

PLAYS FOR
New Audiences

A Division of Children's Theatre Company

Wanted! Robin Hood

by Charles Way

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Characters.

Marian of York

Robin Hood

Will Scarlett

Friar Tuck

Little John

Much the miller's son

Guy of Gisborne

Walter Fitzwarren.

Sir Eustace

Bishop of Lincoln.

Wilfred of Edwinstowe

Soldier loyal to Lady Marian [Geoffery]

3 Soldiers loyal to Walter Fitzwarren

The play was written for a minimum cast of eight.

ACT ONE.

WINTER-1189 NOTTINGHAM CASTLE.

[The last year of the reign of Henry 11. Drums-Enter three Soldiers-who roughly command the crowd. Drum roll -enter Walter Fitzwarren-Sheriff of Nottingham.]

Walter Ten years-ten long dry years fighting in the Holy land. Good people of Nottingham, I'm glad to be home. I cannot tell you the joy I feel to see once more the fertile beauty of the great forest that surrounds us. I return in the King's command and let it be known to all, especially to those who appear ignorant of the fact that Sherwood Forest belongs to the King and I am duty bound to uphold the laws of the Forest in his name. Whoever wishes to clear and cultivate land in Sherwood Forest must seek permission from this office. Whoever wishes to cut wood be it for fire or for building must seek permission. Such permissions will be granted on payment of a fee. Those who do not pay will be brought before the Forest Court, fined or imprisoned. No man shall keep dogs for hunting. No man may carry a bow or arrows in Sherwood Forest for the King loves the beasts of the wood as if he were their own Father. Any man who kills wild boar or deer shall be named an outlaw-his land and all his worldly goods shall be forfeit and he will cast himself beyond the mercy of the crown. He shall be hunted, even as he has hunted-and he shall hang for his crimes.

[A hunting horn sounds. Exit Walter.]

THE FOREST OF SHERWOOD.

[Night. The sound of Horses hooves. The sound of arrows whistling through the air. The cries of men—fading. Enter Marian, hands tied, gagged blindfolded and hooded with Much and Will Scarlet.]

Much Stop, stop, stop. Ah she kicked. She kicked me again. I can't hold her Will.

Will No names, no names.

Much I know, I know. Where's John?

Will For pities sake shut yer mouth man.

[Enter John]

Will Have they fled?

John I reckon-an two with arrows in them.

Much Hah. Thought we three were thirty.

John What does she have?

Will Haven't searched her yet.

Much Can't get close enough.

John My lady-

Much Careful-she got a kick on her like-

John Ah!

Much Told you.

John Listen up-Lady-the soldiers you were with have upped and ran away and left you alone with us. You have no choice but to have faith in our good natures. We are thieves is all- and no harm shall come to you. I promise.

Much ---She is gagged you know – beneath hood.

Will And blindfold.

John Blindfolded, gagged, hooded?

Much She has given us much trouble.

John Tis a wonder she can breathe-or have you put a clothes peg on her nose. Take off the hood. Go on. Lady, forgive these injustices. A simple nod will be your promise to cause no further trouble. In return I will cut you free so you may with dignity 'search yourself' and hand to us everything—

Will Everything!

John Of value you have about your person.

[Marian nods. He cuts her hands free. She takes off the mouth gag and spits.]

Will You can leave the blindfold.

Much Yeah-not stupid.

[Marian takes off a broach, a hair pin, buttons, a purse etc. The thieves gather round their horde]

Much We have struck lucky lads.

John Twenty gold marks.

Will Twenty five-

Much And counting.

Will What about that ring?

Marian You cannot have the ring.

Will You don't tell us lady what we can have or not. We shall have what we please.

John Give him the ring.

Marian No.

[Will tries to take it by force-she bites him. He draws his knife.]

John Please my lady-give him the ring.

Much Or he'll cut yer finger off. He will.
[She allows him Will to take the ring.]

Marian You, John- are you the leader of these men?

Will No-he is not.

Marian Who is in command? [They laugh] I would speak to the man in charge.

Will In charge hey?

Much In command.

John I would like to hear that conversation if you could speak to a --

Will Breath of wind- or a?

John Rustle of leaves-or a?

Will A pair of antlers.

Marian Why are you laughing?

[They laugh even louder-]

Much No idea meself.

Marian Who is in charge?

Will And what would you say to 'our leader'-if he was here?

Marian I would say, take the money, hairpin, necklace, broach, bracelet and buttons-but give me back the ring.

Will Why? What's the ring worth?

Marian Your lives.

John You have some pluck lady-to threaten us here-in our own country.

Marian Give it back and I will forget I ever heard the names John -Will and-

Much Much.
[Will hits him]

John You have our names so what be yours?

Will Best be telling him.

Marian Marian-soon to be Marian Fitzwarren. [Will and John exchange a glance]
Therefore I urge you-give back the ring and I will say nothing of you when I am questioned- and I will be questioned.

Much Who is the lady then? What's the matter?

John The lady it seems- is getting married.

Much Congratulations.

John To Walter Fitzwarren-High Sheriff of Nottingham.

[Will and John stand aside]

Much No, no no-you don't want to be doing that- a colder crueller man you won't find in all of England. People say-he once killed a soldier of Saladin-and to gain that soldiers' strength he drank his blood. Besides-isn't he a bit old for you.

Will You know what this means?

John Don't even think it.

Will Think it we must-or think of his revenge –women and children murdered.

Much Speak up lads-think of what?

Will We'd best be digging a hole for the lady.

Much What she want a hole for?

[They look at him]

Much Oh-she needs a—

Will No you ruddy fool. A grave- a grave is what she needs.

Marian Thieves- that's all you are. You promised me.

[Will draws his knife again. Enter Friar Tuck armed with a wooden stave.]

Tuck Take one more step and you'll be digging your own grave. Put down the knife.

John Put it down.

Will Who are you Tuck- to command me ? I will not be commanded-not no more-

[He steps toward Marian- and Tuck fells him with a single blow. Will slowly gets up and then exits- he takes the ring.]

Tuck Run you villain-run and hide in shame! Why stand you still?

John I never would have—I did not-

Tuck You did too. I saw it in your eyes.

[Exit John]

Tuck Remove the blindfold.

Much She will see my face.

Tuck Don't worry-tis easily forgot.

[He takes it off-then exits before she can turn.]

Marian Praise God.

Tuck Are you hurt?

Marian My ankle-twisted-swollen.

Tuck There's five mile of brook and bramble between here and Nottingham-there's nowt for it but walking.

Marian No horse?

Tuck We had a horse-but-uh {He pats his stomach}.

Marian We? You are one of these-thieves?

Tuck Sometimes the shepherd must follow the flock. Now you must walk or sit there and catch a death of cold.

Marian It's no good. There's only one thing to be done-good, strong Friar

Tuck Hey? No!

Marian Carry me.

Tuck Over ten mile of brook and bramble?

Marian If you wish 'Friar Tuck' to have your name forgotten- as I pledge to forget the others-for the price of a lift.

[Tuck shakes his fist at heaven. She climbs on his back. They walk. Dawn breaks]

Marian Thank you Friar. You've saved me.

Tuck Have I? Forgive my forthright nature, but have you ever met your future husband?

Marian Once-when I was twelve- before he left for the crusade. How come you- a Friar with thieves?

FT They weren't born thieves my lady-just lads-orphans most of em who had no other choice but to live wild in the woods. I have done my best to restrain them-teach them-father them-though sometimes I despair of them.

Marian Under what circumstance-orphans?

FT There we go lass-Nottingham. You can limp the last lap.

Marian I'm in your debt.

FT I beg to differ. I fear I've carried you from frying pan to fire.

Marian I have no choice. But I will not despair Friar-if you will not.

FT I will pray Lady Marian-as I do each year-for spring.

[He turns to leave and he sees her walking without a limp. She smiles at him. Tuck shakes his fist at heaven]

THE CASTLE AT NOTTINGHAM

[Marian's room. Sir Eustace supervises the arrival of some clothes on a rail and some books.]

Eustace Is everything as you wish my lady? What kind of house was your Father's house in Edwinstowe?

Marian Thatched.

Eustace And look at you now-in a castle. The wheel of fortune has turned in your favour.

Marian Sir Eustace is there anything I can do for you?

Eustace No, no, no. The shoe is on the other foot. I am at your service- and the service of my Master. I am you see his Steward.

Marian I realise.

Eustace Oh-[He sees her book] Do you read my lady?

Marian Which is why I have books.

Eustace Very good-but-uh- do not emphasise this or other such accomplishments in the Sheriff's company. He is not one for books-or the emotions in them. His own accomplishments such as swordplay and archery-he is the finest archer I ever saw-are indeed worth emphasis and he is not immune to praise regarding them. Praise him my lady—but- a word to the wise- never ever laugh at him. You see my lady-we must work together-the wife and the Steward. It was ever thus-- Oh—[Looks from window] quite a drop-quite a drop.

Marian Are you thinking of jumping Sir Eustace?

Eustace Ha, Ha Ha. No. Alas I have no head for heights- and cannot swim. No no no- my talents lie elsewhere.

[Enter Walter Fitzwarren. Eustace exits backwards. Walter stares at Marian]

Walter I did not think I would survive to see this day-to see you a grown woman. Are you recovered?

Marian Yes my Lord-thank you.

Walter The manner of your arrival has caused quite a stir. The whole town talks about you- and are looking forward to our wedding----- as I do.

[Marian curtsies]

The guards you were with say they saw nothing- heard nothing- but the flight of arrows.

Marian It was dark.

Walter Darker still in the dungeons-but I can't get them to remember anything.

Marian They are imprisoned?

Walter A night in the cells will do them no harm-for failing to protect you.

Marian They are my Fathers' men- were-and now are mine. Please release them.

Walter -----As you wish. It means however that you- are my only witness.

Marian We were delayed by rain- suddenly our way was barred by a fallen tree and then- there was the sound of a horn- a hunting horn- much shouting and all was chaos and confusion- and I was taken.

Walter By how many?

Marian Hard to say- three—or thirty.

Walter Did you see the faces of these men?

Marian I was blindfolded.

Walter Did you hear them call each other by name?

Marian If I did I can't recall them—I was frightened-the wind was high and it was so dark-the moon could not pierce the trees and all I could hear were arrows slicing through the air- and then- rough hands-rough hands. {She puts the back of her hand to her forehead}

Walter Where is the ring I sent you?

Marian Stolen. But at least I'm safe. That is what matters.

Walter Who took the ring?

Marian My Lord-I would like to forget this unhappy incident-and we have more important things to think about--- a wedding to- to discuss. Sir-It is ten years- since you left for the Holy land- and I was wondering if in that time- you have had cause to----- change your mind-regarding me?

Walter Change my mind?

Marian I cannot believe that in ten years-you a soldier- do not have a lady somewhere who waits for you. I could not in conscience hold you to my Father's promise-if that were the case?

Walter [He moves closer to her kisses her roughly. When it's over she turns away-shaken.] Be reassured-I never change my mind. I will catch the man who stole the ring- and watch him hang.

Marian I don't think you'll find him.

Walter Why should I not find him?

Marian He is somewhat elusive—I believe.

Walter Naturally- he's a thief.

Marian And yet-

Walter What?

Marian A man of some quality.

Walter You spoke to this man?

Marian ---Yes-I

Walter You did not say so before.

Marian I was in shock- but now I come to think of him-

[A light rises on Robin Hood-sitting in the branches of The Great Oak.]

Walter But now? [He takes her by the shoulders]

Marian I think of him-he comes to mind-quite clearly-

Walter The leader of these men?

Marian I- yes-

Walter You said you were blindfolded.

Marian He removed it.

Walter What for?

Marian To look at me.

Walter 'Look' at you?

Marian And I at him.

Walter Why?

Marian He wanted me to remember his face.

Walter --What did he look like?

Marian Oh-a strong face. Strong but gentle. Refined almost.

Walter A nobleman?

Marian A yeoman, with a noble countenance. A natural leader of men I would say. They obeyed his commands without question.

Walter Short? Tall?

Marian Tall. Taller than you.

Walter Age?

Marian Young---younger than you. In fact-my age- no more than- twenty two.

Walter What was he wearing?

Marian Strange clothes, as if the spirits of the wood had dressed him.

Walter His name?

Marian If he told me -

Walter A trade name perhaps-Tanner-Bowman-Reeve-

Marian -I can't remember.

Walter If he wanted you to know his face there's no reason he wouldn't have told you his name- you just need to think woman- think.

Marian H--Hood.

Walter Hood? Nothing more?

Marian Rob-Robin----

Robin+ Marian Robin Hood.

[He lets her go. He has gripped her hard but does not realise it.]

Marian What will you do?

Walter I will catch this Robin Hood-and hang him. You have my word on it.

[She bows her head and curtsies. Exit Walter Fitzwarren]

Marian Robin Hood. Younger, taller, a fine archer-

Robin The best in England.

Marian Better than you Sir Walter. Literate-

Robin Nearly.

Marian Foolish-

Robin Rarely.

Marian Elusive-

Robin Certainly-

Marian As a breath of wind-

Robin A fall of leaves-

Marian Antlers fleeing-through forest trees----
Robin Hood -bold Robin Hood. Rebellious-

Robin Proud-

Marian And free-

R+M Free----

Marian *Robin Hood, bold Robin Hood
Rebellious proud and free
With four and twenty arrows stood
Under a Greenwood tree.*

PURCHASE PERUSAL FOR FULL SCRIPT