

MERRY MEN

A full-length comedy by
Kemuel DeMolive

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

MAID MARIAN, female, clever and spry. She has her own plans for her life.

MINSTREL, any gender, a traveling singer and performer. More Commedia than troubadour. The actor can play additional parts as necessary. In the past one actor has played the Minstrel, Guy and Archer.

CLORINDA, female, lady in waiting. She is a bit dim, but kind.

MATILDA, female, lady in waiting. She is smart, sassy and a bit of a nerd.

ELENA, female, lady in waiting. She is a shy wallflower, always in the right place but never noticed.

BERNADETTE, female, lady in waiting. She is physically strong and overly aggressive.

NURSIE, female, Marian's aging nurse with a slight physical resemblance to Friar Tuck. She is kind, but easily befuddled.

FRIAR TUCK, male, a befuddled man. He is more braggart than pious.

SHERIFF, male, a bad guy in love with Marian.

GUY, male, the Sheriff's underling.

ARCHER, any gender, a fantastic archer and teacher.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE MILITIA, any gender, a bumbling group of actors who can be used wherever they are needed. Kind of a Zanni Chorus.

THE VOICE OF AUTHORITY, any gender, a booming voice from above. This can be pre-recorded.

Note: In the past, one actor has played the Minstrel, Guy and Archer.

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SETTING

The playing space should be multifunctional, transformative and playful. It resembles the traditional May Day Fair stages out in the English countryside, but with additional elements commonly found on playground structures. There are maypoles, hemp ropes, flags, banners, trapdoors and maybe even a tire swing – lots of places to hide in, swing over or climb through. It shouldn't be too "new" looking, but instead have a patina of something well loved, with its edges softened by years of use. Different settings (forests, castles and rivers) are established by lighting and various configurations of flags and banners in the space.

A NOTE ABOUT THE SONGS

The two songs in the play should be created by the performers using the provided lyrics. The songs work best when they have a kind of "Irish Drinking Song" meets "California Surf Rock" feel, but don't let that paint you into a corner. Whatever sound works best for the production. The cast should be playing the instruments (or creating a found-instrument sound) – but in the end just do whatever works, don't get hung up on the mechanics of the music, have fun with whatever you do!

If you decide that your production would be better served without the songs, feel free to cut them.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Merry Men premiered at The Leeward Theatre at Leeward Community College under the direction of Ashley DeMoville, with Set Design & Fight Choreography by Donald J. Ranney Jr., Costume Design by Katie Patrick, Music and Sound Design by Jordan Estioco, Kristen Labiano & Crystal Fujiwara, and

Lighting Design by Sarah Y. Whitehead. The cast was as follows:

Marian.....Melissa Kenigton
Nursie.....Chelsea Campbell
Clorinda.....Sam Fukushima
Matilda.....Talisha Acevedo
Elena.....Julie Anne Directo
Bernadette.....Nikki Nansen
Minstrel, Guy, & Archer.....Jordan Estioco
Friar Tuck.....Raymond Rivera III
Sheriff.....Kirk Lapilio
Musician.....Kristen Labiano
Musician.....Crystal Fujiwara
Nottingham Militia.....Marshall Cressy,
Tia Gadison, Kamalani Gapol, Lex Lugo, Paul Lumbao,
Charlene McDonald Keona Mora, Garrett Oliver, Nikki Stuart,
Emily Wagon, and Colt Yamashiro.

DEDICATION

Dedicated to my three sons. To Tennyson and Barrett, because I wanted to make you laugh; and to Finlay, because hopefully one day you'll laugh at this too.

PROLOGUE

(A bare stage. All "behind the scenes" aspects of the theater are on full display, possibly including the scene shop. It looks as if no performance is scheduled for tonight. The tech crew go about their jobs as usual. Suddenly, a blast of trumpets [played poorly], the bang of drums and the raucous cheers of actors fills the house. As soon as the first musical note is played, the stage begins to transform. Scene shop doors are closed, curtains fly into place, the performance structures are wheeled into position and locked down, lights come on – now it looks like a show! During the stage transformation, the performers enter from the back, parading toward the stage. They carry boxes of props, balance swords, play instruments, wave flags, and just generally have a good time and interacting with the audience as they herd toward the stage. Once everything is in place the MINSTREL turns to the audience.)

MINSTREL: Tonight...

(The Minstrel is interrupted by the booming speech of the THE VOICE OF AUTHORITY. It blasts out of the speakers, startling all of the performers. They hide around the space. The dialogue spoken by The Voice of Authority can be edited/amended to reflect the actual curtain speech of the theatre.)

THE VOICE OF AUTHORITY: Welcome to [INSERT NAME OF THEATRE] and tonight's performance of Merry Men!

(Silence. The performers start to come out of hiding. They are cautious, but the Minstrel won't be cowed that easily.)

MINSTREL: Yes. Welcome. Tonight –

(Again with the booming voice and the hiding.)

THE VOICE OF AUTHORITY: On behalf of the cast and crew, we are delighted to have you here!

(Again, silence. The performers start to come out of hiding once more.)

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MINSTREL: Exactly. We are delighted! Because tonight—

(Again with the booming voice and the hiding.)

Oh, come on!

THE VOICE OF AUTHORITY: As a courtesy to other guests, and in accordance with all rules and regulations, please consume all food and drink outside of the theater.

(The performers start to nervously emerge. One of them is eating an apple and the Minstrel yells at them. The Minstrel tries to take the apple from the performer, but the performer runs away—a short chase ensues.)

Smoking, including the use of e-cigarettes, is strictly prohibited. Young children should remain seated and supervised for their own safety. Aisleways should remain clear, as our performers often wander off stage and are very clumsy.

(The chase ends with the performer who was eating the apple tripping and accidentally tossing the half-eaten apple to the Minstrel, who tosses it offstage. The other actors gather around the performer who tripped and take a selfie with the performer and the audience behind them. The actors look at the selfie then motion for the audience to "squeeze in a bit.")

Finally: If you have a cellphone, tablet computer, or other noise-making or light-emitting device, please turn it off now. Unauthorized photography or video recording is not permitted in the theatre.

(The Minstrel makes "put it away" gestures to the other performers, who promptly hide the camera—after taking one or two more candid shots.)

In the event of an emergency, please follow the instructions of our ushers and house management. Emergency exits are clearly marked along the side-walls and at the rear of the auditorium.

Thank you again for being a part of this performance at
[INSERT NAME OF THEATRE]!

MINSTREL: And welcome...once again...to *Merry Men*!

Song

BY ALDER BY ASH
BY ELM AND BY OAK
IN THE BORDERS OF NOTTINGHAMSHIRE.
BY TRENT AND BY EREWASH
BY IDLE AND LEEN
COMES A STORY WE HOPE WILL INSPIRE.
BY ASHLAR BY BAILEY
BY DANK OUBLIETTE
SITS A SHERIFF SO GREEDY AND MEAN.
BY TRICKS AND BY CUNNING
BY GUILLE AND BY GAUL
YOU'LL FIND HEROES LIKE YOU'VE NEVER SEEN.
MAID MARIAN!
CLEVER MARIAN!
JUST SITTING AND KNITTING
AND DARNING AND STITCHING
AND WEAVING AND DREAMING
OF A LIFE FILLED WITH MEANING
NOT JUST COOPED UP
AND KEPT UP
AND HUSHED UP
AND SWEEPED UP
BY PLOTS AND BY PLANS
RANK AND VILE.
MAID MARIAN!
CANNY MARIAN!
WITH HER LADIES BESIDE HER
TO HELP AND TO GUIDE HER

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THEY'RE SURE TO DETER HER
 FROM DANGER AND NURTURE
 THIS MAID NOT AFRAID
 OF A BRAWL.
 BY BASTIAN BY BARMKIN BY WALL
 BY BUCK-THORN BY BRAMBLE BY GALL.
 MAID MARIAN!
 CAGEY MARIAN!
 SHE LIVES IN A KINGDOM
 WITHOUT ANY FREEDOM
 WHERE PRINCELY DOMINION
 JUST TREATS HER LIKE INCOME
 IT'S PART OF A SYSTEM
 OF WHICH THEY'RE ALL VICTIMS...

(Someone clears their throat. A beat. The Minstrel went a bit too far and everyone knows it.)

BY GLENN AND BY MOOR
 BY CHALKY WHITE SHORE
 BY SHREW AND BY VOLE
 AND BY TINY BLACK MOLE
 BY STAG AND BY PIKE
 BY KESTREL AND KITE
 BY SHRUBBERY
 WILLOWTREE
 HONEYBEE
 ANEMONE
 BY ME AND BY YOU
 AND OUR DEAR HEILAN COO
 IT'S NOW TIME FOR OUR MAY PLAY TO START!

(Everyone holds for a moment, then immediately goes into:)

SCENE 1 – The Castle

(MARIAN paces around the space like a caged animal. NURSIE is seated, mending something.)

MARIAN: I...I just don't believe it!

NURSIE: I know, dear.

MARIAN: It's so...so...

NURSIE: Wonderful? Flattering?

MARIAN: Horrible!

NURSIE: You mean spectacular.

MARIAN: I can't believe I have to marry him!

NURSIE: I know. It's a dream come true.

MARIAN: You mean nightmare!

NURSIE: He's such a nice boy.

MARIAN: He's cruel! And rude! And pompous!

NURSIE: And the Sheriff. A girl could do worse than marrying the Sheriff of Nottingham. You could be marrying the Cottar of Nottingham. Or the Ratcatcher of Nottingham. Or the Scullion of Nottingham. Or the Swineherd of Nottingham. Or –

MARIAN: I get it, Nursie, and I'd rather be marrying the Swineherd of Nottingham than that swine of a Sheriff.

NURSIE: Very clever, Marian, but you know what they say about clever girls:

(Marian mentally rolls her eyes because she's heard this a thousand times.)

MARIAN & NURSIE: Look, a clever girl. She must be a witch! Run! Run! A witch!

NURSIE: Clever girls don't have a place in this world. Why just last week my own niece was banished to the peat bog for knowing how to do math.

MARIAN: It's the 1100s, Nursie! People need to get with the times!

NURSIE: Those are the times, my dear.

MARIAN: This would have never happened if King Richard were still here.

NURSIE: I know. It would have happened much sooner. Prince John really dragged his feet about the whole thing. Most girls your age would already have been married off and had a little one or two or seven of their own by now.

MARIAN: You're not listening, Nursie!

NURSIE: I'm sure I'm not, dear.

(CLORINDA, MATILDA, ELENA and BERNADETTE enter, having just heard the terrible news about the betrothal. Marian throws open her arms for a group hug and knocks Nursie off of her seat. Nursie is stuck like a turtle on its back, legs kicking and wacky medieval panties exposed for all to see. None of the girls notice that Nursie is stuck; they are too busy comforting Marian.)

MATILDA: We heard about your awful betrothal, Marian. We came as soon as we could.

MARIAN: Thank you, Matilda. I couldn't get through this without all of you.

BERNADETTE: My gallbladder is overflowing with hate for the Sheriff and his handsome face. I want to punch him into the squirming mass of goo that he is!

MARIAN: You always know just what to say, Bernadette.

BERNADETTE: I also want to kiss his dreamy lips. Ahhhh! I'm very conflicted.

MARIAN: Okay. I know the Sheriff is handsome, and I know that he is employed and favored by Prince John, but I just hate the idea of being forced to marry that...that...

NURSIE: *(From the floor:)* Eligible bachelor?

MARIAN: You're not helping, Nursie! Nursie?

NURSIE: I'm down here.

MARIAN: That's a silly place to be.

(Everyone helps Nursie up – which is a bit of a production in itself.)

CLORINDA: I just wish there was a way we could convince Prince John to break off the betrothal.

MATILDA: That's it! Clorinda, say that again.

CLORINDA: *(Confused:)* ...That.

MATILDA: Yes. Say it again.

CLORINDA: *(Confused:)* ...It.

MATILDA: What?

CLORINDA: I don't know! I'm just doing what you said. You told me to say "that" again. So I did. Then you said to say "it" again, so I did that too. Why are you speaking in riddles?!

MATILDA: Sometimes I hate you, Clorinda.

CLORINDA: What did I say?

MARIAN: You said we need to find some way to get Prince John to break the betrothal.

NURSIE: No, she didn't! Don't do that. The Sheriff is a good match!

MATILDA: The only question is how do we convince Prince John. We need to make him think the Sheriff is an incompetent idiot.

MARIAN: He is an incompetent idiot. It shouldn't be too hard.

BERNADETTE: We could trick the Sheriff into marrying me and I would smother him with very aggressive kisses.

MARIAN: ...I'm not too sure about that plan.

BERNADETTE: It would work.

MARIAN: Yeeehaaaaah... Let's keep throwing out ideas and we'll put the "aggressive kissing" plan on the back-burner.

ELENA: What if we made it seem like the countryside was filled with bandits? Then the Prince will think the Sheriff is an idiot who can't do his job, and he'll break off the betrothal.

MATILDA: I've got it! We have to make it seem like the countryside is filled with bandits. Then the Prince will think the Sheriff is an idiot who can't do his job, and he'll be forced to break off the betrothal!

ELENA: I just said that!

MATILDA: What was that, Elena? I didn't hear you.

ELENA: I said I just said that.

CLORINDA: I said "that" too, and "it" –but you don't see me making a big stink about it.

MARIAN: It doesn't matter who said what!

CLORINDA: No one said "what." Just "that" and "it."

BERNADETTE: What?

CLORINDA: I stand corrected.

MARIAN: Stop! Everyone! The important thing here is that we have an idea. A great idea! An idea that might actually work!

BERNADETTE: The idea I had about staring into the Sheriff's dreamy eyes and kissing him with scorn and derision?

MARIAN: No. The other idea. The one where we make it seem like the countryside is full of bandits and the Sheriff is bad at his job. Then the Prince will break the betrothal agreement!

NURSIE: That's a terrible idea!

MARIAN: But how do we make it seem like the countryside is full of bandits?

MATILDA: We'll be the bandits!

(Nursie faints outrageously.)

CLORINDA: I can't be a bandit! I don't have the posture for banditry!

MARIAN: Clorinda's right – kind of – we don't know anything about being bandits. All we've ever been taught is how to order servants about and knit.

NURSIE: Embroider. Only serfs knit. There is a difference.

MARIAN: Fine. Whatever. We are experts in household leadership and threadcraft. How does that help us with banditry?

MATILDA: It's not really that different. You order people around and take their money. The only real difference between a bandit and a noble is that one lives in a castle and the other sleeps under the stars.

NURSIE: Treason! Sedition!... *(Swoons:)* ...Pickle...barrel...

(Nursie faints again.)

ELENA: But we don't know how to sword fight, or shoot an arrow or anything bandits need to know to force people to hand over their gold. We're just going to be begging aggressively.

MATILDA: We'll just DuGoogle it.

MARIAN: What's a DuGoogle?

MATILDA: He's my father's Chamberlin, Lord Chauncery DuGoogle. He knows everything. I'm sure all we have to do is ask Lord DuGoogle and he'll go on and on for hours about the finer points of swordcraft and rugged fighting stuff. Just don't ask him about kittens. He knows way too much about kittens.

BERNADETTE: Finally! I've been begging my father to teach me how to use a sword since I put a bear in a chokehold when I was seven.

CLORINDA: You put a bear in a chokehold? When you were seven!?!

BERNADETTE: It was an old bear. And I was a high-energy child.

NURSIE: Please, ladies, think about what you're saying. What's so bad about wanting a good marriage to a good husband?

MARIAN: Nothing. But it's not what I want. It won't be a good marriage and he's not a good man.

NURSIE: I know he's not exactly the friendliest rat in the dungeon, but things could be worse.

MARIAN: Just because things "could be worse" doesn't mean that we shouldn't try to make things better.

NURSIE: Well I'll have no part in it. Gentle ladies like yourselves shouldn't be resorting to banditry.

MATILDA: Just the illusion of banditry.

NURSIE: Still. I think if you all spend some time weaving a very rebellious tapestry to Prince John, it'll have the same effect.

BERNADETTE: Tapestries don't work! I'm tired of weaving rebellious tapestries!

NURSIE: I won't help you do this, Marian.

MARIAN: I understand.

BERNADETTE: We're gonna be bandits!

(Bernadette cordially slaps Nursie on the back, but she doesn't know her own strength – Nursie falls over and gets her head stuck in a trunk.)

CLORINDA: I'll need to buy new tights!

MATILDA: I'll send for DuGoogle!

ELENA: I'll...I'll make snacks, I guess.

MARIAN: That's it then. The Sheriff won't know what hit him!

NURSIE: *(Still stuck:)* ...Little help, please?

(Some performers help Nursie up, while others work to transform the scene into:)

SCENE 2 – The Road to Sherwood

(The performers all work to transform the space from the castle to the road to the forest. Wackiness and stoogery abound. One of the performers accidentally whacks another on the head with a flag. When the performers carrying the flag turn to see what is wrong with the end of the flag, everyone ducks. The performer who was initially hit shakily gets back on their feet, but is again whacked in the head when the flag-transporting performer swings back onto their path. Finally, the scene is set.)

(Marian, Clorinda, Elena, Bernadette and Matilda are riding on hobby horses. The horses are decorated with ribbons and bits of cloth – more playful than realistic. FRIAR TUCK and GUY OF GISBOURNE [played by the actor who plays the Minstrel] are riding horses as well.)

MARIAN: What a lovely afternoon to go for a ride.

FRIAR TUCK: A truly magnanimous day! You know, the Holy Hermit of Myrkviðr said, "A beautiful day is like a gift from a neighbor: you're not really sure what to do with it."

MATILDA: I've never heard that.

FRIAR TUCK: I'm not surprised. It's in an apostle's epistle on epistles from apostles. Very hush-hush.

MARIAN: Yes. Well I appreciate you coming along as an escort, Friar, and you as well, Sir Guy. We are just helpless ladies after all.

BERNADETTE: We are like weak and stinky baby birds.

MATILDA: I'm not stinky!

GUY: It's my pleasure to escort the Sheriff's betrothed and her...pals.

MARIAN: That's good. I love going for rides, but I've heard this road is filled with bandits.

FRIAR TUCK: Bandits!

GUY: That's a barrel of applesauce. There are no bandits in Nottingham. The Sheriff hired them all to serve as his militia.

MARIAN: No. These are new bandits. Fresh.

FRIAR TUCK: Fresh bandits!

BERNADETTE: I heard that only last week a man was beaten by the bandits.

FRIAR TUCK: Beaten?

BERNADETTE: It was a bishop.

FRIAR TUCK: No!

MATILDA: I heard that a rich merchant was held up on this very road, on this very spot, only yesterday.

FRIAR TUCK: Yesterday!? On this very spot?

MATILDA: Exactly where you stand.

GUY: Ridiculous. No one reported anything.

MATILDA: The merchant tried to report it but no one believed him. They thought he was some vagabond beggar.

GUY: I know the difference between a merchant and a beggar.

CLORINDA: They stole his clothes and his gold and they dressed him in poor rags. Then they gave the gold out to the poor and needy.

FRIAR TUCK: Will the madness never end?!?

GUY: No bandit would give out his hard-stolen gold to the poor. It's disrespectful to all the other bandits.

MARIAN: Maybe they're not doing it for the money. Maybe they just want to help other people.

FRIAR TUCK: Revolutionaries!

GUY: Rumormongering. That's all it is. Rumors and fantasy.

FRIAR TUCK: Maybe we should turn back. For the ladies.

BERNADETTE: They've told everyone in the village that the next loudmouth friar that came down this road would get flogged and dunked in the river.

(Friar Tuck swoons and then faints comically.)

GUY: Fantastic. The Friar's fainted.

CLORINDA: It was a fairly fabulous fainting.

ELENA: So are we just going to leave him for the bandits and the wolves?

GUY: Wolves? Wolves now? Look, there aren't any wolves and there aren't any bandits! Everyone just dismount and help me get the Friar back onto his horse.

(Everyone tries to lift and position the Friar back onto the hobby horse, but the fainted Friar is like a sack of wet potatoes and won't cooperate. Comedy ensues.)

ELENA: Are you sure we can't just leave him?

(Marian gives the other Ladies a look indicating that now is the time to begin the plan.)

CLORINDA: Wait! Did you hear that!?

GUY: Hear what?

CLORINDA: It sounded like the soft footfalls of disenfranchised men!

GUY: I don't hear anything.

ELENA: There it is again!

GUY: What?

CLORINDA: That!

GUY: What?

CLORINDA: That!

GUY: *(Listening carefully for a moment:)* ...What?

(Everyone is huddled in a tight group with the Friar at the center, his eyes still closed and fainted away. They all listen carefully for a few moments in an ever-tightening huddle around Friar Tuck.)

MARIAN: *(Whispering:)* I think we're surrounded by bandits.

(Friar Tuck's eyes snap open and he screams high, loud and long.)

FRIAR TUCK: Ahhhhh!! Bandits!! Ahhhhhh!!

BERNADETTE: Look! In the hedge!

GUY: Where?

(While Guy looks away, Bernadette bonks the Friar on his head – he immediately stops screaming and is knocked out.)

BERNADETTE: One of the bandits just knocked out the friar with a quarterstaff!

CLORINDA: We're under attack!

(Guy draws his sword.)

GUY: We are?

ELENA: From all sides!

GUY: Who said that? Show yourselves, villains!

MARIAN: There's one!

(Guy turns to face the enemy and gets punched from behind by Matilda.)

MATILDA: It was a surly burly bandit! He came out of nowhere!

(The other girls start taking turns hitting Guy when his back is to them.)

ELENA: I see one over there!

CLORINDA: There's one with a wicked scar!

MARIAN: I think that one has a bow and arrow!

(She knocks Guy's hat off.)

It just missed your head by a cat's whisker!

BERNADETTE: Here comes a sneaky one!

(Bernadette uses the wooden end of the hobby horse to hit Guy right between the legs.)

GUY: Ooooo, me biscuits!

MARIAN: We're outnumbered! We should just leave our gold and retreat!

GUY: Sounds good.

(Friar Tuck suddenly wakes up.)

FRIAR TUCK: Ahhhh!! Leave our gold!! Ahhhh!

(Bernadette bonks him on the head again and he's out.)

MARIAN: Everyone grab one of our manly protectors and let's head back to the castle!

(They scoop up Guy and Friar Tuck and carry them off, then all performers work to transform the scene into:)

SCENE 3 – Back at the Castle

(The performers move flags, banners, and toss boxes to create the feeling of Nottingham Castle. Someone accidentally throws a sheet or a banner over another performer's head. Then everyone thinks there is a ghost on stage. Performers are scared. Besheeted performer is also scared and keeps trying to hide with the group, who keeps running away from him. Finally, the unsheeted performers turn and start beating the ghost with sticks and props and bits of the stage, knocking them out. The other performers approach cautiously and remove the sheet. All are shocked [and a bit scared] to discover that it was one of their fellow actors. They cover the ghost back up and start the scene anyway.)

(The SHERIFF and Guy are conferencing while Marian and the ladies are huddled in the back, acting scared. From the center of their group, muffled weeping can be heard.)

SHERIFF: Bandits! I can't believe it! Nottingham has been a bandit-free county for the past seven years!

GUY: We'll have to update the newsletter. The people need to know.

SHERIFF: Nobody reads the newsletter!

GUY: You don't have to be cruel about it.

SHERIFF: Nobody reads, Guy!

GUY: It's pronounced "Gee" – we've been over this...

SHERIFF: I'm the Sheriff! I decide on the pronunciation of names in Nottinghamshire!

GUY: My apologies "Sharif."

SHERIFF: We don't have time for sassiness, Guy. There's banditry afoot!

GUY: Fine. So what do we do about it?

SHERIFF: Release the hounds!

GUY: We don't have any hounds.

SHERIFF: Zounds! No hounds! Why?

GUY: Budget cuts.

SHERIFF: Then raise the taxes! Public safety demands hounds.

GUY: That takes time.

SHERIFF: Well what are our options? Do we have anything hound-like?

GUY: We've got a fairly aggressive Fesnying of Ferrets available.

SHERIFF: Release the ferrets!

GUY: Consider it done, my lord. (*Shouting:*) Release the ferrets!

(The performer who was the "ghost" wakes up from being knocked out, and staggers around the stage, before finally just heading into the wings. The still have their "ghost" cloth on. The Sheriff and Guy [and everyone else] are a bit lost as to how to proceed.)

SHERIFF: Thank you, guard. For...going to release the ferrets so quickly.

(The sounds of weeping from the huddled group becomes louder and more insistent.)

Will you ladies stop all the blubber! I've got to plot an elaborate trap over here!

(The ladies move to reveal it was the Friar who had been crying all along.)

FRIAR TUCK: I'm sorry, M'Lord. It was just all so horrible. I'm a gentle friar and the mere thought of violence makes me...

(He gags.)

...makes me...

(He retches.)

SHERIFF: We get it! Just stop thinking about it before we have to clean the carpets!

FRIAR TUCK: Saint Pharyngeal writes that "One should never vomit on their lord's boots."

SHERIFF: Good advice. Now let me hatch a cunning plan. Guy, plot with me in a menacing fashion!

(The Sheriff and Guy start pacing in opposite directions. Elena sees this and sneaks away from the group toward the middle of the space, trying to blend in with the set structure.)

GUY: What do we know about these bandits? How can we trap them?

SHERIFF: Well...we know they're bandits.

GUY: Yes! They're bandits...so they enjoy...banditry.

SHERIFF: But how can we use that to our advantage?

ELENA: *(As Guy:)* We know they didn't hurt the ladies.

SHERIFF: That's right, Guy!

GUY: What?

SHERIFF: What you said.

GUY: What did I say?

SHERIFF: That they didn't hurt the ladies.

GUY: They didn't?

SHERIFF: Quit being sassy or I will bop you on the nose!

GUY: But...?

SHERIFF: How can we use that against them. They're soft hearted – we can exploit that.

ELENA: (*As the Sheriff:*) What if we use the ladies as bait and ambush them on the road to Sherwood?

GUY: Oh that's dark Sir, even for you.

SHERIFF: What's dark?

GUY: Using the ladies as bait as a way to ambush the bandits.

SHERIFF: You're cold blooded Guy, but I like it. That's why I keep you around.

GUY: But...it was your idea.

SHERIFF: I suppose that since I'm the one who hired you it kind of was my idea. Inspiration by appropriation.

GUY: No, that's –

SHERIFF: We'll do it! Saddle the horses!

ELENA: (*As Guy:*) But we'll need time to prepare the trap!

SHERIFF: You're right, Guy. I'm being impetuous.

GUY: I didn't say anything! And my name is Guy! (*Pronounced "GEE":*) Guy! Guy! Guy!

(The Sheriff punches Guy in the nose.)

SHERIFF: That's for sassiness. I will not suffer sass in my own castle! And your name sounds like sounds like a pig giving birth. (*Squealing:*) Geee! Geee! Geee! It's ridiculous. You'll be Guy and like it.

GUY: Sorry, sir.

SHERIFF: By week's end those bandits will be rotting in the Nottingham dungeon!

(The Sheriff starts to "evil laugh.")

Everyone. Evil laugh with me.

(Everyone joins in – somewhat halfheartedly – with the Sheriff's evil laughing.)

(All performers work to transform the scene into:)

SCENE 4 – Again, on the Road to Sherwood

(The performer who was the "ghost" comes back on stage with a bandage on their head. They look angrily at all of the other performers who have busied themselves in changing the scenery – and are obviously ignoring the withering gaze of the bandaged performer. After being ignored for a few moments the bandaged performer picks up a stick or a banner and starts whacking the other performers with it. The other performers dodge the blows as best they can – wackiness ensues. Finally, the bandaged performer's rage abates and everyone gets into position for the scene.)

(Friar Tuck, Marian and the Ladies are all traveling on the road to Sherwood Forest.)

FRIAR TUCK: I hate traveling this road. Sherwood Forest is a spooky place, and the road leading to it isn't much brighter. Saint Melancholia would always say "Leaving the nunnery is like throwing cow pies at a good friend."

(A bird sound is heard.)

CLORINDA: Do you really think using us as bait is the...noblest course of action? Oh look, a wren!

MATILDA: *(Sarcastically:)* I'm sure the Sheriff only has our best interests at heart.

FRIAR TUCK: Don't fret, sweet lady. The Sheriff is a great man. His plans are incomprehensible to the simple minds of the gentler sort.

ELENA: The mere thought of banditry sets my heart racing.

FRIAR TUCK: Who said that?! Brigands, show yourself!

CLORINDA: It's only Elena, Friar.

FRIAR TUCK: Who's Elena?

MATILDA: She's riding on the horse next to you.

(Another bird sound is heard.)

CLORINDA: That's a skylark!

FRIAR TUCK: Oh! I'm sorry, dear, you just sort of blend into the background. It's quite disconcerting. I thought you were a sack of cornmeal riding on a pack mule. Don't be afraid to stand out a bit more. It's like Saint Aconitum wrote in his musings on flowers: "If you want to avoid bees, burn all the flowers."

ELENA: I'm not sure how that relates.

FRIAR TUCK: Who's there?! Cowards! Rogues! Prepare to face the rapturous indignation of my sermonizing!

ELENA: Never mind.

(Again, a bird sound is heard.)

CLORINDA: That's a stone curlew! They're very rare.

FRIAR TUCK: You certainly know your songbirds, dear.

BERNADETTE: If I see any bandits, I'll crush them like stale bread. I'll tear them apart like I was a fox in the larder!

FRIAR TUCK: Ooo! I'm feeling a bit peckish. Did any of you demurring ladies happen to pack a biscuit, or perhaps an apple or three?

(Marian gives the ladies a look – time to start the show.)

CLORINDA: I think I heard something rustle in the bushes!

(Beat.)

FRIAR TUCK: It was probably just a startled hare—

BERNADETTE: Look! There! A flash of green tunic! It's the bandits!

FRIAR TUCK: No! We haven't even reached the Sheriff's prescribed point of ambush! This is very unconventional!

(Bernadette throws a sack over Friar Tuck's head.)

MARIAN: Oh no! We've all had bags thrown over our heads.

MATILDA: Yes. All of us are uniformly be-sacked and can see nothing.

BERNADETTE: *(In a manly voice:)* Well, if it isn't our fat friar, back out for a stroll.

FRIAR TUCK: Don't be cruel! I'm not fat. I'm husky. Saint Cacomorphobia always said that "Husky boys sit at the right hand of the buffet table." ...Maybe that's not the best quote from Saint Cacomorphobia but it's a bit hard to think when you have a sack over your head!

ELENA: *(In a manly voice:)* You'll keep that sack on your head and like it you pompous old fart! Be thankful that our leader isn't letting us stick you with our very, very sharp swords.

(Elena pokes Friar Tuck with her finger.)

FRIAR TUCK: Please don't stab me! I'm just a simple friar with an encyclopedic knowledge of saintly lore.

MARIAN: *(In a manly voice:)* Don't stab him, Elena.

FRIAR TUCK: Elena?!

MARIAN: *(In a manly voice:)* No. Not Elena. That would be ridiculous. I said...Alan...Uh...

MATILDA: *(In a manly voice:)* Dale!

MARIAN: Yes. Alan-A-Dale. A perfectly reasonable name for a bandit.

FRIAR TUCK: Sounds a bit silly to me.

MARIAN: *(In a manly voice:)* Poke him again, Merry Men!

(All poke Friar Tuck, who giggles.)

FRIAR TUCK: Please! No! I'm highly ticklish! I'm having flashbacks of our "Silly Saturdays" at the monastery!

(Friar Tuck gets up and tries to run, even though he has a sack on his head. He mostly just runs in circles.)

Ha! You'll never catch me now, bandits! I've won the Fastest Friar in the Shire competition for three years in a row.

(The ladies just watch him run in circles for a bit. They shrug, not sure what to do.)

MATILDA: *(In a manly voice:)* I guess we should...fire some arrows at him or something?

MARIAN: Okay...?

(Marian makes "pew-pew" arrow shooting sounds while the Ladies "whoosh" their hands around the Friar, who suddenly stops – terrified at the idea of being shot by an arrow.)

MATILDA: *(In a manly voice:)* Our leader is the best archer in the land. He could skewer you at a thousand paces if he wanted.

MARIAN: *(In a manly voice:)* I think he's had enough.

FRIAR TUCK: Please, give up the life of an outlaw! Turn yourself over to the Sheriff and find solace in his punishments. Was it not Saint Paraphilias who said, "When you're always wrestling with pigs, you have to deal with some nasty rumors"?

MATILDA: *(In a manly voice:)* Let's just poke him with our swords some more and then toss him in the river!

MARIAN: *(In a manly voice:)* No. I want him to take a message to the Sheriff for me.

FRIAR TUCK: So you're the leader then?

(Bird sound is heard.)

CLORINDA: *(In a manly voice:)* Ooo! Robin!

FRIAR TUCK: Robin? That's your name?

MARIAN: *(In a manly voice:)* Yeeeeees. I was going to say Glyndŵr, but I guess Robin it is.

FRIAR TUCK: Do what you want with the ladies, but I demand you set me free!

MARIAN: No he cannot "do what he wants with the ladies." This is not that kind of play!

FRIAR TUCK: Uriticaria the Blessed said, "If you give a man a stick he will surely scratch."

MARIAN: That has nothing to do with what we've talking about! *(In a manly voice:)* Well, you've got quite a bit of spirit. *(In a womanly voice:)* Don't talk down to me, you heartless oaf. *(In a manly voice:)* Oaf, am I? Heartless? Would a heartless man have let you live, or would he have skewered you all on the spot? Be glad for this oaf's mercy. *(In a womanly voice:)* It's an easy thing to talk of mercy when you've a sack over your victim's head. *(In a manly voice:)* Here then. Let's remove the sack and see what claws this kit might have.

MATILDA: *(In a manly voice:)* Are you sure you want to do that, Roger?

ELENA: *(In a manly voice:)* Robin.

MATILDA: *(In a manly voice:)* Robin.

MARIAN: *(In a manly voice:)* I'll risk it. *(Gasps:)* You're...beautiful. *(In a womanly voice:)* You're kind...for a thief.

(In a manly voice:) Would that this thief could steal your heart, gentle maiden.

BERNADETTE: *(In a manly voice:)* Are we really letting this happen? This is starting to get weird.

MARIAN: You'll find my heart is not so easily plundered. I'm not some merchant's sack of gold. *(In a manly voice:)* No. You're of far greater worth to me. What can I steal your affection with? My honest words? You are like a sunrise on a meadow of wildflowers. You're a fresh blown bud after an April rain. *(In a womanly voice:)* Enough, outlaw. You make me blush.

MATILDA: *(In a manly voice:)* And you make the rest of us kind of creeped out. Maybe we should stick to the plan.

FRIAR TUCK: *(Softly crying:)* I think it's wonderful. It's like being in a poem.

MARIAN: *(In a manly voice:)* I would give all the world to see that rosy blush for the rest of my days. *(In a womanly voice:)* Then prove it. Give up this life of banditry. Become an honest man. *(In a manly voice:)* An honest man? As the Sheriff is an honest man? As Guy of Gisbourne is an honest man? No. Keep your honesty. Give me the honesty of the forest any day. The honesty of a cool stream or laughter 'round a fire. *(In a womanly voice:)* You make the life of a bandit sound quite romantic. *(In a manly voice:)* A bandit? We only take back what was unjustly stolen from the people by the Sheriff and Prince John. What use is gold compared to the luster of the sunlight dancing on the River Idle? ...You're blushing again. *(In a womanly voice:)* I feel I have been unfair. Maybe you are a better man than I have supposed. *(In a manly voice:)* Perhaps I will be a thief then, and steal a kiss of m'lady's lips. *(In a womanly voice:)* You steal nothing. I give it freely.

(Marian mimes kissing – eyes closed, fully committed.)

BERNADETTE: This is really awkward.

FRIAR TUCK: (*Still crying:*) It's just so beautiful. I've always been a weepy willy when it comes to a love story.

CLORINDA: (*In a manly voice:*) Now I'm crying.

BERNADETTE: (*In a manly voice:*) Let's wrap this up. I think the Sheriff is coming.

MARIAN: (*In a manly voice:*) Sure. Yes. Sorry. That went a bit farther than I had imagined.

ELENA: (*In a manly voice:*) I can see the Sheriff! He's nearly here! Oh wait. He's caught on a bush. We've got some time.

MARIAN: (*In a manly voice:*) Friar. Tell your Sheriff and his henchman that we will continue to rob from the rich to give to the poor until he has left Nottinghamshire and King Richard is back on the throne!

FRIAR TUCK: That's kind of a tall order. Is there any wiggle room?

BERNADETTE: (*In a manly voice:*) Deliver the message or I'll hunt you down and feed you to a hedgehog.

FRIAR TUCK: Okay. So no wiggle room then. Fair enough. As Abbot Alopecia always said, "A dollop of dung keeps the sun off the scalp."

MATILDA: (*In a manly voice:*) Quick. Let's run off! The Sheriff is here!

(The ladies all begin screaming. The Sheriff and Guy enter.)

SHERIFF: What's going on? Why is everyone screaming? What is the friar doing with a sack on his head? I'm very flustered!

GUY: Careful, everyone. You won't like him when he's flustered.

SHERIFF: I got caught in a bush over there and it's thrown off my whole mood.

ELENA: Sheriff! The bandits captured us and threw sacks over our heads. It was horrible!

CLORINDA: We barely escaped with our lives!

(Friar Tuck removes the sack from his head.)

FRIAR TUCK: It's true.

SHERIFF: But we had an ambush all planned! It was supposed to happen down the road! The impertinence of these bandits is maddening!

FRIAR TUCK: Their leader is a man called Robin who spends his days larking about the dappled sunlight and dreamily bathing in the waterfalls of Sherwood Forest.

SHERIFF: That's oddly specific.

FRIAR TUCK: I'm afraid he's a bit taken with your betrothed.

SHERIFF: The rogue!

FRIAR TUCK: I think it's because of the love he feels for Maid Marian that we're all still standing here. I tried to bravely fight them off, but this Robin is the greatest archer in England. I never stood a chance.

SHERIFF: A great archer, you say.

FRIAR TUCK: I do.

SHERIFF: And in love with Maid Marian.

FRIAR TUCK: I said that too.

SHERIFF: Guy! Attend me! I have a plan hatching that is even more cunning than the last!

MARIAN: More cunning than this poorly planned ambush?

SHERIFF: Twice as cunning! Three times as cunning! Well... two and a half times as cunning at the very least. Definitely double the cunning, plus a little bit of cunning on top of that.

MARIAN: Well, Robin doesn't stand a chance then.

SHERIFF: Yes. Beware, Robin of the Wood! The Sheriff of Nottingham is on the hunt! Along with a whole pack of ferrets we released last week! (*To Guy:*) Any word on how the ferrets are doing? Have they turned up any clues?

GUY: No. They mostly just ran off into the woods and decimated the native bird populations.

SHERIFF: Oh. Well. There are a few less birds out there to sing sweetly in the trees for you. So. Yeah. Take that!

(The Sheriff evil laughs again.)

Come on. Evil laugh with me! You guys always leave me hanging on the evil laugh.

(Everyone evil laughs – the Friar has a very high pitched evil giggle.)

Just stop. You're all pathetic. I'm going back to the castle.

(All performers work to transform the scene into:)

SCENE 5 – The Tournament

(The performers start setting up the space for the Tournament. Some begin setting up a small viewing platform/dais by bunching boxes or trunks together and using some of the banners to create a fair-like atmosphere. Another set of performers bring out a large archery target. There is a bit of a pushing match as one performer tries to force the other to hold the target, neither wants to play the target for the competition. Finally, one of the performers is forced to hold the target while the other stands nearby.)

(The Sheriff and Marian sit on the dais.)

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SHERIFF: So m'lady, are you enjoying the archery tournament I've set up in honor of our betrothal contract?

MARIAN: Yeah. It's great. A dream come true.

(The Sheriff evil laughs.)

SHERIFF: Exactly. A dream come true.

(The Sheriff evil laughs again.)

MARIAN: It's a trap, isn't it.

SHERIFF: Of course it's a trap! It's another one of my brilliantly imprudent schemes of cunning and misdirection. A few weeks ago, when my ambush went awry, I learned that this Robin fellow was an amazing archer, and that he was desperately in love with you. By any chance, have you heard what the grand prize is for whomever wins the tournament?

MARIAN: I don't know. A golden arrow or something.

SHERIFF: A golden arrow?! This isn't a boy scout initiation! I'm not handing out golden weaponry. No my little peahen, the grand prize is a kiss from the lips of Maid Marian herself.

MARIAN: Me?! I'm the prize?

SHERIFF: Of course you're the prize. You're the medieval equivalent of a triple threat: pretty, dim and upwardly noble.

MARIAN: I'm not dim!

SHERIFF: With you as the prize, this Robin will be compelled to enter the tournament. And since he is the greatest archer in the land, whoever wins this tournament must ergo ipso facto be the bandit, Robin.

MARIAN: That's a formal fallacy!

SHERIFF: You're a formal fallacy!

MARIAN: What if Robin doesn't compete?

SHERIFF: You just don't understand cunning plans. You see, best case scenario is that we catch Robin and hang him in the castle square. Worst case, we hang the wrong man. Either way, there's a hanging and everyone eats turkey legs and has a good time. It's a win-win for me.

MARIAN: That's horrible!

SHERIFF: That's the law. I'm just doing my job.

MARIAN: Excuse me. I need to...do something.

SHERIFF: Well, this "something" will have to wait. I'm not letting you out of my sight. We wouldn't want this Robin to come and steal you away, now would we.

MARIAN: I just need to talk to my ladies about...knitting and stuff. You wouldn't understand.

SHERIFF: Fine. But stay where I can see you.

(Marian goes to the Ladies, who are all huddled together.)

MARIAN: I need your help! This is another ridiculous trap.

MATILDA: I thought as much.

BERNADETTE: Oh that Sheriff really butters my biscuits!

CLORINDA: Is that a bad thing or a good thing?

BERNADETTE: I'm not sure.

MARIAN: The problem is that some innocent peasant is going to get hanged simply because he's a good archer! We have to do something.

ELENA: One of us could enter the contest.

MATILDA: We're all terrible archers. Have you even held a bow and arrow before?

ELENA: No. But I'm a quick learner.

MARIAN: We have to think of something! I don't want some random peasant to die because I tricked the Sheriff into thinking that Robin was the greatest archer in all of England!

SHERIFF: Marian! We're about to announce the winner. I'd hate for you to miss the excitement.

MATILDA: Don't worry. We'll think of something.

(Marian returns to her seat by the Sheriff. Ladies all exit. The ARCHER enters.)

SHERIFF: *(Announcing to the crowd:)* And now we have our final contestant!

ARCHER: Thank you, Sheriff! I am the school master from Nottingham Elementary. I am well versed in all the modern mathematical practices and scientific studies. I shall trounce all the competitors using my highly developed intellect and outellect.

SHERIFF: Who is he talking to? Is he talking to me?

MARIAN: He's a school teacher. He treats everyone like they're his students.

ARCHER: The first step in becoming an amazing archer is to master the steady stance and the killing eye. First, the steady stance.

(The Archer makes a silly and exaggerated stance.)

You'll notice the shape my body is making. It's a bit of a cross between a graceful crane and a dog having a tinkle. This is a power stance. No one can knock me over when I take this stance. I'm like an immovable castle wall.

(One of the performers pushes him over.)

Yes, well. I'm not wearing my archery tights right now. If I had my archery tights on, you wouldn't have been able to do that.

SHERIFF: Get on with it!

ARCHER: The next step in firing a perfect shot is to wet the fletching feathers at the base of the arrow.

(The Archer puts the arrow in his mouth like a straw, feathers first. Then he makes a face and starts spitting and sputtering.)

Ugh. I think those were the tail feathers there. They tasted a bit seedy. Anyway, the final step in firing a perfect arrow shot is what the seasoned archers call "the killer's eye." This is the steely gaze of a man who does not waiver, and who possesses the rarest of qualities: an unflinching will and clarity of purpose. I'll demonstrate.

(The Archer makes a silly face.)

SHERIFF: Quit scrunching your face up like that. You look like a cat's bum. Just shoot the arrow!

ARCHER: As you command, M'Lord. So we put together all we have learned...

(Archer does the silly stance and killer eye.)

We pull back on the bow...

(Archer pulls back on the bow. It's a bit beyond his control. He spins around the space, pointing the arrow at everyone – who all duck and scream when it passes by them.)

And we fire!

(A performer standing by the performer holding the target jabs an arrow into the target [as if the Archer shot it]. No effort is made to disguise the fact that the Archer didn't fire the arrow, and that this is theatre, but everyone should pretend that he did. This is not the Merry Men's trickery; in the reality of the play the arrow actually was fired and hit the target. The performer holding the target screams as if he was stabbed. But once the fear has passed he realizes that he is okay.)

SHERIFF: *(Stands excitedly:)* A perfect shot! Do it again!

ARCHER: Alright.

(The Archer repeats the process, a little different this time and a bit faster, but the result is the same. Once again, the target performer screams.)

SHERIFF: He did it again! He split the arrow!

MARIAN: No he didn't.

SHERIFF: Close enough. Let the balladeers debate semantics. Guards! Arrest that archer! He's the bandit of Sherwood! Robin something-or-other.

(Some performers serving as guards grab hold of the Archer.)

ARCHER: No I'm not!

SHERIFF: You may be a clever man, but I am cleverer... erer...

ARCHER: Are you growling at me?

SHERIFF: Nevermind! I knew you couldn't resist a kiss from Maid Marian. This was all a trap.

ARCHER: Who's Maid Marian? I thought the prize was a golden arrow?! I was going to retire on that arrow!

SHERIFF: It doesn't matter. You'll find your retirement at the end of a rope before this hour is up.

ARCHER: But I'm not a bandit!

SHERIFF: Take him away!

(The Ladies enter dressed as the Merry Men – or at least an approximation of it. They are wearing things that they have found around the fair and repurposed as bandit outfits.)

MATILDA: *(In a manly voice:)* Quick, men! They have Robert!

CLORINDA: *(In a manly voice:)* Robin.

MATILDA: *(In a manly voice:)* Robin!

ELENA: *(In a manly voice:)* We have to rescue him! Because he's Robin!

CLORINDA: *(In a manly voice:)* This is not a trick!

(Bernadette plows into the guards, sending them flying. The Merry Men surround the Archer, fighting off guards and keeping the Archer from running away. They aren't trained fighters, but they're clever enough to outmaneuver the guards. The Archer keeps trying to escape, but the Ladies are always able to keep him protected and make it look like a rescue.)

BERNADETTE: Let's go! Back to Sherwood Forest!

ARCHER: I'm not Robin! You can't make me go with you! I won't—

(Bernadette knocks him out, and the other ladies carry the Archer off stage. She then turns to the Sheriff, who is raging at his dazed and defeated guards.)

SHERIFF: You're letting them escape! Don't go! You're wrecking my trap! I spent weeks on this trap, and you're all wrecking it! This day is turning into a pickle, a real bitter pickle!

(Bernadette walks over to the Sheriff and kisses him passionately.)

BERNADETTE: *(In a manly voice:)* Remember me.

(Bernadette runs off. The Sheriff stands there in a daze for a few beats.)

SHERIFF: I think I'm going to have a little cry in the castle. If anyone needs me, I'll be in my room.

(The Sheriff starts to move off. Once more, all performers work to transform the scene into:)

SCENE 6— At the River Idle

(The performers move boxes and banners and flags around the space, transforming it into the River Idle [both the bank and the river itself]. More wackiness and clowning during the transformation. Two performers carrying some banner/rope/fabric between them accidentally wrap up a third performer when they cross on either side of them. The third performer gets tangled in the banner/rope/fabric and gets dragged across stage. Other wacky bits can be added as needed. Finally, the space is transformed.)

(Nursie scrubs one of Marian's dresses, then pins it up on the line to dry.)

NURSIE: *(To herself:)* I don't know what that girl is thinking. It seems like all I'm doing now is washing muddy gowns and mending torn bliauts. There are worse fates in life than having to marry the minor nobility and manage a castle!

(Friar Tuck comes over the river's edge with bathing gear.)

FRIAR TUCK: Pardon me, Nursie! I'm going to take my yearly bath. Would you mind turning around while I get in?

(Nursie turns while Friar Tuck strips to his bathing clothes and enters the river.)

NURSIE: Has it been a year already?

FRIAR TUCK: It's a bit earlier than usual, but after the last few run-ins with those bandits, I was in desperate need of a vigorous washing. As Mother Cacāre Cūlus once said, "When fear strikes the bowles it's time for a scrubbing."

NURSIE: You may want to bathe upstream a ways. There is a vicious pike that lives in this stretch of the Idle. I'd hate to see you get bit.

FRIAR TUCK: I fear no earthly creature, good nurse. The nibbles of fish are simply a reminder of the frailty of man.

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NURSIÉ: Well, the village tanner lost a finger to that fish last week – so you might not want to underestimate its "nibbles."

(The Sheriff and Guy enter. The Sheriff is in a rage.)

SHERIFF: I'm in a rage!

GUY: I know, sir.

SHERIFF: It's been five months since Robin and his Merry Men started menacing the countryside with their generosity and flagrant disregard for my authority!

GUY: They just don't get the system.

(While this dialogue is happening, the Friar starts to get attacked by a large plush pike puppet. Some of the performers operate the plush pike.)

SHERIFF: Things have been going downhill since that archery tournament.

GUY: You mean things have been going uphill.

SHERIFF: What? No. Downhill. The expression is "things have been going downhill."

GUY: But going uphill is way harder.

SHERIFF: Yes, but... Well... That's not the point. It has to do with a loss of control.

GUY: I always just avoid hills if I can. Give me a nice smooth meadow any day.

(The Sheriff punches Guy.)

SHERIFF: You're not being part of the solution, Guy! Be part of the solution!

GUY: I don't understand.

SHERIFF: First there was the trap where we disguised a bear to look like a rich merchant in order to ensure a mauling for our

highwaymen, but we couldn't even get the tunic on the beast before he turned on us.

GUY: How was that my fault?

SHERIFF: Then we had the brilliant idea to pile all of the gold in Nottingham Castle into one big mound in the forest and ambush the bandits when they came to collect it. But the men we set to guard the gold stole it all before we even had a chance to get the word out!

GUY: I'll own that one. We should have done more thorough background checks.

SHERIFF: Every plan we try always seems to fail spectacularly! We've run out of villages to burn and peasants to threaten and terrorize! This idea of robbing from the rich and giving to the poor is turning the whole system on its head!

GUY: Maybe the problem is that your plans are a bit—

SHERIFF: Don't you say it!

GUY: Convoluted.

SHERIFF: Oh. Well thank you, Guy. I thought you were going to say they were extremely complex and difficult to follow. You've made my morning.

GUY: No, that's what it—

SHERIFF: Stop while you're ahead, Guy. I've just thought of another brilliant plan—one that is sure to work. Grab that dress—we're going to have a picnic.

GUY: Is that part of the plan, or are we just having a nice afternoon?

SHERIFF: Just grab the dress, you fool!

(Guy grabs the dress.)

NURSIE: Wait! That's Marian's dress!

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SHERIFF: And we need it for our next clever trap. With this dress I will ensnare the outlaw Robin and bring him to justice. By order of Prince John, I take this dress for the state!

GUY: Thank you for your contribution.

(The Sheriff and Guy exit. Friar is still being harassed by the pike.)

NURSIE: Oh, what should I do? I love Marian like a daughter, but I don't agree with what she's doing out there in the wood. She should settle down and be happy... But I suppose if she settles down, she won't be happy... Friar! I need your advice. Should I help a friend in need or—

FRIAR TUCK: *(Screaming – and fighting a pike:)* Help! Help! Just help! Please!

NURSIE: Thanks for listening, Friar! I'm going to borrow these. I need to warn a friend and I wouldn't want the Sheriff's guards to recognize me!

FRIAR TUCK: No! Help me! Don't go!

(Nursie steals Friar Tuck's clothes and exits, while Friar Tuck battles the pike.)

(All performers work to transform the scene into:)

SCENE 7—Deep in the Shire Wood

(The performers quickly transform the space from the river to the forest. There is less wackiness during this transition. Banners, boxes, flags, and platforms become a large oak tree [or some semblance of it]. We are deep in Sherwood Forest – it's a spooky, magical and silly place. All of the actors leave the stage once the oak tree has been created. There are a few beats where all that can be heard are the sounds of the forest.)

(Marian and the Ladies enter from all around the space. Some can even come through the house if possible. They are all dressed as the Merry Men now. They meet under the oak.)

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MARIAN: Is everyone here?

CLORINDA: *(From out in the audience:)* I'm not! I'm stuck in a shrubbery!

ELENA: *(From out in the audience:)* I think I'm lost!

(Clorinda and Elena can climb over seats, or over audience members, trying to make their way onto the stage.)

MARIAN: Quit messing around and just come up here!

CLORINDA: Sorry.

ELENA: It's hard to see in the forest.

MARIAN: Alright ladies, I think the Sheriff and Guy are up to something. Sherwood is crawling with the Sheriff's militia. He's got us trapped in the forest!

BERNADETTE: It's obviously another one of his wacky traps.

MATILDA: I'm not that worried about the Sheriff's traps. They all seem to explode in his face.

ELENA: Like when he tried to launch buttered badgers from trebuchets to create a slippery swarm of claws and death, but all of the badgers escaped once they were buttered because the guards couldn't hold them.

CLORINDA: Or when he made all of his guards ride their horses backwards so that no one could ever sneak up on them, and they ended up in Wales.

MARIAN: Okay, so the Sheriff's not the best strategist, but we shouldn't underestimate him. All it would take is one lucky jab or punch to expose us all!

MATILDA: I wish King Richard was here. None of this would even be an issue.

MARIAN: Well he's off fighting some crusade, so it's up to us to fix our own problems. We'll have to split up so we have a better chance of evading the Sheriff's men. Let's go!

(Marian and the Ladies exit in different directions.)

(The Sheriff and Guy enter. The Sheriff is wearing the dress that he and Guy stole earlier.)

GUY: I'm still not too sure about this new plan.

SHERIFF: Don't be so ninth-century, Guy. This plan has the one element that all of my other plans lacked—me at the very center.

GUY: You seemed pretty central to all of the other plans.

SHERIFF: Not today, Guy. I really don't need this today.

GUY: Just saying.

SHERIFF: Yes. Thank you, Guy. Duly noted. But what sets this plan apart is that I won't leave the execution of this trap to some idiot underling or underpaid intern. I will be the bait and the poison.

GUY: We're poisoning someone?

SHERIFF: It's a figure of speech, Guy! Keep up. Robin is in love with Maid Marian. And when he sees me in this getup he'll assume that I am Marian lost in the wood and will come over to help me. Then I will strike like an adder!

GUY: Like an otter?

SHERIFF: An adder! It's a snake. You're a real bumbler, Guy. A grade-A bumbler.

GUY: So why am I even here?

SHERIFF: Because you're going to chase me. Just to make it seem real. That's why we've got the militia out in force. It's all a clever ruse. Now I'm going to run off, and after a few moments

you come chasing after me. Then there will be two of us to give this Robin what he deserves!

GUY: What could go wrong.

SHERIFF: I can't think of a thing. It's airtight. Okay – give me a head start.

(The Sheriff exits. Nursie enters opposite the Sheriff, looking for Marian and the Ladies. Guy hides.)

NURSIE: Marian! Marian, is that you! Marian? Miscellaneous Ladies in Waiting? Anyone?

(Guy jumps out with his sword drawn.)

GUY: Hold, villain!

NURSIE: Hold what?

GUY: I'm not really sure. Hold still, I guess.

NURSIE: Alright.

GUY: *(Seeing her outfit:)* Is that you, Friar Tuck? It's hard to tell in the shadows of the forest.

NURSIE: Yeeees. It's me. Friar Tuck. As...Saint...Tree always said...umm..."Don't stab me."

GUY: Saint Tree?

NURSIE: Yes. He was a martyr. A lesser martyr. He used to dig for gold and other minerals before he gave it all up to serve a higher power. And then he was stabbed in the mines through trickery, which is why he said, "Don't stab me."

GUY: So he was a minor miner martyr mysteriously murdered in the mineral mines?

NURSIE: Don't think about it too hard.

GUY: Well, you should really head back to the castle, Friar. Things are about to get pretty weird here in Sherwood. The Sheriff has a sure-fire plan.

NURSIE: Oh dear.

GUY: I know. Best be on your way.

NURSIE: Sounds good to me.

(Nursie exits. Friar Tuck enters from another direction, and Guy hides again. Friar Tuck is still in his underclothes, since Nursie stole his Friar's outfit. He crosses to center, then does a little wiggle. Then another. Something is in his underclothes. He pulls out a fish.)

FRIAR TUCK: Hello, lunch. You must have been hiding from the pike in there. Out of the pike's mouth and into the friar.

(He giggles at his own joke, then he starts wiggling again. He reaches into his underclothes and pulls out another fish, and another, and another. He ties the fish in a line with a bit of string.)

As Saint Surströmming said, "Keep a herring in your pocket and you'll find out who your real friends are."

(Guy jumps out again, sword drawn.)

GUY: Hold, rogue!

FRIAR TUCK: *(Holding his catch:)* No. Hold fish.

GUY: Everyone's a comedian.

FRIAR TUCK: It's me, Sir Guy. Friar Tuck.

GUY: You won't fool me so easily! I just spoke with the Friar. En garde!

(The Friar does another wiggle, even more elaborate than the last time, and pulls a large fish out of his underclothes. Guy and the Friar fight, the Friar using the large fish as a sword. Some wacky

fighting ensues, but the duel doesn't last long. It ends with Guy kicking Friar Tuck into some bushes.)

GUY: *(Shouting:)* Take that, you potbellied highwayman! I hope you've learned your lesson! Now it's time for me to chase down the Sheriff.

(Guy exits in the same direction as the Sheriff did earlier. The MILITIA enters, chasing various Ladies [except Marian]. There is a wacky transitional fight scene where the Militia are tricked into running off, and the Ladies are left onstage with Nursie.)

MATILDA: *(In a manly voice:)* Well if it isn't Friar Tuck.

ELENA: *(In a manly voice:)* Come to help the Sheriff in his wacky trap.

NURSIE: No! It's me!

BERNADETTE: *(In a manly voice:)* You should have stayed in bed this morning, Friar. We don't like snitches in Sherwood.

CLORINDA: *(In a manly voice:)* Yeah. Snitches get tickle-switches.

NURSIE: What's a tickle-switch?

MATILDA: *(In a manly voice:)* Let's show him.

(Some of the Ladies tickle Nursie, while others spank her. Nursie giggles and yelps.)

NURSIE: Ha! Oh! No! Ah! Haha! Stop it! Ooo! This is not an effective form of discipline! Ow! Hahahaha! Eee! Stop!

(Nursie finally has had enough.)

You leave me no choice. Nursie Thunder Punch!!

(Nursie does a big superhero-style punch that sends all of the Ladies flying back at the same time, and lays them out on the floor.)

MATILDA: Nursie!?! It is you!

ELENA: What are you doing here?

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