they come, they expect some blessed favour - and if I don't deliver, they threaten to (SLITS THROAT). I think they're jealous - of my good looks and sparkling personality.

HERALD ENTERS.

HERALD: Sire, your guests have arrived.

GISBORNE: (SHARP) Show them in, show them in.

FAN FARE.

HERALD: (ANNOUNCES) His Highness Prince John, and the Sheriff of Nottingham.

PRINCE JOHN AND SHERIFF ENTER.

GISBORNE: (GROVELS) Prince John, your wonderfulness.

SHERIFF COUGHS.

GISBORNE: (DISMISSIVE) Ah Sheriff of Nottingham - so you tagged along. (TO PRINCE) Now your gradeliness, if I might grovellingly ask to what do I owe this grand honour of your sublime presence.

PRINCE JOHN: Tell him, Nottingham.

SHERIFF: It's the forest.

GISBORNE: Nottingham Forest, things not going well there...

PRINCE JOHN: What are you prattling about Gisborne?

GISBORNE: 'pon my word. Did I prattle? Pray forgive me. Prattling is not what I would perform for my perfect Prince.

PRINCE JOHN: You're doing it again.

GISBORNE: Slap my wrists and hang, draw and quarter me.

PRINCE JOHN: I will if you don't listen. (BEAT) Deer.

GISBORNE: Yes, duckie?

PRINCE JOHN: My deer.

GISBORNE: I'm flattered by your attention. Are you sure you want the Sheriff here?

PRINCE JOHN: The deer in blessed Sherwood Forest.

GISBORNE: Oh yes... right... sorry... what a turnip head...

PRINCE JOHN: It has come to my attention that an outlaw by the name of... (TO SHERIFF) What was the ruffian's name?

SHERIFF: Er... what was it now? (TO GISBORNE) What was the outlaw's name?

GISBORNE: Er.

THEY ALL THINK, WHILE AUDIENCE POSSIBLY HELP THEM.

PRINCE JOHN: Robert Flood...

SHERIFF: Rupert Good...

GISBORNE: I've got it, I've got it - Robin (BEAT) Redbreast.

SHERIFF: Hood.

PRINCE JOHN: Good.

GISBORNE: Good... yes... hoo-rah for Robin Hood.

PRINCE AND SHERIFF LOOK AT HIM.

GISBORNE: I mean, hoo-rah, we've thought of the scurvy rascal's name - not hoo-rah because he poaches your deer, robs your Barons, bashes your Bishops, feeds the poor and encourages them not to pay your swingeing taxes. Anyway, what about this scoundrel whom I dislike so much I've forgotten his name again - what about this Robin...

SHERIFF: Hood.

PRINCE JOHN: Good.

GISBORNE: Good... yes... hoo-rah.

PRINCE JOHN: Shut up.

GISBORNE: Yes...

PRINCE THREATENS.

GISBORNE: 'Nuff said... say no more... not unless you want to say some more, your Highentity.

PRINCE JOHN: I will say just this - I want this Robin Hood and his followers swinging from the highest gallows in Nottingham by the end of the month.

GISBORNE: Is that all?

MARION ENTERS. SURPRISED TO SEE PRINCE AND SHERIFF.

GISBORNE: Lady Marion.

MARION: (CURTSIES) Prince John. My Lord Sheriff. Sir Guy.

PRINCE JOHN: My, what a beautiful lady.

SHERIFF: (QUIET TO PRINCE) Be wary, Sire, 'tis said Lady Marion was once betrothed to he who calls himself Robin Hood.

PRINCE JOHN: Perfect.

MARION: For three such great men to be in discussion together it must be a matter of great importance.

ALL ARE FLATTERED.

MARION: Far greater issues than a simple girl like me can understand.

GISBORNE: Quite so - we can't all be great and intelligent like we three nobles. Take me - I nearly know my three times tables.

SHERIFF: And I know my alphabet all the way up to 'F'.

PRINCE JOHN: And I would be able to tell the time using a clock - if they had been invented.

MARION: Gosh, you are all so... so... words fail me.

PRINCE JOHN: I dare say.

MARION: I'm sure I won't understand what you're talking about. Why don't you test me... it will only go to show how silly and foolish I am and make you all the more wise and greater.

PRINCE JOHN: I like this damn gal.

GISBORNE: She's a corker. (ASIDE) If I can bump off this Robin Hood cove, I dare say she'll be happy, nay proud, to be my wife.

MARION: (ASIDE) If he thinks that he's even dafter than he looks - and that's saying something.

PRINCE JOHN: Our aim is simple - Sir Guy of Gisborne here, is charged with the task of capturing Robin Hood and his outlaws.

GISBORNE: (ASIDE) Easy peasy - I don't think.

SHERIFF: You, Lady Marion, were betrothed to Robert of Loxley.

MARION: Yes, but as you know he went away, living as a hermit I believe in Wythenshawe.

SHERIFF: He wouldn't be living in Sherwood as Robin Hood?

MARION: Good lord no, the very idea.

PRINCE JOHN: So you have no loyalty to this Robin Hood character?

MARION: Loyalty - like any outlaw he should be dangling from the gallows.

GISBORNE: (ASIDE) By golly, what a murderous, vindictive, vengeful woman - just my type.

PRINCE JOHN: (TO MARION) You would help us capture Hood then?

MARION: Nothing would give me greater pleasure. What's your plan?

GISBORNE: (ASIDE) Catch Robin Hood, get a big fat reward and marry you Lady Marion.

SHERIFF: (TO PRINCE) Don't trust her.

PRINCE JOHN: You're too suspicious Nottingham. I'm sure I can trust Marion - can't I, dear?

MARION: With your life.

PRINCE JOHN: Good - because I would hate to have to deal with you as a spy or traitor. It would be a pity to see you swing on the gallows next to Robin Hood.

GISBORNE: I'm sure there won't be any need for that. (ASIDE) The only place Marion will swing is on my arm when I marry her.

(TO AUDIENCE) Don't you think I'd make a splendid husband. Wouldn't you like to marry me, madam?

PRINCE JOHN: Right, Gisborne, let us eat. I assume you've prepared something for me.

GISBORNE: Just a light snack, your loveliness - two poached deer, three wild boar lightly toasted, a brace of peasants...

SHERIFF: Don't you mean 'pheasants'?

GISBORNE: No. (CONINUES) Pigeon pie, pork pie, apple pie, blackberry pie, fresh salmon, grilled trout, sheep's eyeballs, oh, and those little things you put on sticks....

PRINCE JOHN: Is that all? I suppose it will have to do.

SHERIFF: (AS THEY GO) I hope you've got red sauce.

THEY EXIT.

THE MAID WHO HAS HAD HER BACK TO US, TURNS ROUND WHEN THEY'VE GONE. IT IS MOTHER MAUDLIN.

MAUDLIN: So - everybody has plans. Robin Hood schemes to free the peasants of Sherwood. Prince John and the idiot Gisborne scheme to capture Robin Hood. And I, Mother Maudlin, think it's time for a little scheme of my own. I'm cleverer than them.

I'm more beautiful than them. And I have more power than them. Sherwood Forest will be mine - free of peasants and yes - especially free of their cheeky, noisy, horrible, terrible, smelly children.

SHE EXITS.

A RIVERBANK

TUCK ENTERS. HE CARRIES A ROUGHLY MADE SIGN, 'FRIAR'S FERRY'.

TUCK: (TO AUDIENCE) I'm setting up my own business. That'll teach that Bishop to treat me like a slave. I'll be my own boss and I'll soon be rich enough to buy ten square meals a day - I'm not greedy. This river is perfect - for a small charge I'll carry people across. (THINKS) I just hope all my passengers are as nice and slim as me. (BEAT) What d'you mean, I'm fat - I'm as lean as a whippet... (PUTS UP SIGN) In a woodland place like this there should be birds singing and animals calling. I wonder if you could help me - I could have a very nice doze against a background of forest sounds. Now, up the back there, you can be the buzzing bees - let's hear you. (Pathetic!) And at the back at that side, you can be the tweety little birds. Let's hear you. And down at this side, you can be the little squeaky mice, let's hear you. And down at this side, you can be the croaky old frogs - let's hear you. Right - now when I sit down, you make your noises... Oh, now, if anyone comes along, like my first customer, wake me by ringing a bell... You've not got a bell? Well, make a bell sound. Any kind of bell noise! As loud as you can because I'm a very very heavy sleeper - and I mean heavy.

TUCK SETTLES BY THE RIVER.
ANIMAL SOUNDS COMMENCE.
TUCK FALLS ASLEEP.
ROBIN ENTERS.

ROBIN: What's that ringing in my ears?

HE SEES TUCK.

ROBIN: Wake up friend, I need ferrying.

TUCK DOESN'T STIR.

ROBIN: How can I wake him? The ringing in the air obviously isn't loud enough!

ROBIN ENCOURAGES AUDIENCE TO RAISE SUFFICIENT DECIBELS TO STIR TUCK.

TUCK: What was that gentle tinkling I heard? (TO ROBIN) Did you tinkle?

ROBIN: I tinkled not...

TUCK: Oh...

ROBIN: Anyway... hello fine fellow.

TUCK LOOKS AROUND, WONDERING WHO HE'S TALKING TO.

ROBIN: How are you this day?

TUCK: Starving - I've not eaten for... (THINKS) at least half an hour.

You haven't got a snack on you, have you?

ROBIN: There's food all round you.

TUCK: (LOOKS) The trees made of bread are they then?

ROBIN: There are juicy sweet blackberries, hazel nuts...

TUCK: I'm not a squirrel. I like my blackberries in a great big pie, with a gallon or three of lumpy custard.

ROBIN: I can't help you there.

TUCK: Well, it's hardly worth me wasting my breath talking to you then.

ROBIN: Are you the Ferry man?

TUCK: No, I mean, yes.

ROBIN: Could you take me across the river?

TUCK: It'll cost you a groat. (HOLDS HIS HAND OUT)

ROBIN: When you've taken me over.

TUCK: How do I know that you'll pay up?

ROBIN: You'll have to trust me.

TUCK: Ha.

ROBIN GIVES HIM THE GROAT.

TUCK SURPRISED THEN PLEASED, TAKES THE COIN.

TUCK: You trust me!

ROBIN: I wouldn't have given you the money if I didn't.

TUCK: You must be mad. (SETTLES BACK, POCKETING THE MONEY)

ROBIN: I could run you through with my sword...

TUCK LOOKS.

ROBIN: (TURNS AWAY) I hope the food you buy with my money satisfies you.

TUCK: Aren't you going to attack me?

ROBIN: Over one groat?

TUCK: It's the principle.

ROBIN: (THINKS) No.

TUCK: Well you're a dull cove and no mistake.

ROBIN IGNORES HIM AND CONTEMPLATES THE RIVER.

TUCK: I know your game, you soppy sapling.

ROBIN LOOKS.

TUCK: You're just trying to make me feel guilty aren't you?

ROBIN SMILES.

TUCK: I thought so - what a rotten trick. Don't think you can get away with it that easily.

SUDDENLY HE LAUNCHES HIMSELF AND JUMPS ON ROBIN'S BACK, NEARLY FLATTENING HIM.

TUCK: Give us a piggy back across the river.

ROBIN: You're joking.

TUCK: I'll teach you to make me feel guilty... now move twiglet.

ROBIN LOOKS TO AUDIENCE, THEN TO RIVER.

ROBIN: (TO AUDIENCE) Should I throw him in?

TUCK: No he shouldn't.

ROBIN: Oh yes I will. (ETC)

TUCK: Oh no you won't. (ETC)

ROBIN DUMPS TUCK IN THE RIVER.

ROBIN: Oh yes I did.

1st AND 2nd GUARDS ENTER, AND WATCH AMUSED AS TUCK DRAGS HIMSELF OUT OF THE RIVER - COVERED IN GUNGE IF POSSIBLE.

TUCK: You silly green nelly. (SEES GUARDS) Ah, my great brave soldier boys.

ROBIN NERVOUS.

1st GUARD: Do we know you, fat little fellow?

TUCK: No, but I bet you'd be my very best friends if I gave you a groat.

GUARDS HURRY TO HELP TUCK.

2nd GUARD: Why you poor harmless Friar...

1st GUARD: We feel as if we've known you all our lives.

TUCK: (LOOKS SMUGLY AT ROBIN. THEN TO GUARDS) Oh thank you for saving me from this raggedy rascal. I dare say he would have drowned me. Me - a poor gentle honest...

ROBIN LAUGHS.

TUCK: (CONTINUES PIOUSLY) Me - a good gentle, nay delicate man of goodly goodness - you haven't got an odd roast chicken tucked up your jerkin, have you chum? (EXAMINING GUARDS' CLOTHING)

1st GUARD: Where's our groat?

TUCK: Here... (FINDS COIN, THEN HESITATES) but you'll have to prove our friendship if you want it.

2nd GUARD: How?

TUCK: Give the green goblin over there a ducking - there's this lovely shiny groat in it, if you do.

1st GUARD & 2nd GUARD: (LOOK AT OTHER, SHRUG) A groat's a groat.

THEY GO TOWARDS ROBIN TWIRLING (HOPEFULLY) QUARTER STAFFS / SPEARS.

ROBIN: The Friar's a fraud.

TUCK: (TEMPTING THEM) A nice shiny groat.

ROBIN: I don't like cheats and I don't like hypocrites.

TUCK: Listen how he talks about me, your great friend - a humble man of the church.

ROBIN: I'll give you another ducking.

1st GUARD: He's a gentle Friar - only a coward or a bully would duck him.

2nd GUARD: Yeh, give us a ducking if you dare.

TUCK: Hear, hear.

1st GUARD: And be quick about it - we've got important business in Sherwood Forest. Bigger fish to fry than you.

TUCK: (MUSES) Mmm - a big fat fried fish - and a huge dollop of greasy chips.

2nd GUARD: Yes, when we've dealt with you, we're out to capture Robin Hood, and collect the reward.

TUCK: Reward?

ROBIN: Why bother with me then - hadn't you better go after Robin Hood.

1st GUARD: I knew it, you're a coward. (STARTS PRODDING ROBIN.
2nd GUARD JOINS IN)

ROBIN LOSING PATIENCE GRABS A STAFF FROM BUSHES.

ROBIN: You're not the only one with more important things to do.

THEY FIGHT WITH QUARTER STAFFS. TUCK ENJOYING IT HUGELY. MUCH AND JOAN ENTER, CONCERNED AT SEEING ROBIN FIGHTING. TUCK UNAWARE OF MUCH/JOAN, DANCES ROUND THE

FIGHTERS WHO NOW TEETER ON THE EDGE OF THE RIVER. THEY FREEZE.

TUCK: (WICKED. TO AUDIENCE) What fun - I've almost forgotten I was hungry. Now - one little push and the green goblin would get his dousing. *And* those two nit wits wouldn't get their groat. I could go and buy a pie. Should I...
WAITS FOR RESPONSE, THEN PUSHES GUARDS AND ROBIN INTO RIVER.

TUCK: Dolts and ruffians.

1st GUARD: I thought you were our friend.

2nd GUARD: (SULKY) Yeh - you said you were our friend and now you've pushed us in the river.

TUCK: (WAVES COIN) This is my friend. Cheerio boys.

HE TURNS TO FIND JOAN AND MUCH WITH SWORDS AT HIS NECK.

JOAN: Not so fast, blubber belly.

MUCH: Yes - don't move, big bum.

GUARDS AND ROBIN CLIMB OUT OF THE RIVER.

1st GUARD: (THREATENS TUCK WITH SPEAR) I've a good mind to...

TUCK: Can't take a joke I see.

1st GUARD: (TO TUCK) Right - you're under arrest for... for doing something very naughty to a soldier of the crown.

2nd GUARD: (TO ROBIN) And so are you - for fighting with us... so there.

JOAN AND MUCH, AS ONE, MOVE THEIR SWORDS FROM TUCK TO GUARDS.

TUCK: Bravo. I say, what larks. (TAUNTS GUARDS, DANCING ROUND THEM) Right, tin pot soldiers, what d'you say to that. Not so brave now are you.

1st GUARD: Don't kill us... Well, don't kill me. Bump him (2nd GUARD) off if you want.

2nd GUARD: You rotten thing - I thought you were my friend.

1st GUARD: Sorry pal, it's every man for himself these days.

JOAN: (TO ROBIN) Should I dispatch the sniveling wretches?

ROBIN: They aren't worth it.

1st GUARD: Good point, well made.

2nd GUARD: We're absolutely worthless...

1st GUARD: Useless.

2nd GUARD: I'm as useless as a handkerchief to someone without a nose.

1st GUARD: I'm even more useless than that - I'm as useless as... as... something that's no use.

2nd GUARD: Is that all - why, I'm as useless as a pair of roller skates before they invented wheels. I'm as totally devoid of use as a bow without any string.

1st GUARD: I'm as useless as a unicorn without a horn.

2nd GUARD: If you must know a unicorn without a horn is very useful - it's called a horse actually - it can pull ploughs.

1st GUARD: (THINKS. SMUG) Not if it's dead, it can't - I'm as useful as a unicorn without a horn that's dead.

ROBIN: Go on - leave now, the pair of you, before you drive us all mad.

1st GUARD: Fair enough.

THEY LEAVE.

2nd GUARD: (AS HE EXITS) We're not really useless. (MAKES A GESTURE)

1st GUARD'S HAND IS SEEN TO GRAB 2nd GUARD AND YANK HIM OFF.

JOAN: Why let two of Gisborne's guards go free?

ROBIN: They're just his stooges, if they're the best he's got, we've got nothing to fear.

TUCK: There's no need to thank me for freeing you from Gisborne's men.

JOAN: That's big of you.

ROBIN: What's your name?

TUCK: They call me Friar Michael Tuck.

JOAN: I bet that's not all they call you.

TUCK: Look, I can't waste my time listening to you ruffians - I've got an important mission to complete. In fact you might be able to help me - I'll give you a groat... (ASIDE) If they believe that they'll believe anything.

ROBIN: What is this important mission?

TUCK: (LOOKS ABOUT. QUIET) I'm going a-looking for Robin Hood.

JOAN: Don't tell us you're interested in freedom and justice.

TUCK: Well, that's where you're wrong, you walking dumpling. I am interested in freedom and justice...

ROBIN: Bravo Friar.

TUCK: (CONTINUES) Freedom and justice FOR ME. There's a reward on the head of this Hood fellow - enough money to keep me in grub for many a year.

MUCH: (ASIDE) It must be a lot of money.

JOAN: (QUIET TO ROBIN) Should I see him off?

TUCK: (CONTINUES, BRANDISHING HIS SWORD) So, if you point me to this outlaw I will use my fearsome fighting skills, to chop him up and serve him up to Sir Guy. They don't call me Terrible Tuck for no reason. So show me where Hood is and I'll strut my stuff.

ROBIN: Pleased to meet you. (OFFERS HAND)

TUCK: Look, I've no time to spend being pleasant to you - just point me towards the varlet Hood.

JOAN AND MUCH POINT AT ROBIN, WHO POINTS AT HIMSELF.

TUCK: Very funny I must say.

ROBIN: They call me Robin Hood.

TUCK: Oh aye - they call me Little Jack Horner. Why, I tossed you in the river with my little finger.

ROBIN: I am Robin Hood.

TUCK TURNS AWAY, DISBELIEVING, THEN STOPS.

TUCK: (ASIDE) There is something familiar about him.

ROBIN: I can remind you when you saw me before... Remember when the Abbot was robbed?

TUCK: Good thing too - the Abbot didn't like me. He said I was greedy. Greedy, me! Not as greedy as him - used to get the money from the collection and keep it himself... I was pleased when you filched it. (IT DAWNS) It was you. You are Robin Hood, aren't you.

ROBIN: That's me.

TUCK: (ASIDE) Oh my Lord, me and my galloping gob.
(KNEELS AND PRAYS) Please God, don't let these outlaws do me in - if I come up to heaven I'll only eat you out of house and home. Give me inspiration... (PAUSE AS HE LISTENS FOR GOD'S ANSWER) Thanks.
(STANDS. TO ROBIN) Did I say I was going to capture you and claim a reward? Silly me, slip of the tongue. What I meant was I was going to join you. That my reward would be helping you fighting for freedom and justice.

JOAN: So Terrible Tuck, you can pledge your loyalty now.

TUCK: How do I know it's really him? Anyone could say they were Robin Hood. I might be Robin Hood come to that... I'd make a better Robin Hood than him.

JOAN: (RAISES SWORD AGAIN)

TUCK: Just joking. (SMARMY) Robin, pleased to meet you, my hero.

ROBIN: Relax Tuck, we don't force people to join us.

TUCK: You don't.

ROBIN: You're free to go.

TUCK STARTS TO MOVE, THEN HESITATES.

TUCK: Oh blow it - I'll join you. The best laugh I ever had when you robbed the Abbot. Did you really give the money to the poor?

ROBIN: Do I look as if I kept it?

TUCK: If you did, you certainly didn't spend it on clothes.
(TITTERS) Serves the Abbot right. He'd sit there, dressed in silk and gold, eating fine food - telling me I

should find salvation living in poverty. Pff, the old hypocrite - yes, I'll join you. Take me to your merry army.

ROBIN: (EMBARRASSED) Erm - this is it.

TUCK: What? I'm risking my life to fight with an urchin, a battle axe, and a walking bush!

ROBIN: Yes.

TUCK: (SHRUGS) Fair enough.

ROBIN: Let's get back to camp, make our plans and eat.

TUCK: Did somebody say 'eat' - take me there.

THEY EXIT.

GISBORNE'S CASTLE.

GISBORNE AND HIS TWO GUARDS DISCUSS PLANS. MAUDLIN IS STILL DISGUISED AS THE SERVING WOMAN, THE AUDIENCE KNOWS WHO SHE IS. MARION LISTENS BUT EFFECTS BEING DISINTERESTED.

GISBORNE: I don't know how I'm going to trap Robin Hood. It's alright for Prince John and the Sheriff to say 'Capture him'. Any fool can say 'Capture him'.

1st GUARD: 'Capture him.' 'Capture him.' You're right...

2nd GUARD: I've got a scheme.

GISBORNE: (CYNICAL) Go on - let's hear it then.

2nd GUARD: We'll dig a dirty great hole, cover it with sticks, and then Robin Hood will walk over it and crash, bang, wallop - in he goes. Simple really.

1st GUARD: That's a very good scheme that is. I could use my spade.
(PROUD) I've got a spade you know...

GISBORNE: (SARCASTIC) And how do you make sure he walks over
this trap - Sherwood Forest is the size of a county.

THEY THINK.

1st GUARD: I know - we make it a very big hole. As big as the whole
of Nottinghamshire.

2nd GUARD: That's a very good scheme... but supposing it's so big we
all fall in it.

THEY THINK. GISBORNE, BORED BY THIS TIME, IS
ADMIRING HIMSELF IN A MIRROR AND PLAYING
WITH HIS SPOTS.

1st GUARD: We'll have to put signs round it; 'Look out - there's a
socking great hole here to trap outlaws in.'

2nd GUARD: That's a very good scheme... but say Robin Hood reads
the sign.

1st GUARD: He wouldn't fall in the trap, would he...

GISBORNE: Look, you swede-heads, the only hole to be dug is one
I'm going to bury you in if you don't shut up.

1st GUARD: Thanks Sir Guy - do you want to use my spade?

GISBORNE: Shut up.

MAUDLIN: Do you mind if I make a suggestion?

GISBORNE: Yes, you old rag bag, I do mind, I mind very much. I mind
very very much. I'm a very grand and important
gentleman, with great issues to deliberate on. I can't
waste time listening to the meaningless tittle tattle of a
menial maid.

MAUDLIN: Of course. (SLY) If your lordship doesn't want to capture
Hood... (STARTS TO LEAVE)

GISBORNE: Go on then, crone - it might give us a laugh. Tell us - as long as it doesn't involve spades.

MAUDLIN: It involves swords and bows and arrows and lots of other lovely horrible weapons.

GISBORNE: Sounds like my kind of plan - as long as I don't have to fight him. (FOR MARION'S BENEFIT) Not that I'm a coward of course. Just want to save myself for a certain lady, want to make sure when I take her to the alter all my parts are present and in good working order.

MAUDLIN: D'you want to hear my plan or what?

GISBORNE: I've said 'yes'. I suppose you'd want a reward in the unlikely event of your plan working.

MAUDLIN: It would seem fair.

GISBORNE: You could have anything if it does. (ASIDE) Some hope.

MAUDLIN: Anything?

GISBORNE: Anything - as long as it doesn't cost more than a duckett.

MAUDLIN: All I want is to be left to live in peace.

GISBORNE: Your wish is granted old girl.

MAUDLIN: (CONTINUES) I want Sherwood Forest free of those noisy chattering creatures.

GISBORNE: Squirrels.

MAUDLIN: Children!

GISBORNE: And who would jib at that. Sounds like a socking good idea to me - we'll get rid of Robin Hood, then my men will be free to burn down the peasant's houses and starve them and their children out of Sherwood. So - what's the plan?

MAUDLIN CLOCKS MARION, THEN GOES INTO A
HUDDLE WITH GISBORNE AND TWO GUARDS.
MARION TRIES TO LISTEN.

MAUDLIN: (IN HUDDLE) Rhubarb, rhubarb, etc.

GISBORNE: Right - let us put our plan into action. Robin Hood and his
fellows will die.

GISBORNE AND 1st GUARD AND MAUDLIN LEAVE.

MARION: (TO 2nd GUARD) Excuse me.

2nd GUARD: Why, what have you done?

MARION: I couldn't quite hear what the plan was. What did she
say?

2nd GUARD: Oh, that's easy Lady Marion. She said 'Rhubarb, rhubarb,
rhubarb...' (LEAVES)

MARION: (TO AUDIENCE) Whatever plan Gisborne has, I must
warn Robin that something's afoot.

SHE EXITS.

THE FOREST.

MUCH SITS DEEP IN THOUGHT. ROBIN ENTERS.

ROBIN: A groat for your thoughts.

MUCH: They aren't worth a groat.

ROBIN: (SITS WITH HIM) Missing your dad?

MUCH: (NODS)

ROBIN: It's hard, isn't it, having to leave all the people you know - family and friends. I get lonely too.

MUCH: You?

ROBIN: If you and Joan hadn't come to Sherwood I don't think I'd have had the strength to carry on...

MUCH: I wonder if that's why the spirit brought me to Sherwood... (THINKS) Why did I say spirit?

ROBIN: The same spirit brought me here.

MUCH: Is it the Green Man... have you seen him?

ROBIN: No, but he's here alright... (MUCH LOOKS ABOUT) ...inside us. And in the trees, the wind, the river, the animals. We're all one.

MUCH: I'm not alone now, am I.

ROBIN: Neither am I.

JOAN ENTERS.

JOAN: One of Gisbourne's guards is coming.

MUCH: You hide, I'll see what he's up to. He won't suspect me.

ROBIN: Good lad - We'll be watching.

ROBIN AND JOAN HIDE. 1st GUARD ENTERS.

HE PROCEEDS TO NAIL A POSTER UP.

1st GUARD: Oh yes, oh yes - Grand Tournament at Nottingham Castle, big prizes. Come and display your skills at archery, swordery, and hitting each other with socking great sticks. All welcome. (ASIDE) Especially outlaws so we can chop them up into little pieces.

MUCH GOES OVER.

MUCH: What's all this then?

1st GUARD: Clear off, sonny.

MUCH: (READS POSTER) Grand Tournament. A bag of gold for the best bowman.

1st GUARD: You can read.

MUCH: Give him a cream bun... can't you?

1st GUARD: Clear off, sonny.

MUCH: What's it say then?

1st GUARD: (BLUFFS) Grand Tournament. A bag of gold.

MUCH: I've read that already. What's that say?

1st GUARD: It says you'll get a clip round the ear if you don't buzz off.

MUCH: I might want to join in the Tournament.

1st GUARD: What, playing conkers? Anyway, this is only open to a very particular person.

MUCH: Who's that then?

1st GUARD: You can't fool me that easily. I bet you think this is just a trick to trap Robin Hood. Well, it's not... so don't you say no different.

MUCH: I didn't.

1st GUARD: Well, don't.

MUCH: A trick to trap Robin...

1st GUARD: No - and don't tell Guy of Gisborne I didn't tell you.

GUARD EXITS.

MARION ARRIVES, HURRYING.

MARION: Ah, Much.

MUCH: Lady Marion.

MARION: Where's Robin, Gisborne is planning to trap him. The trouble is I don't know how.

MUCH: I do - one of Gisborne's gormless guards told me.

MARION: We must warn him.

ROBIN AND JOAN EMERGE FROM TREES, OBVIOUSLY HAVING HEARD.

MARION: Sir Guy is planning your capture.

ROBIN: We heard.

MARION: (RELIEVED) That's one trap we won't walk into then.

ROBIN: (LOOKING AT POSTER) I don't know - a tournament might be fun. Besides if I could win the prize we could do an awful lot of good with the money.

TUCK ENTERS, OUT OF BREATH, STRUGGLING TO KEEP UP WITH THE OTHERS.

JOAN: Oh look, it's Terrible Tuck.

MUCH: We're off to a Tournament, Friar.

TUCK: Will there be a guzzling contest - I'll enter that. Twenty pints of ale, twenty pasties, twenty pancakes and twenty pies.

Yummo - let's go.

RAVEN APPEARS.

ROBIN: Do you ever have a feeling you're being spied on?

(TO AUDIENCE) Can anybody see someone watching us?

THEY LOOK ABOUT.

TUCK: You're all mad. There's no one spying on us - except that mangy raven. Frightened of birds are you?

MAUDLIN: (AS RAVEN. ASIDE) I'll give them good cause to be frightened of me.

ROBIN: There's no point us all going to the tournament and risked being captured.

JOAN & MUCH & MARION: (TOGETHER) I'll go.

ROBIN: I've got to do it - you came to Sherwood because you believed in me. I owe it to you.

MARION: I'll go with you then - I might find what Gisbourne's plan is and be able to warn you.

JOAN: I'm going if she is.

MUCH: I'm coming too then.

TUCK: I might as well come.

JOAN: A sudden attack of bravery, Tuck.

TUCK: Yes - besides there'll be some good nosh, if it's a decent tournament.

MARION: If we're all going to take the risk, we should go in disguise.

JOAN: Not a bad idea - put a sheet over your head Tuck - you could go as a tent.

ROBIN: Come on then, let's get to Nottingham.

THEY EXIT. RAVEN APPEARS.

MAUDLIN: (AS RAVEN) Stupid, arrogant people - they wouldn't be warned by the traitor, Maid Marion. Walking straight into the trap I've laid. Sir Guy is sure to reward me very well for this. Sherwood will be do-gooder free, child-free. All this, all for me. Now I must tell him that Hood is on his way, so the trap can be sprung.

RAVEN FLIES.

THE SPIRIT OF THE GREEN MAN FILLS THE SCENE.

GREEN MAN: (V.O.) All quiet in the Forest now... evil has left - for the time being. But evil is set on ruling this green place, banishing the people of the forest for ever. So soon you will be invited to a tournament - but the true tournament, the real battle between good and evil, right and wrong will be contested before your eyes before this day is out.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

TOURNAMENT.

OUTLAWS HIDE BEHIND TREE AND OCCASIONALLY LOOK OUT. MARION ENTERS, APPREHENSIVE. SHE LOOKS ABOUT FOR OUTLAWS. TWO GUARDS ENTER.

1st GUARD: Roll up, roll up - come to the Grand Tournament.

2nd GUARD: (TO AUDIENCE) Before the serious business of catching outlaws - I mean, of the archery competition, we are having our traditional country contests.

1st GUARD: Come on Maurice, let's get the props.

2nd GUARD: Alright, Boris.

GUARDS EXIT. ROBIN, JOAN, TUCK AND MUCH
EMERGE FROM BEHIND TREE. MARION SEES THEM,
SHE CARRIES A BAG TO THEM.

MARION: There you are. Here are your disguises. (HANDS BAG
OVER)

OUTLAWS, BACKS TO AUDIENCE, PUT DISGUISES
ON - BEARD AND SPECS. THEY TURN TO
AUDIENCE.

ROBIN: No one will recognize us now.

MARION: Now mingle with the crowds - it's the Country Contests
before the archery. Quick, they're (THE GUARDS)
coming back.

OUTLAWS GO TO AUDIENCE. JOAN AND TUCK TO
ONE SIDE. ROBIN AND MUCH TO OTHER, AS:
GUARDS RETURN CARRYING TWO BOG SEATS.

1st GUARD: Now, kind Guy of Gisborne (SPITS) is offering a small,
very small, nay infinitesimal, prize to the winners of the
Country Contests. (ASIDE) Then you'll all think he's
wonderful, won't you!

2nd GUARD: (TO OUTLAWS) You, you surly Saxons, bringeth me
some volunteers.

OUTLAWS BRING ON TWO TEAMS OF THREE.

2nd GUARD: That team will be namethed the Guzzlers. (JOAN'S
TEAM)

1st GUARD: And that team will be namethed the Gobblers. (ROBIN'S
TEAM)

2nd GUARD: And the judge of the competition is Lady Marion.

1st GUARD: A fairer judge you wouldn't find.

2nd GUARD: No - she's a very fair judge.

1st GUARD: She's a very very fair judge - if I'm any judge.

MARION: (CUTS IN) What's the first game?

1st GUARD: The first contest is - Gurning.

OUTLAWS: Yer what?

1st GUARD: Gurning.

2nd GUARD: Pulling ugly faces.

MUCH: You should know all about that.

ROBIN: (TO GUARDS) We don't understand.

1st GUARD: You're as dim as a snuffed out candle.

2nd GUARD: Gurning is easy.

THEY DEMONSTRATE - UGLY FACES THROUGH
BOG SEATS.

MARION: First let's see the Guzzlers Gurn.

GUZZLERS GURN.

MARION: Now Gobblers, you Gurn.

GOBBLERS GURN.

MARION: It's very difficult... (TO AUDIENCE) Perhaps you could help me. If it's this lot (ONE TEAM) say 'Urrgh', or 'Cor blimey, they'll crack the mirror' if it's this lot. And the winner is - the Guzzlers.

1st GUARD: Right, the next contest is - Pass The Turnip.

ROBIN: How do you play it?

2nd GUARD: Dolt.

1st GUARD: We'll show you.

1st AND 2nd GUARD DEMONSTRATE.

2nd GUARD: Pass it along the team - without using your hands.

1st GUARD: If you drop it, you're disqualified.

2nd GUARD: So let's - Pass The Turnip.

CONTEST ENSUES. TUCK EATS TURNIP,
UNBEKNOWN TO OTHERS.

JOAN: Where's our turnip?

TUCK: Some fiend's scoffed it.

JOAN: You! You great greedy effort.

MARION: The Guzzlers have guzzled the turnip, therefore the
winners are the Gobblers.

1st GUARD: And the next contest is - 'Knock over the nitwit'.

JOAN: Easy. (SHE KNOCKS GUARD OVER)

1st GUARD: Not me - those.

2nd GUARD BRINGS ON TWO LARGE HEAD SHAPES
(FACES AWAY FROM AUDIENCE). WHEN TURNED
ROUND ONE IS MAUDLIN AND ONE IS GISBORNE.
THEY ARE ON STANDS, THE AIM BEING TO KNOCK
THEM OVER BY THROWING SPONGES AT THEM.
2nd GUARD TURNS FACES TOWARDS AUDIENCE.

2nd GUARD: The two ugliest mugs in Sherwood.

1st GUARD: So, come on teams, which will be first to - knock over the
nitwit.

MARION: (TO GUARDS) You two nitwits better keep the score.

2nd GUARD: Let the contest begin.

BEAN BAG THROWING BEGINS.

MARION: And the winners are - the Guzzlers.

2nd GUARD: Right, the final contest before the archery is - Faffing the Feather.

1st GUARD PRODUCES TWO FEATHERS.

1st GUARD: The first team to blow their genuine Nottingham Goose Feather, straight from Old Farmer Bernard Matthews farm, into that motley crew (THE AUDIENCE) is the winner.

2nd GUARD: Ready, steady, blow!

THE VOLUNTEERS BLOW FEATHERS. OUTLAWS ENCOURAGE TEAMS AND AUDIENCE.

END OF GAME.

MARION: And the Bernard Matthews award for Feather Faffing goes to the Gobblers.

1st GUARD: And so ends our Country Contests.

2nd GUARD: Pray welcome kind Sir Guy who will give you your paltry prizes.

TO A FAN FARE, GISBORNE ENTERS. HE PRODUCES SOME PARTICULARLY PATHETIC PRIZES WHICH THE TEAMS RECEIVE CUP FINAL FASHION.

MARION: (TO AUDIENCE) A big hand for our wonderful volunteers.

VOLUNTEERS USHERED OFF.

MARION MOVES TO OUTLAWS. MAUDLIN ENTERS, WARILY.

MAUDLIN: Have those little monsters gone? (SEES KIDS HAVE) I hate children.

GOES TO STAND BY GISBORNE.

MARION: (TO ROBIN) I'll try to hear what Gisborne's planning.

ROBIN: Be careful, Marion.

MARION: And you.

MARION MOVES TO NEAR GISBORNE AND MAUDLIN.

ROBIN: (QUIETLY TO JOAN, MUCH, AND TUCK) I'll stand a better chance of escaping if I'm on my own.

JOAN: You're saying you don't need us.

ROBIN: You've proved your bravery by coming with me, but even four of us won't stand a chance against Gisborne's army - you leave now. I'll slip away after the archery, they won't suspect a poor old pathetic begger like me.

MUCH: (ABOUT TO PROTEST) Let us stay...

JOAN: Robin's right...

TUCK: Scared are you.

JOAN: You stay then Tuck.

TUCK: No... I'll escort you two back to the forest.

JOAN: (SARCASTIC) How kind.

GISBORNE: (GRANDLY) So, let the competition to find Britain's best bowman commence.

JOAN, TUCK AND MUCH LEAVE.

GISBORNE: Lady Marion - come and sit by me.

MARION HESITATES, THEN DOES SO.

GISBORNE: You seem to be rather nervous, my dear.

MARION: It's just the excitement of this grand tournament.

GISBORNE: (OILY, PATS HER HAND) You stay by me, my dear.
There'll be more excitement to come.

2nd GUARD COMES OVER TO GISBORNE.

2nd GUARD: Ain't seen no signs of that there Robin Hood, sire.

GISBORNE: Shush.

MARION: Surely Robin Hood wouldn't come here.

GISBORNE: That's what I thought, come to think of it. Stupid idea. As if he would just walk into my castle courtyard.

MAUDLIN: He'll be wearing a disguise.

GISBORNE: That's what I thought. What a good idea. (SNAPS AT 2nd GUARD) He'll be wearing a disguise.

2nd GUARD: What a good idea. (GOES TO LEAVE) I'll go and capture him then. (HESITATES) What will he be disguised as?

GISBORNE: Dolt...

2nd GUARD: Disguised as a dolt?

GISBORNE: (TO MAUDLIN) What will he be disguised as?

MAUDLIN: I don't know.

GISBORNE: Dolt.

MAUDLIN: But I know he's said to be the best bow man in Nottingham - whoever wins the archery - that will be Robin Hood.

GISBORNE: What a good idea. (CALLS) Let the archery contest begin.

MARION GETS UP TO LEAVE. BUT GISBORNE CLASPS HER HAND.

GISBORNE: Going somewhere my lady?

MARION: It's the excitement - I need to... (WHISPERS SOMETHING IN HIS EAR)

GISBORNE: You should have gone during the interval like the rest of them (THE AUDIENCE) - least I hope they went... Bring on the Archers...

THE ARCHERS ENTER, MASKED IN SOME WAY AS KNIGHTS, GUARDS, OR WHATEVER, AND ONE OLD HOODED BEGGER. (OPTIONAL - SOMEONE CAN SING 'ARCHERS' MUSIC!)

GISBORNE: Set up the target.

GUARDS PICK UP TARGET.

1st GUARD: I'm not holding the target this time.

2nd GUARD: I'm not.

1st GUARD: It's your turn - they still haven't got the arrow head out of my brain from last time.

GISBORNE: Get on with it.

2nd GUARD LEFT WITH TARGET. GOES TO AUDIENCE.

1st GUARD: Step forward our first challenger - Dead Eye Dick from Didsbury.

DICK COMES FORWARD AGGRESSIVELY, TAKES AIM, AND FIRES. ONLOOKERS WATCH ARROW DISAPPEAR INTO HEAVENS. BIRD SQUAWKS AND LANDS ON STAGE.

GISBORNE: What a dead duck.

2nd GUARD: Step forward our next challenger - Limp Hand Luke from Levenshulme.

LUKE GOES THROUGH GREAT PREPARATIONS AND FIRES - THE ARROW DROPS IN FRONT OF HIM.

1st GUARD: And Limp Hand Luke will be very disappointed - no holidays in Bali or helping starving children for you this year, Luke.

GISBORNE: Look at them - my best bowmen. What a shambles, what a rabble.

IT'S THE BEGGER'S (ROBIN'S) TURN TO FIRE.

GISBORNE: And look at this scruffy article - he makes the Horrible Hermit of Handforth look like the smartest man around - Basil of Blackley, a man who's so smart he puts face powder on his bottom.

1st GUARD: He's got a cheek.

2nd GUARD: Nah, he's cracked.

ROBIN TAKES AIM AND SHOOTS AN ARROW.
(THERE MIGHT BE THE '50s ROBIN HOOD THEME MUSIC.) A TWANG. THE CROWD GASP.

1st GUARD: One hundred and eighty. Bullseye. (DISPLAYS)

GISBORNE: A lucky shot.

ROBIN: (DISGUISED VOICE) Should I do it again, sire?

GISBORNE: Do it again and you can be a General in my army.

ROBIN REPEATS PROCESS - ALL LOSE SIGHT OF ARROW.

1st GUARD: Missed.

2nd GUARD: Cor, look - the second arrow split the first.

ROBIN: (GOES TO GISBORNE) My gold, sire?

GISBORNE: Well done. (HANDS MONEY OVER) How about joining my army, oh scruffy one? There'll be alot more gold for you if you can split Robin Hood from stem to stern with one of your arrows - and a jolly nice uniform too.

MAUDLIN: (WHISPERS IN GISBORNE'S EAR) You great jam tart - it is Robin Hood.

GISBORNE: What... arrrgh... don't shoot Robin.

MAUDLIN: (SHOUTS) Seize the begger - it's Robin Hood.

BEFORE ROBIN CAN RESPOND, ALL OF THE MASKED ARCHERS HAVE SWORDS, ARROWS, LANCES DIRECTED AT HIM. THERE IS NO ESCAPE.

GISBORNE: So Robin Hood - I, me, the great bold Guy of Gisborne have captured you.

REMOVES ROBIN'S DISGUISE BEARD.

GISBORNE: Take the loathesome coward to the dungeon.

MARION: What will become of him Sir Guy?

GISBORNE: He will hang in the morning. Hang.

Take him away.

DRUMS BEAT. ROBIN TAKEN TO DUNGEON.
ALL EXIT.

THE DUNGEON.

ROBIN ALONE.

ROBIN: Now I really know what being alone is.

No friends, not even the spirit of the Green Man would visit this evil place. (SELF MOCKING) Me - the great hero! The legendary Robin Hood... What use am I to people now?

WE BECOME AWARE OF THE PRESENCE OF THE GREEN MAN. GREEN MAN THEME PLAYS.

GREEN MAN: (V.O.) You aren't alone, Robin - just as my spirit is with you, so your spirit fills the hearts of your friends...

GREEN MAN GOES.

ROBIN: Help me! (DEFEATED) Help me...

DIM LIGHTS ON ROBIN.

BRING UP LIGHTS ON GALLOWS WHICH 1st AND 2nd GUARDS HAVE NEARLY FINISHED BUILDING.

1st GUARD: I always was good at woodwork at school - I made a lovely set of stocks once.

2nd GUARD: Have you ever made gallows before.

1st GUARD: Na - no gallows.

2nd GUARD: How d'you know they'll work?

1st GUARD: Because I'm an expert. (BANGS HIS THUMB WITH HAMMER) Hold this nail while I knock it in.

2nd GUARD CRINGES, HOLDING NAIL. HE YELPS AS 1st GUARD STRIKES EACH BLOW.

2nd GUARD: You can't even knock a nail in straight. I bet the gallows won't work.

1st GUARD: Course they will.

2nd GUARD: If they don't, old Gisborne will have your guts for garters.

1st GUARD: We better test them then.

2nd GUARD: How?

1st GUARD: (THINKS) I know - you pretend you're Robin Hood and I'll be the hangman.

2nd GUARD: Great - me, Robin Hood. I always wanted to be a hero.

(ABOUT TO GO TO GALLOWS, SEES NOOSE, HESITATES) Na - I'll take your word for it.

1st GUARD: Come on - let's get some sleep. We've got to get up early in the morning for the execution.

THEY SETTLE DOWN TO SLEEP.

2nd GUARD: (MUSES) I like a nice execution - I hope they have a good juggler on first.

1st GUARD: Bet he's (ROBIN) not looking forward to it.

2nd GUARD: No, poor blighter.

RAVEN APPEARS.

MAUDLIN: (AS RAVEN. TO AUDIENCE) So Robin Hood will be gone forever by this time tomorrow. Then I will let Gisborne know where Hood's rag taggle army is camped so they can be finished off. And I can live in a Sherwood Forest where no children play and the only sound will be the occasional huntsmen slaughtering some useless stag or pheasant. Nobody can stop me now. Hood is as good as dead. (SHE CACKLES)

MARION ENTERS HEADING CAUTIOUSLY TOWARDS ROBIN'S PRISON CELL. SHE CREEPS PAST THE GUARDS AND DOESN'T NOTICE THE RAVEN.

MARION: (WHISPERS) Robin...

ROBIN: Marion - is that you? At least we've got the chance to say goodbye.

MARION: The only 'good-bye' you'll say is to this place. I've come to help you escape... where do they keep the keys?

ROBIN: I think one of the guards has them.

MARION GOES TO SLEEPING GUARDS.

ROBIN: Be careful.

MARION QUIETLY FUMBLES TO GET THE KEYS OFF THE 1st GUARD'S BELT - THERE'S LOTS OF SNORING, SLEEP-TALKING, ETC. FROM GUARDS. SOMETHING ALONG THE LINES THAT 1st GUARD THINKS 2nd IS TRYING TO STEAL HIS BREECHES. MARION HAS KEYS. RAVEN LOUDLY SQUAWKS MAKING HER AND EVERYONE ELSE JUMP - EXCEPT THE GUARDS.

ROBIN: (HISSES) Shut up Raven - I'll buy you a big bag of bird seed. A nice new cuttlefish... and one of those little wobbly men for you to peck at.

MAUDLIN: (AS RAVEN) Stow it. (SQUAWKS LOUDER)

MARION DESPERATELY UNLOCKS THE DOOR.

ROBIN: Come on, let's get away from here - there'll be an army after us.

MARION: I'll stay - I need to find out what Gisborne will do now.

THEY KISS.

MAUDLIN (V.O.): (AS RAVEN. SCREECHES) He's escaping, he's escaping.

GISBORNE ENTERS WITH OTHER MASKED GUARDS. BOOTS 1st AND 2nd GUARD INTO ACTION. ROBIN GRABS SLEEPING GUARD'S SWORD, AND USING MORE AGILITY THAN BRUTE STRENGTH, AVOIDS CAPTURE AND ESCAPES.

GISBORNE: Lady Marion.

MARION THINKS SHE'S FOUND OUT.

GISBORNE: Did the ruffian harm you?

MARION: Harm me... (REALISING HE DOESN'T SUSPECT HER)
Oh, no - you saved me Sir Guy.

GISBORNE: Did I? (PROUD) I did, didn't I. What a fine fellow I am. I must make sure the Town Cryer hears of this, and he can make sure the whole of Nottingham does. A fine fellow indeed I am.

NOTICES THE SHEEPISH 1st AND 2nd GUARDS.

GISBORNE: You fools. You let him escape. I will have you flogged.

1st & 2nd GUARD: Oh 'eck.

MARION: Be merciful, good Sir Guy - not all your men can be as brave and quick witted as you.

GISBORNE: That's true.

1st GUARD: That's true, Sir Guy.

2nd GUARD: You're very very brave, and quick witted.

1st GUARD: And merciful.

GISBORNE: Thank the good Lady Marion for your lives, you idiots.

1st GUARD: On behalf of two idiots, Lady Marion, thank you very much.

2nd GUARD: Thank you very very much.

MAUDLIN (V.O.): (AS RAVEN) The only person who should be grateful to 'good Lady Marion' is - Robin Hood...

GISBORNE: What do you know? And another thing... you're a bird! Am I dreaming. Pinch me. (THEY DO) Harder! (THEY DO) Not that hard. (BOOTS GUARDS) Perhaps this is a bad dream. Maybe Hood hasn't escaped. Silly me - a talking bird!

1st GUARD: Should I bump it off?

GISBORNE: What?

1st GUARD: The talking bird.

GISBORNE: Arrgh. The bird is talking. Am I going mad?

2nd GUARD: We could have Raven pie for supper.

GISBORNE: (ALMOST WAILING) How can you think of pies at a time like this - Hood's escaped, Prince John will hang me, a bird is talking and I am going mad! (STARTS TO GIBBER AND SUCKS HIS THUMB)

THERE IS A FLASH, RAVEN DISAPPEARS, MAUDLIN APPEARS IN FULL WITCH REGALIA IN THE SAME INSTANT.

MAUDLIN: Fools - who do you think raised the alarm?

MARION: Mother Maudlin.

MAUDLIN: (SLY, TRIUMPHANT) And who do you think stole the keys from the sleeping dullards - it was her - Lady Marion.

GISBORNE: Marion - how could you betray a quick witted, brave, merciful man like me? I was even going to offer to marry you.

MARION: Ha! Marry you, you cruel, vicious, pompous, bullying, grasping, greedy tyrant.

GISBORNE: No one's perfect.

MARION: No woman would marry you. You are evil.

GISBORNE: Yes, they would.

MARION: No they wouldn't.
(CONTINUE WITH AUDIENCE - GISBORNE
PREENING AND PROFESSING TO VIRTUES -
PROPOSING TO ONE OR TWO LUCKY PEOPLE)

MARION: You are evil - EVIL.

GISBORNE: It's a fair cop. You are quite right - I am evil. And just to prove it, and so as not to disappoint the citizens of Nottingham there *will* be a public hanging in Nottingham in the morning - yours.

MAUDLIN GOES TO LEAVE.

GISBORNE: Where are you going, Mother Maudlin? I thought you'd like a nice hanging.

MAUDLIN: A nice double hanging would be better. I'm going to tell Robin Hood that Marion is in the dungeon.

GISBORNE: Traitor!

MAUDLIN: Wazzock. I'm telling him so he'll come to rescue her.

1st & 2nd GUARD: Traitor!

MAUDLIN: (GIVES THEM A LOOK - 'GIVE ME STRENGTH' - EXPLAINS) Use her as a hostage. So he can be recaptured - if you can manage that...

GISBORNE: Good plan.

1st & 2nd GUARD: A very very good plan.

GISBORNE: Get her locked up.

GUARDS TAKE MARION OFF, GISBORNE GOES TO FOLLOW.

GISBORNE: (LOOKS AT GALLOWS) Next time Hood, the treacherous Marion, and all their motley followers will swing from those gallows. A warning to all who challenge my power and authority.

HE EXITS.

THE FOREST.

FRIAR TUCK WATCHES MUCH AND JOAN FIGHT WITH QUARTER STAFFS.
WE ASSUME THE CONTEST IS FOR REAL. BOTH DISPLAY A LOT OF SKILL.

TUCK: (RECLINING, GNAWING A CHICKEN LEG) For heaven's sake stop that click clicking with those sticks - how am I expected to get any sleep.

MUCH: We've got to train so that we are ready to fight Gisborne.

TUCK: Boring! Why not just sit and lounge about here.

JOAN: Because some one has to fight to free the forest - we might have to go to free Robin...

MUCH: I hope he's alright.

TUCK: If you ask me Robin's done a bunk. I bet he's won the dosh and gone back to being a noble man. I bet he's lying on a soft couch, with Maid Marilyn...

JOAN: Marion.

TUCK: With *two* women, munching a great big chicken leg - while we suffer.

JOAN: You don't seem to be doing much suffering, Tuck. A bit of indigestion, perhaps...

TUCK: Just because I don't moan and complain it doesn't mean I don't suffer. (RAMBLES) I know the pain that only an unfrocked cleric knows. I'm a martyr to it.

JOAN AND MUCH IGNORE TUCK.

JOAN: We should have heard something from Robin by now.

MUCH: Do you think he's been captured?

JOAN: If he has, we'll have to rescue him, it's as simple as that.

TUCK: What - you two against all of Gisborne's army.

JOAN: We *three*. (COUNTS, INCLUDING TUCK)

TUCK: I'll stay here, and er, guard the place. Yes, that's it, I'll guard the food.

JOAN: That settles it - you're coming... Unless you're frightened.
TUCK: Me! Moi! Terrible Tuck terrified. Tosh, twaddle, tittle tattle and tripe... speaking of which, could we have a feed before we go?

JOAN: No - there's no time.

TUCK: Oh alright - but don't blame me if my stomach rumbles so loud Gisborne hears us coming.

AMPLIFIED STOMACH RUMBLINGS.

MUCH: What was that?

TUCK: Her (JOAN'S) stomach.

JOAN ELBOWS TUCK IN HIS.

MUCH: Not old rumble guts - listen.

WE HEAR A DISTANT HORN.

TUCK: That was definitely not me - I hope.

JOAN RETURNS THE CALL. THE DISTANT HORN
BLOWS AGAIN, BUT NEARER.

MUCH: It's Robin.

THEY MOVE TOWARDS THE SOUND, ROBIN
ENTERS.

MUCH: You're safe.

TUCK: I knew you'd be back, Robin - not like these doubters -
said you'd be lapping up the life of luxury they did...
Did you win the gold, old friend?

ROBIN: Yes.

TUCK: Let's see it then, er, mate, chum, pal, brother... so we can
help the peasants of course.

ROBIN: I haven't got it.

TUCK: You twister. You won the prize and spent it. Typical. I bet
you stuffed yourself with scran.

JOAN: (TO TUCK) Give your mouth a rest and let your brain
have a chance.

TUCK: (SULKY) Twister.

JOAN: So what happened?

ROBIN: Gisborne kindly gave me a bed for the night...

TUCK: I knew it...

ROBIN: ...in his dungeon.

TUCK: What was the food like?

ROBIN: (CONTINUES) Marion helped me escape.

JOAN: We told you it wasn't safe.

ROBIN: It should have been safe enough - Gisborne and his men are so stupid. No - there's a greater intelligence at work, and a greater evil.

MUCH: There can't be anyone worse than Gisborne.

ROBIN: There is someone...

JOAN: Mother Maudlin?

MUCH: Can't we do something about her.

ROBIN: It would be easy if we knew what she looked like...

JOAN: Is Marion safe?

ROBIN: As safe as she can be under Gisborne's gaze I suppose.

MAUDLIN ARRIVES IN THE GUISE OF A GIRL. SHE IS DISTRESSED.

MAUDLIN: (AS GIRL) Oh please help me - my dear friend is a prisoner of Sir Guy of Gisborne.

ROBIN: Who is it?

MAUDLIN: Lady Marion Fitzwalter.

ROBIN: Marion?

MAUDLIN: It makes me so sad to hear her name mentioned - a sweeter person never lived. You must do something - she is to be executed.

JOAN: They wouldn't hang Marion.

MAUDLIN: The town cryer has already announced it.

ROBIN: Come on, we must hurry to Nottingham.

THEY START TO LEAVE.

ROBIN: (TO MAUDLIN) How can we thank you.

MAUDLIN: I don't need thanks - I just want to see Lady Marion free.
That will be my reward.

JOAN AND TUCK EXIT. MUCH GOES TO FOLLOW.

ROBIN: Much, you stay here.

MUCH: Why?

ROBIN: It's dangerous... too dangerous for a child.

MUCH: Aw, Robin...

ROBIN: The time will come for you to have your own adventures.

MUCH: I want to come to rescue Lady Marion.

ROBIN: If you were caught it might put the rest of us at risk.

MUCH SITS, DEJECTED.

ROBIN: We'll be back soon.

ROBIN EXITS. MAUDLIN GOES TO MUCH.

MAUDLIN: They are real heroes.

MUCH: I'm supposed to be one of them, but I'm not much of a hero sitting here.

MAUDLIN: Don't you see what Robin is doing by asking you to stay?

MUCH LOOKS.

MAUDLIN: He's testing you - testing your bravery.

MUCH: How?

MAUDLIN: Robin wants to see if you'll just sit here, all safe and sound - or be the brave boy I know you really are.

MUCH: Do you think so?

MAUDLIN: (ALMOST SEDUCTIVE) You are Much, son of the Miller aren't you? I've heard of your bravery - your battles with wixcked witches and Gisborne's guards. Robin needs such bravery at his side. Besides - you could avenge the death of your father if you went. Teach that tyrant Gisborne a lesson. I'm sure your father would have been proud of you... I would too.

MUCH PONDERES, THEN DECIDES.

MUCH: I must go, to help rescue Marion - and to gain revenge.
(GOES TO LEAVE)

MAUDLIN: Brave boy. Good fortune.

SHE KISSES MUCH. FLATTERED, HE GOES. AS SOON AS HE'S GONE, MAUDLIN REMOVES HER DISGUISE.

MAUDLIN: (LAUGHS) That's got rid of the sprog. Now ALL of the outlaws are doomed. I must go to warn Gisborne that Hood is on his way.

MAUDLIN TRANSFORMS INTO THE RAVEN.

MAUDLIN: (AS RAVEN) I will arrive before them -traveling as the Raven flies of course.

MAUDLIN EXITS.

THE CASTLE.

1st AND 2nd GUARD ENTER CARRYING A LARGE FISHING NET AND OTHER BITS OF CLUTTER. LOTS OF BUSINESS AS THEY GET TANGLED, ETC.

2nd GUARD: Can't see the point of this.

1st GUARD: That's because you're as dim as a snuffed out candle.

2nd GUARD: How can we catch fish on dry land?

1st GUARD: We're after one big fish. This is my grand plan - this will get us back in Sir Guy's good books - after you let Hood go.

2nd GUARD: Me! You fell asleep too.

1st GUARD: Just get the net sorted and stop arguing. I'll get the rope.

1st GUARD GOES OFF. 2nd GUARD SORTS NET, POSSIBLY SINGING, 'ONCE I CAUGHT A FISH ALIVE'. 1st GUARD RETURNS.

1st GUARD: The point is, if we can catch Robin Hood we'll be heroes. We might even be made Barons or Knights.

2nd GUARD: Aw, brilliant - I'd love to be a knight, riding round in a tin suit, poking peasants with a big stick... But how?

1st GUARD: See how my self-regulating sproket lowers the ropes.

FOUR ROPES ARE LOWERED DOWN.

1st GUARD: Now connect up the net to the ropes.

THEY DO SO.

2nd GUARD: Blimey - and I always thought you were a dullard.

1st GUARD: (PREENS) I'm as bright as a candle... (THINKS) that hain't been snuffed out.

NET CONNECTED, 1st GUARD GOES TO LEAVE.

1st GUARD: Now while I'm winching up the net, you dig a socking great hole. (HANDS HIM PNEUMATIC DRILL)

2nd GUARD: Oh, right.

1st GUARD OFF. NET UP. 2nd GUARD STARTS DRILLING. 1st GUARD RETURNS.

1st GUARD: (BAWLS) Right. Stop now.

2nd GUARD DRILLS ON. 1st GUARD BOOTS HIM AND SWITCHES DRILL OFF. 2nd GUARD KEEPS VIBRATING. 1st GUARD TRIES TO HOLD HIM STILL, AND STARTS VIBRATING TOO. THEY SLOWLY STOP SHAKING, OCCASIONALLY BURSTING INTO ACTION AGAIN. WHEN FINALLY...

1st GUARD: Right, when Hood treads on it - Bob's your uncle.

2nd GUARD: I've not got an Uncle Bob. I've got an Uncle Cedric... he's married to me Auntie Molly... who's the sister of Matthew the mangle worsel worrier...

1st GUARD: Maurice.

2nd GUARD: Yes, Boris.

1st GUARD: Button it.

2nd GUARD: Yes, Boris.

1st GUARD: Good.

2nd GUARD: Boris?

1st GUARD: Yes, Maurice.

2nd GUARD: How does it work?

1st GUARD: We cover the hole.

2nd GUARD: That's a good idea.

1st GUARD: The baddy steps on that hidden lever.

2nd GUARD: That's a good idea.

1st GUARD: That operates a rod, that operates a ratchet, that operates a gromet, that operates a catch, that operates a release, that operates the net...

2nd GUARD: Are you sure this is a good idea?

1st GUARD: (CONTINUES) ...the net falls, and Robin Hood will be done up like a kipper.

2nd GUARD: Kipper? So we are fishing after all?

1st GUARD: Stop going on about fish - you great prawn.

2nd GUARD: A prawn is a type of fish actually.

AS THEY LEAVE.

1st GUARD: It's a crustacean actually.

THEY EXIT.

LIGHTS UP ON DUNGEON, WHERE MARION WAITS.

MARION: Morning will bring the last sunrise that I'll see. I won't see those I love again... or walk in the greenwood, or sit by sparkling streams, or be woken by a chorus of woodland birds, or hear children laugh. Or see the man I love. I'm afraid... but at least it's not for nothing if Robin can just galvanise the others...

GISBORNE ENTERS.

GISBORNE: Ah, Lady Marion - thought I'd find you here!

MARION: What do you want?

GISBORNE: I've come to offer you the chance of Salvation...

MARION: Oh yes...

GISBORNE: You probably wonder why I should spend my valuable time with a convicted traitor.

MARION: Not really.

GISBORNE: I can save you... just agree to be my wife.

MARION: Ha.

GISBORNE: (PERSERVERES) And I will pardon you.

MARION: I'd rather marry a slug.

GISBORNE: Oh I know the games you little ladies play -just playing hard to get.

MARION: I loathe you.

GISBORNE: There you go again, you little tease.

MARION: I'd rather have tooth-ache, ear-ache, and belly-ache than spend a minute with you.

GISBORNE: You're obviously distressed, muzzy headed, dear girl. I know it's a big decision, over-awing, that such a grand man should offer himself. I'll give you time to think it over - you've got 15 minutes.

MARION: I've thought it over - NO. No, no, no, no, no.

GISBORNE: Don't beat about the bush - give it to me straight.

MARION: Go.

GISBORNE: Go!

MARION: Get out of my sight - forever.

GISBORNE: Oh you'll be seeing me again - in fifteen minutes to be precise - when you die.

WE HEAR RAVEN CALL, A FLUTTER OF WINGS.
MAUDLIN ENTERS.

MAUDLIN: The trap is set, Gisborne - Hood and his followers are on their way.

MARION: You'll never take them alive.

MAUDLIN: We'll take them dead then. (CACKLES)

GISBORNE: (CALLS) Guard commanders.

A NUMBER OF MASKED GUARD COMMANDERS
ENTER.

GISBORNE: If Hood and his man aren't swinging from the gallows by the end of this day - you will be. (BARKS ORDERS) You - take your men to the North Gate, you - the South, you - the Tower Gate. (ETC)

AS THEY START TO LEAVE.

GISBORNE: But remember - let Hood into the castle - don't frighten him off. We'll trap him here, in the dungeon.

GUARD COMMANDERS EXIT FOLLOWED BY
GISBORNE.

GISBORNE: (TO MAUDLIN) I suppose you'll watch events from a nice, safe perch. (RATHER PLEASED WITH THIS JOKE) You'd be raven mad not to. (EVEN MORE PLEASED)

MAUDLIN: How would you like to be a slug?

MARION: It would be an improvement.

GISBORNE: (BRIGHTENS) Would you marry me if I was?

MARION: I'd tread on you and feed you to the toads.

GISBORNE: (DECIDES TO LEAVE) Ah well, enough of this banter, pleasant though it is. I must put on my finery before my very important guests arrive. Prince John and the Sheriff are going to be very very pleased with me I dare say.

GISBORNE EXITS.

MAUDLIN: (TO MARION. SARCASTIC) Cheer up - you'll soon be reunited with your dear, sweet Robin.

MAUDLIN GOES TO LEAVE.

MARION: Gloat as much as you want. Even if this sordid plan works, you won't be able to suppress all the people.

MAUDLIN: We shall see

MARION: Yes, we will.

MAUDLIN CACKLES AND LEAVES.

THE FOREST.

MUCH WALKS ON HIS OWN.

MUCH: I've got to get to the castle. I must help rescue Marion.
Not far to go now.

PRINCE JOHN AND THE SHERIFF ENTER. THEY
DON'T SEE MUCH, WHO HIDES, IN VIEW OF THE
AUDIENCE.

PRINCE JOHN: Ah well, Nottingham - we'll soon see whether Gisborne has captured Hood and his outlaws.

SHERIFF: Gisborne is an idiot, Your Highness.

PRINCE JOHN: You don't seem to have done very well in putting a stop to the outlaws' activities.

SHERIFF: Bad luck that's all. Besides, I delegated the job to Gisborne.

PRINCE JOHN: Let's hope he's succeeded. I'm absolutely dying to see a nice hanging.

SHERIFF: Very humorous, my liege.

PRINCE JOHN: Then my army will clear the forest of peasants and then I think we'll do a spot of hunting.

SHERIFF: Capital.

MUCH: (TO AUDIENCE) How can I stop Prince John and the Sheriff getting to the castle? Their army'll be close behind them... (DESPERATE) Oh what can I do - a boy against an army.

If only I had the power to make magic. Or I was strong and tough...

THE SPIRIT OF THE GREEN MAN IS PRESENT.

MUCH PONDERES. PRINCE JOHN AND THE SHERIFF FREEZE.

GREEN MAN: (V.O.) Much, you have something more powerful than magic, something which gives you more power than the greatest warriors or armies. Your strength is love. You care. That can't be touched or taken away from you. Use yourself, your mind.

MUCH: What would Robin do... even he couldn't fight this lot. In fact he hardly ever fights... he'd use his brain. That's what he says to me, 'Use your brain, Much.' (BLANK PAUSE) Oh blimey, I don't think I've got a brain. (AN IDEA!) I've got it.

HE STANDS, THEN MAKES HIMSELF LOOK AS GROTESQUE AS HE CAN. HE COUGHS, SPLUTTERS, MOANS AND STAGGERS TOWARDS PRINCE JOHN AND THE SHERIFF.

MUCH: Help me, kind sirs.

SHERIFF: Should I kill him, sire?

MUCH: Help me - I've got the terrible plague - and the green lurgy.

AT EACH OF THESE PRINCE AND SHERIFF RETREAT A STEP.

MUCH: I come from Gisborne's castle, every one's gone green and looks like this. (GROTESQUE!) It's very catching.

PRINCE JOHN: Are you sure, serf?

MUCH: As green as grass, and as horrible as this. (BECOMES RIDICULOUSLY HORRIBLE)

SHERIFF: This might be a trick, sire.

PRINCE JOHN: Go to Gisborne's castle to check.

SHERIFF: (SECONDS THOUGHTS) The boy looks honest enough - I think we can trust him.

MUCH: Help me, sir.

PRINCE JOHN: Help you! You're all ill and dirty. We could put you out of your misery if you want.

MUCH: Er... no... I wouldn't want you to go to so much trouble on my behalf.

PRINCE JOHN: Right Nottingham - I think we'll give Gisborne a miss this time Tell the men to mount up and we'll return to London.

SHERIFF: Good idea...

MUCH TAKES A STEP NEARER - THEY BACK OFF, THEN HURRIEDLY EXIT, COVERING THEIR FACES.

MUCH COLLAPSES WITH LAUGHTER. SHAKES HIS FEET IN THE AIR.

MUCH: (SINGS TO 'HERE WE GO') I used my brain, used my brain, used my brain...

SHERIFF REAPPEARS, SUSPICIOUS.

MUCH: (SEES HIM) Er... it's a fit. I'm about to snuff it.

SHERIFF: Oh right, carry on.

SHERIFF LEAVES.

MUCH: (TO HIMSELF) Right Much - pull yourself together.
There's more to be done.

HE EXITS.

THE DUNGEONS.

ROBIN, JOAN AND TUCK ENTER. ROBIN HURRIES
TO MARION.

MARION: It's a trap Robin.

ROBIN: We got into to the castle easily enough.

MARION: Gisborne wanted you to - leaving won't be so simple.

ROBIN: We'll see about that...

JOAN: Where are the keys to the cell?

MARION: The guards have them.

THEY PONDER.

TUCK: Any fool could open that door.

JOAN: Go on then.

TUCK CONFIDENT, STARTS PICKING THE LOCK.

ROBIN: Where did you learn to do that?

TUCK: At the monastery - the Abbot used to lock all the food
away...

JOAN: I don't blame him.

THE DOOR OPENS. MARION AND ROBIN EMBRACE.

THE RAVEN APPEARS, UNNOTICED BY THEM.

MARION: Free.

ROBIN: We must hurry.

TUCK: Can't we have a rest. What's the rush? Nobody's seen us so far. Ha, you're all frightened - what d'you think, someone's spying on us now.

AS TUCK RAMBLES, THE OTHERS, ONE BY ONE, CLOCK THE RAVEN.

TUCK: (CONTINUES) All dumb struck are you. All about to wet yourselves. Huh - that Terrible Tuck should be fighting with a bunch of ninnies. Look at you - you can't even look me in the eye.

ROBIN SLOWLY RAISES HIS BOW TO AIM AT THE RAVEN.

TUCK: That's better, have a bit of target practice.

FOLLOWS THEIR GAZE.

TUCK: It's only a scraggy old raven.

MARION: It's Maudlin - in disguise.

MAUDLIN (V.O.): (AS RAVEN) That's right.

TUCK: (PANICS) Arrgh! It's that wicked witch! Shoot her, run away. It's wasn't me, Mother Maudlin. They made me come. I like witches...

JOAN: Oh look, 'Terrible' Tuck has turned into 'Terrified' Tuck.

ROBIN HAS BOW AND ARROW POISED TO SHOOT RAVEN, BUT RAVEN GOES.

MAUDLIN: (V.O.) You'll have to be quicker than that Robin Hood.
(CALLS) Bring the guards, lower the Port Cullis, call Gisborne. I - Mother Maudlin - have captured the Outlaws of Sherwood.

METAL DOORS SLAM SHUT, THE STAGE DARKENS.

MAUDLIN, GISBORNE, 1st AND 2nd GUARDS ENTER AT AN ELEVATED POSITION - THEY ARE PROBABLY LIT FROM THE BACK, LOOKING VERY SINISTER AND IN TOTAL CONTROL. ALSO THE HOLE WHICH THE TWO GUARDS DUG WILL BE BETWEEN GISBORNE AND THE OUTLAWS.

GISBORNE: So - this is the end of Robin Hood and his scum.

TUCK: I'm not really scum - I'm a friar, a goodly pious man. Also an excellent cook. Why don't you give me a job in your kitchen, Sir Guy - and me being a Friar I could forgive all your wicked sins. And that could be pretty handy for a chap who's sinned as many times as you.

GISBORNE: You die with the rest of them.

1st GUARD: (TO 2nd) We'll have to build extra strong gallows for him.

TUCK: I'm too young and handsome to die.

JOAN: If you don't stop blubbering Tuck, I'll do the job for them.
ROBIN: (TO GISBORNE) You can kill us but you can't stop the people of Sherwood fighting for justice. Good will triumph.

MAUDLIN: I don't think we should hang them.

TUCK: Good point, well made.

MAUDLIN: I have a better plan - gas.

2nd GUARD: I have that trouble.

1st GUARD: It's all those beans you eat.

MAUDLIN: I will summon up all the evil magic of the forest, and it will gather in a deadly vapour which will strike them down.

GISBORNE: Why can't we have a public hanging.

MAUDLIN: Because it will turn into a riot. Do you think all the peasants will stand by while you murder their heroes.

ROBIN: (TO AUDIENCE) You won't, will you. (ETC)

MAUDLIN: So - we do the job right here. This becomes their tomb.

MUCH ENTERS, UNSEEN BY OTHERS. HE WATCHES WHAT'S GOING ON.

MUCH:
MAUDLIN: Oh no. I must do something to rescue them.
(CHANTS) Rotting bones
Of forest dark,
Screams and moans
Of spectres, hark.
Fetid flesh
And mouldy leaves
Goodness slain
And no one grieves.
Killing mist
To this place
For evil's sake,
Death and disgrace...

A MIST SLOWLY FILLS THE DUNGEON.

MAUDLIN: Good bye Robin Hood.

MUCH RUNS TO AUDIENCE.

MUCH: Quick, come on. Only you can save them. Blow away the poisonous gases. (Waft your programmes.)

ALL THE GOODIES ENCOURAGE THE AUDIENCE TO BLOW THE MIST AWAY.
BADDIES TRY TO BLOW/ENCOURAGE IT BACK.

SLOWLY THE MIST RECEDES.

OUTLAWS THEN ATTACK.

ROBIN: Come on, now's our chance.

ROBIN SWORD FIGHTS GISBORNE. JOAN AND MUCH TAKE ON THE TWO GUARDS. TUCK GIVES THE ODD DIG WHERE HE CAN. MARION BLOCKS MAUDLIN'S EXIT. MUCH AND JOAN SUBDUE THE GUARDS.

GISBORNE BACKS AWAY FROM ROBIN ABOUT TO RUN TO ESCAPE - HE HASN'T NOTICED THE NET.

1st GUARD: Mind where you're going, Sir Guy.

GISBORNE: Shut up, you dolt.

2nd GUARD: But you're going towards my trap.

GISBORNE: What traaaaaap!

GISBORNE DISAPPEARS INTO THE RAFTERS! TUCK DROPS A GRID ON IT, SATISFIED WITH HIS CONTRIBUTION.

MARION: (CALLS) Robin - Maudlin is escaping.

THEY ALL FACE MAUDLIN.

MAUDLIN: I have no need to escape. The idiot Gisborne, is out of the way, and my magic will soon get rid of all of you - rabble. Then, I, Maudlin, will be Queen over Sherwood.

MUCH: You haven't got any magic.

MAUDLIN: More than your leader.

ROBIN: I'm warning you Maudlin - go now or you'll reap what you sow.

MAUDLIN: I shall turn you into spiders - then tread on you.

TUCK: I don't want to be a spider - I'll only have flies to eat. It'll be like eating Eccles Cakes without the pastry.

MAUDLIN: (CHANTS) Powers of dark and powers of dusk
When I point, this you must -
Humans shall you be no more
Only spiders on this floor.

POINTS HER WAND AT ROBIN. ROBIN GRABS A DISCARDED SHIELD AND USES IT TO REFLECT MAUDLIN'S SPELL BACK.

ROBIN: (CHANTS) Powers of good, powers of light
Reflect evil with goodness bright
Maudlin shall we see no more
Just a spider on the floor.

AND SURE ENOUGH, MAUDLIN HAS TURNED INTO A SPIDER! TUCK TRAPS IT UNDER A GUARDS HELMET.

MAUDLIN: (V.O. ECHOES) Let me out.

TUCK: I wonder what spider stew tastes like.

MARION: (GOES TO ROBIN) Now you can safely return to Nottingham.

ROBIN: No...

MARION: Robin...

ROBIN: I don't want Gisborne's power, grand castles and fine clothes. Sherwood is where I'm happy. It's where I belong. There is a spirit there which is part of me.

MARION: I don't understand.

MUCH: I do.

MARION DISCONSOLATE.

ROBIN: But I do love you, Marion.

MARION: How can you leave me again?

ROBIN: I don't suppose you would come back to Sherwood Forest...

MARION: ...and marry you.

ROBIN: (NODS)

THEY KISS

MUCH: Musho.

MARION: I'll come on one condition.

ROBIN LOOKS.

MARION: I don't have to sit at home washing your socks while you have all the adventures.

JOAN: Good for you!

ROBIN: Fair enough. (BEAT) Tuck can do that.

TUCK: Suits me, better than fighting. (TO AUDIENCE) Listen everyone - there's going to be a wedding - lots of lovely grub.

THEY ALL LEAVE.

THE HELMET, UNDERWHICH IS MAUDLIN. RATTLES OFF.

MAUDLIN: (ECHO. V.O.) It's dark in here, help. I'll be good, I'll be good...
I don't like being a spider.

HELMET EXITS.

GISBORNE: (PATHETIC, WAVERING V.O. FROM ROOF) Help. I don't like heights... And another thing, which idiots put that trap there!

LIGHTS UP FOR FINALE.

1st and 2nd GUARDS ENTER, IN LINCOLN GREEN.

1st GUARD: You don't have to boo us.

2nd GUARD: We've joined the goodies!

THEY ARE FOLLOWED BY JOAN AND TUCK
(MUNCHING A PIE), A CHAIN IN HIS OTHER HAND.
GISBORNE'S ON THE OTHER END OF IT. MUCH
FOLLOWS. ROBIN AND MARION ENTER.

ALL: (SING) We all can enjoy Nature's gifts
And share them with each other.
In woodland feel our spirits lift
In peace all sisters and brothers.

Forest, field, sea and air
We won't destroy them, never
Treasure them with loving care
The world will last forever.

THUNDER. RAVEN APPEARS. SPOT IN RAVEN. ALL
LOOK.

GREEN MAN: (V.O.) Don't look at me like that - I'm a good raven, not
mangy old Maudlin. I am the Green Man, guardian of the
forest. And because of you all magic is for good - evil is
no more.

FINAL VERSE OF SONG.

END

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