

ROBIN HOOD

AN ADAPTION IN TWO ACTS

By **Dan Neidermyer**

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SYNOPSIS: Experience the life of Robin Hood, prince of thieves, through the amusing narrative of the roly-poly wandering minstrel, Friar Tuck, as the legend of Robin Hood marvelously comes to life as wrongs are once again chivalrously righted by the valiant outlaw who robs from the rich and gives to the poor. Meet Little John, Robin's right-hand-man, Maid Marian, Robin's sweetheart and love, and Marian's dedicated handmaiden, Cassandra. The play will take you through the legend of Sherwood Forest (no you don't need a forest, we said easily staged) to the robbing of the Sheriff's men, when Robin Hood dared defy both the evil Sheriff of Nottingham and the despotic monarch King John. Most of the wonderful legends are in this play (well, we don't really shoot arrows) but you'll enjoy the sequence when Friar Tuck takes the gold shillings from the Sheriff's men (really foil-wrapped chocolates) and tosses them to the peasants in the audience. Ample room to include troubadours, jugglers, jesters, strolling minstrels and acrobats. Area staging.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(7 MEN, 2 WOMEN, 1-4 EITHER, EXTRAS)

ROBIN HOOD (m).....The nobleman Robin of Locksley turned outlaw. *(120 lines)*

LADY MARIAN FITZWALTER (f)The noble lady who becomes Maid Marian and a spy for Robin Hood within the Sheriff of Nottingham's castle. *(84 lines)*

TOMAS ALLARD (m).....The pernicious, greedy and cruel Sheriff of Nottingham who represents the despotic tyrant King John of England. *(179 lines)*

LORD DUNSTAN (m).....A weak and sniveling noble-underling to the Sheriff of Nottingham. (101 lines)

FRIAR TUCK (m/f).....A wandering minstrel, bard, balladeer, and troubadour, who while re-telling the legend of *Robin Hood* may double as the Bishop of Hereford, Towncrier and Will Scarlet. (10 lines)

BISHOP OF HEREFORD (m/f).....Representative of the Church in England. May double with Friar Tuck, Towncrier and Will Scarlet. (31 lines)

TOWNCRIER (m/f).....The means of delivering news throughout Medieval England. May double with Friar Tuck, Bishop of Hereford and Will Scarlet. (1 line)

WILL SCARLET (m/f).....A nobleman who despises both King John and the Sheriff of Nottingham and becomes an ally to Robin Hood. May double with Friar Tuck, Bishop of Hereford and Towncrier. (6 lines)

LITTLE JOHN (m)A garrulous braggart who becomes one of Robin's most trusted friends. (38 lines)

CASSANDRA, HANDMAIDEN TO

LADY MARIAN (f)A servant to Lady Marian. (19 lines)

RUGGED WOODSMAN (m)A peasant serf within Nottinghamshire. (No lines)

ROBIN HOOD

POOR YEOMAN (m).....Another peasant serf within Nottinghamshire wrongly accused of poaching the King's deer in Sherwood Forest. (14 lines)

FOOTMAN (m)A servant within the castle who is wrongly accused of being a spy for Robin Hood. (5 lines)

SERF (m)A peasant forced by the Sheriff of Nottingham to pay much higher taxes. (7 lines)

SHERIFF'S MEN

(THREE OR AS MANY AS DESIRED).....Representatives of the Sheriff of Nottingham carrying large amounts of shillings through Sherwood Forest on their way to King John's treasury in London. (*SHERIFF'S MEN: ~6 lines*)

CASTING

Written to utilize a cast of seven characters or as many roles as desired and available. When utilizing a cast of seven, the individuals creating the roles of "Little John" and "Cassandra" can double, with a simple costume change, with several of the smaller roles like "Rugged Woodsman," "Poor Yeoman," "Footman," "Serf," and the "Sheriff's Men."

ADDITIONAL CHARACTERS

"Friar Tuck" may double as "Bishop of Hereford," the "Towncrier," and "Will Scarlet." This type of doubling is a story-telling device that enables the actor to interact with the audience, explaining and re-telling the legend of Robin Hood by being involved within the creation of that legend! Thus, the wandering minstrel speaks directly to the audience, much as a jovial narrator, and then becomes a participant within the story's action, which he subsequently explains to the audience.

At the director's discretion, "Bishop of Hereford," the "Towncrier," and "Will Scarlet" could be cast as separate characters. Should additional cast members be desired, a director may provide Robin Hood with a Band of Merry Men; Maid Marian with several Chambermaids and Ladies-in-waiting; and the Sheriff of Nottingham with a "host of conniving noblemen" or "loyal bodyguards within his castle."

A NOTE CONCERNING CASTING

Except for the characters of Robin Hood and Little John, all other roles could be played by females.

Though it is advisable to play the role of Tomas Allard, the Sheriff of Nottingham, as a haughty man, the role could be cast as Tomasina, the Sheriff's sinister representative in Nottingham. Friar Tuck could become "Prioress Anna" or "Mother Abbess Anna," a member of a religious order lovingly re-telling the story of the outlaw Robin Hood just as joyfully and humorously as the wandering troubadour monk. Thus, Robin Hood can be played by as few as seven characters or as many as desired and with a cast of five men and two women; or two men and five women; or two men and any other combination so desired and available.

PROPS

- ❑ 4 long wooden staffs (A tree limb is most authentic)
- ❑ Swords for the Sheriff of Nottingham, Lord Dunstan and the Sheriff's men
- ❑ Wooden box or chest to carry the King's tax money
- ❑ Several leather or cloth pouches or purses utilized to carry the King's tax money
- ❑ Hangman's black hood (Act Two, Scene 5)
- ❑ Gold coins utilized as tax money (NOTE: For the best effect, the gold coins should be pieces of chocolate wrapped as "gold coins," which can subsequently be 'returned' to the peasants of England, which in reality are audience members)
- ❑ Trees in Sherwood Forest

ROBIN HOOD

- ❑ Dressing table and chairs
- ❑ Large wooden chair (Similar to a throne)
- ❑ Small “counting” table
- ❑ Hangman’s gallows

DESCRIPTION OF STAGE SET

The action of the play takes place in three areas: Sherwood Forest, Lady Marian’s Sitting Room, and the Sheriff of Nottingham’s Castle.

These areas can be suggested by several easily made or acquired stage props:

1. SHERWOOD FOREST, several trees
2. LADY MARIAN’S SITTING ROOM, dressing table and chair
3. SHERIFF OF NOTTINGHAM’S CASTLE, large wooden chair and a small table serving as a “counting table”

To enhance the beauty of the stage areas, brilliantly colored banners and tapestries can be hung in both Lady Marian’s and the Sheriff of Nottingham’s rooms; a canopied bed could be added to Lady Marian’s Sitting Room; and any other furniture and accessories that suggest Medieval England.

A NOTE CONCERNING STAGE SET

By utilizing several simple stage properties, each staging area can be represented at the same time on the stage thus eliminating the need to move sets during scene changes. Therefore, the action of the play can proceed quite easily from scene-to-scene without lengthy scene changes.

Appropriate lighting can be focused on each “stage property,” thus making each stage property appear to be in a different staging area and thus, scenes can be changed merely by changing the lighting rather than the time-consuming process of moving properties on and off stage.

COSTUMES

Costumes can be as simple or as elaborate as desired. Consulting a reference book on period costumes will show illustrations of the clothing styles worn during twelfth-century Medieval England.

Basically, ROBIN HOOD, TOMAS ALLARD, LORD DUNSTAN, and LITTLE JOHN should wear tights, a colored tunic, and moccasin-like footwear. Belts, swords, capes, and personal jewelry become colorful accessories that enhance the basic outfit of tights and tunic.

FRIAR TUCK wears a very simple brown robe tied at the waist by a piece of old and frayed rope from which can be a rosary. LADY MARIAN and CASSANDRA wear floor-length dresses, personal jewelry, and appropriate headgear.

Perusal Only
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**ACT ONE
PROLOGUE**

AT RISE:

A most jovial, roly-poly FRIAR TUCK meanders down the center aisle toward the stage. He is muttering a long-lost Medieval love poem or singing an ancient minstrel's ballad. Regardless, the sound he's making is noise. Suddenly, as if boldly interrupted, FRIAR TUCK stops singing, turns and acknowledges the audience.

FRIAR TUCK: Oh, good morrow and god speed to you! I suppose you wonder what I was doing? Singing, of course. Well, I would call it singing, you might call it— *(Shrugs his shoulders and chuckles.)* Actually, I was reminiscing. You see, while I am *(Pointing to his cowl and cloak.)* a member of the cloth, a friar— *(Leaning into the audience as if to share a secret.)* I am also a minstrel . . . a wandering bard . . . a troubadour of sorts . . . a singer of great tales and wondrous stories of grand heroes and disreputable villains, but —good or bad— *(Folding his hands, prayer-like.)* all part of life! *(Looking heavenward, so pious.)* And he makes His sun to shine and his rain to fall upon both, but just because he does that doesn't mean *(Looks straight at the audience.)* I have to like them all . . . because some are— *(Changes his mind.)* —allow me to show you rather than tell you a story about two men . . . *(Pauses to consider this statement.)* well, a story about one man, a great hero . . . and the other . . . a skunk of the grandest and smelliest order! *(FRIAR TUCK turns toward the main staging area, which is festooned in such a manner so as to create the deepest of woodland glens in Sherwood Forest. FRIAR TUCK, the balladeer, now serves as a tour guide.)*

FRIAR TUCK: Here is our hero.

A spot illuminates ROBIN HOOD battling a RUGGED WOODSMAN. They both have long wooden staffs. The battle moves vigorously across the stage as each man knocks the wooden staff of the other. The noise from the clashing staffs builds as each struggles to maintain his own balance while throwing each other off balance. Certainly, this battle will end in a draw! Then, suddenly, skillfully, with a sudden and powerful thrust, ROBIN HOOD whams the RUGGED WOODSMAN's staff and the RUGGED WOODSMAN loses his balance and slides across the floor. ROBIN HOOD, noting the FRIAR's disapproving gesture, immediately freezes. Spot fades.

FRIAR TUCK: And here is our skunk. *(A spot illuminates the SHERIFF OF NOTTINGHAM who sits in a frozen position atop a grand chair looking down on POOR YEOMAN, who also stands in a frozen position.)* A skunk of the grandest and smelliest order! A skunk whose smell everyone in England has come to disdain! Everyone that is but King John, who is also a skunk of the grandest and smelliest order!

SHERIFF: So, you lazy laggard, poaching again in the King's forest?!

YEOMAN: No, my lord Sheriff, you have been misinformed.

SHERIFF: Misinformed? Oh, do say. Dare you accuse one of our King's soldiers of making a false accusation?

YEOMAN: *(Quickly, meekly.)* Oh, no, no.

SHERIFF: Or perhaps of lying?

YEOMAN: No, no.

SHERIFF: Or trying then to fabricate stories about deeds that never happened? Like you trying to sneak into the King's forest? And perhaps you weren't carrying a bow at the time the King's soldiers caught you crawling on your belly through Sherwood Forest? Crawling on your belly like a thief! Or were you crawling to avoid being caught as you plotted to steal from our good King? Ehh, which is it?

YEOMAN: I wasn't plotting against our king. I was only trying to feed my family, my wife and seven children. My Lord Sheriff, I'm a very poor man.

SHERIFF: England's full of poor men! And that is no reason to break the King's law and poach the King's deer in the King's forest.

YEOMAN: But I can hardly grow enough food on my tiny parcel of land, and the King has a hundred thousand acres in his forest.

SHERIFF: The King has what God gave him . . . through the divine right of kings.

YEOMAN: But if God has given our King so much, then why should our King demand even more from us poor peasants?

SHERIFF: Your meager taxes, you sluggard, support the King's army.

YEOMAN: But why does the King need my few farthings to support his large army?

SHERIFF: Silence!

YEOMAN: But, my Lord Sheriff, surely you have asked yourself the same question: Why does King John need such a large army? We are not at war.

SHERIFF: A large army keeps England out of war.

YEOMAN: No, my Lord Sheriff, a large army only eats!

SHERIFF: (*Becoming angry.*) I said *silence!* Our King's army must be large and must be strong to preserve England and to take back the Holy Land in the Crusades.

YEOMAN: But the water around our fair island preserves us already! And the Crusades are the monks' war. Why not let the monks in the monasteries fight the Crusades?

SHERIFF: Because if our King's army doesn't fight in the Holy Land, those infidels now in Jerusalem will soon be in London!

YEOMAN: Oh, I doubt that very much, my Lord Sheriff. Those camel-riding infidels in Jerusalem are from the desert. They would never like our island's weather; it's too cold and much too rainy here for desert people!

SHERIFF: (*Shouting.*) Silence, sluggard! You are accused of not paying your taxes and trying to kill one of the King's deer.

YEOMAN: I wanted only one deer to feed my family. One deer will last my family months, and the King has so many deer in his forest.

SHERIFF: And if every family in England poached and killed just one deer every month in Sherwood Forest, soon the King would have no deer. And what would happen then?

YEOMAN: Then, my Lord Sheriff, I am afraid our King would starve...just as his subjects are now starving.

SHERIFF: You are starving because you are lazy!

YEOMAN: One man can do only so much, and our taxes are too high. We must give most of what we grow to the King, and still he demands more!

SHERIFF: That is not my concern, wretch! You have been caught stealing deer from the King's forest. I sentence you to death by hanging. *(Sheriff and Yeoman freeze in position.)*

FRIAR TUCK: You see, Sheriff of Nottingham, the King's representative in our part of merry old England, which is not so merry right now, is a most cruel and cold-hearted lout! Though he screams of his loyalty to the King, the truth is, he steals part of every collection of the King's tax, and dines on the finest young venison. For every deer the Sheriff's soldiers kill in the King's forest, another poor farmer swings at the end of the Sheriff's rope...for the Sheriff's own crimes! *(Looking heavenward, piously. Back to his audience.)* But now, to share more of this story with you! Remember, you are in England during the last half of the twelfth century. The tyrant King John sits on the throne in London, the throne he has greedily stolen from his own brother, good Prince Richard, who is now fighting far away from home in the Crusades. Our people are very poor, and they need Robin Hood, an outlaw who robs the rich to help the poor.

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

Sitting room of the SHERIFF OF NOTTINGHAM. Though the YEOMAN exited the stage during the recent blackout, the SHERIFF continues to be enraged with the poor, hungry serf.

SHERIFF: These peasants who think they can just walk into Sherwood Forest and walk out with one of the King's deer scot free and then think I, the Sheriff of Nottingham, won't notice, think I, protector of the King's forest, won't do anything about their illegal poaching, these thieving peasants must be stopped! I demand the King's law be upheld!

LORD DUNSTAN: But, my lord Sheriff, your men cannot possibly stand guard in every part of Sherwood Forest every moment of every day.

SHERIFF: *(Great sarcasm and cynicism conveyed within his tone.)* Well, said, my Lord Dunstan. As if I didn't already know that!

LORD DUNSTAN: The problem then is how do we discourage the local farmers from hunting in Sherwood Forest.

SHERIFF: Hang a few of these worthless sluggards!

LORD DUNSTAN: Hang, my lord Sheriff?

SHERIFF: Yes, hang! Let these lazy, shiftless, fly-bitten peasants who dare take their crossbow into Sherwood Forest swing from the end of my rope! *(FRIAR TUCK dons a large rosary, bishop's hat, or some other vestment indicating a high church position, thus "becoming" BISHOP OF HEREFORD.)*

BISHOP OF HEREFORD: But, sire, you cannot have every poor English peasant swinging from the end of your rope! *(Turns to address the audience.)* Please don't get confused. I'm the same Friar Tuck, but it will be much easier to share the story of these two men with you if I occasionally become a different person. *(Turns back to speak to the Sheriff.)* Now, as I was saying, my Lord Sheriff, you cannot have every poor English peasant swinging from the end of your rope!

SHERIFF: *(Growling.)* But it is the King's law.

BISHOP OF HEREFORD: And good King John, may God save our King, cannot have every poor English peasant swinging from the end of your rope either!

SHERIFF: And why not?

LORD DUNSTAN: Who would pay the taxes?

BISHOP OF HEREFORD: Well said, my Lord Dunstan.

SHERIFF: The issue here is not "paying taxes." I will see that every serf in Nottinghamshire pays taxes! The issue here is the illegal poaching of the King's deer in Sherwood Forest. And I will not permit this poaching to continue!

BISHOP OF HEREFORD: And King John? What will he not permit?

SHERIFF: Doomed, my Lord Bishop?

BISHOP OF HEREFORD: Neither you nor our good King John can keep demanding England's poor peasants keep paying such high taxes.

SHERIFF: Ah! Listen to you, the representative of the church, speaking such hypocrisy!

BISHOP OF HEREFORD: Hypocrisy, sire?

SHERIFF: Of course, hypocrisy! You clergy demand every bit as many shillings as the King of England's poor peasants Sunday-after-Sunday offering-after-offering!

BISHOP OF HEREFORD: Ah, perhaps we do, my Lord Sheriff. After all, operating God's church—feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, housing the homeless—these works of charity take money, money we receive graciously from England's peasants. But the difference is *(Pausing, making certain of the Sheriff's attention.)* England's peasants may decide not to give money to God's church and suffer no consequences, but if England's peasants decide not to pay taxes to King John, then you want every one of them swinging from the end of your rope!

SHERIFF: Your word, my Lord Bishop, sounds treasonous!

BISHOP OF HEREFORD: To you, my Lord Sheriff, who is always searching for a higher position in the King's court, every word sounds treasonous!

SHERIFF: Enough! You serve the King!

BISHOP OF HEREFORD: I also serve God.

SHERIFF: *(Informing him.)* At King John's pleasure.

BISHOP OF HEREFORD: *(Correcting him.)* And the will of God.

SHERIFF: Whatever! No matter. You must still be loyal to King John!

BISHOP OF HEREFORD: I am loyal, most loyal, to King John. And I assure you every good churchman throughout England is loyal to those he serves, considering more fully the needs of his people.

SHERIFF: The needs of his people? And what about the needs of the King? King John, after all, is our protector!

BISHOP OF HEREFORD: Is he?

SHERIFF: Bishop, you sound more treasonous with every word you speak.

BISHOP OF HEREFORD: I serve a King who seems deaf to the hungry stomachs of his own people while seeming to care only about filling his own purse...and the purses of those arrogant individuals who surround him.

SHERIFF: You, too, Bishop could swing from the end of a rope.

BISHOP OF HEREFORD: Is that a threat or a promise?

SHERIFF: Whichever you prefer.

BISHOP OF HEREFORD: What I care to hear is compassion for the poor peasants who need food and clothing.

SHERIFF: If you care so much for these lazy ne'er do-wells, give them your food, your clothing.

BISHOP OF HEREFORD: I already have, sire.

LORD DUNSTAN: And still they clamor for more!?

BISHOP OF HEREFORD: There is such a great need, and I have so little.

SHERIFF: But the church has so much hidden away, deep inside your monasteries!

BISHOP OF HEREFORD: And we of the clergy are graciously and most generously giving as much as we are able, but we must have King John's help.

SHERIFF: And to have that, you must have the King's favor.

BISHOP OF HEREFORD: Which you have.

SHERIFF: Because I serve the King, and in serving good King John, I serve all of England.

BISHOP OF HEREFORD: While lining your own pocket.

SHERIFF: Listen to the kettle calling the pot black!

BISHOP OF HEREFORD: Unfortunately many wrongs still exist in England.

SHERIFF: (*Enjoying having put the Bishop in a vice*) Yes, I suppose they do...and among the most vile of wrongs is the peasants' killing of King John's deer in Sherwood Forest.

BISHOP OF HEREFORD: But they are not King John's deer!

SHERIFF: They graze in King John's forest!

LORD DUNSTAN: And that makes them King John's deer!

BISHOP OF HEREFORD: First of all, they are God's deer, my Lord Sheriff. They roam the countryside freely and I daresay the deer have probably been here in England before you or King John were!

SHERIFF: Perhaps, but those deer are now in Sherwood Forest, which makes them property of King John!

BISHOP OF HEREFORD: Those deer leap into Sherwood Forest only because they observe no man-made boundaries. Outside Sherwood Forest, those same deer which you call "King John's deer" suddenly become once again "God's deer." And I'm certain, very certain, if the deer knew boundaries and understood the meaning of borders they would much rather belong to God than to the tyrant King John!

SHERIFF: Treason!

BISHOP OF HEREFORD: My Lord Sheriff, how can a deer commit treason?

SHERIFF: (*Fuming.*) Not the deer, you!

BISHOP OF HEREFORD: You would accuse me, a bishop of the church, of treason when it is you who steal from the very taxes you collect?

SHERIFF: Some day, Bishop, your tongue will wrap your neck in a hangman's noose!

BISHOP OF HEREFORD: Perhaps, and surely, some day, my Lord Sheriff, you will meet a higher judgment which I trust will be infinitely more merciful and understanding than you.

SHERIFF: Perhaps, but I will wait for that day.

BISHOP OF HEREFORD: It will come.

SHERIFF: (*Very cynical.*) Perhaps, but until such time, I shall remain judge for good King John, and I vow to put an end to the thievery of the King's deer! No matter who or how many swing to their deaths!

BISHOP OF HEREFORD: Then may God truly have mercy on your iniquitous soul. (*And with that, the Sheriff of Nottingham proudly struts from his sitting room, Lord Dunstan following. Bishop of Hereford, becoming "Friar Tuck," turns to the audience.*)

FRIAR TUCK: You see . . . is he not just as I told you? A skunk! And you're about to see how our hero, Robin Hood, became an outlaw because of this skunk and his men. You see...originally....Robin Hood's real name was Robin Fitzooth....and young Robin was the handsome and valiant son of Hugh Fitzooth, who was also a very brave man. Together, they served the true king of England: Richard the Lion-Hearted. But alas, Richard the Lion-Hearted was, as I have already told you, far away from home in the Holy land fighting the infidels...and while he was away fighting for the glory and valor of Christendom, his wicked and very selfish brother Prince John had taken the throne...to the horror of us all.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

A glen in Sherwood Forest.

The Sheriff of Nottingham and Lord Dunstan enter. Both remain angry and displeased with the words they most recently heard from the Bishop's lips.

SHERIFF: Imagine! The Bishop trying to claim the deer in this forest do not belong to King John!

LORD DUNSTAN: It is better said the Bishop is "trying to remain" on both sides of the fence.

SHERIFF: Both sides of the fence?

LORD DUNSTAN: The "political" fence. Our lord bishop must appear to be a friend to the serfs who live in Nottinghamshire so those ignorant peasants will foolishly continue to drop their shillings and farthings—

SHERIFF: —into his silver offering plates!

LORD DUNSTAN: Exactly...and yet as the King's bishop, he must also appear to be a good friend to King John to keep—

SHERIFF: —his position! How convenient.

LORD DUNSTAN: How difficult. No man can serve two masters. Even the bishop's own Scripture tells him that.

SHERIFF: So, we wait.

LORD DUNSTAN: Wait?

SHERIFF: Yes, we wait for the bishop to make a mistake, and then—

LORD DUNSTAN: And then? *(The Sheriff gestures as if pulling a hangman's noose upward. Obviously, enjoying his thoughts of ending the Bishop's rule.)*

LORD DUNSTAN: But King John? What would he think?

SHERIFF: He will agree with me.

LORD DUNSTAN: Agree with you?

SHERIFF: When I tell him how many deer the bishop's monks were poaching from Sherwood Forest.

LORD DUNSTAN: None I think.

SHERIFF: None!? My Lord Dunstan, methinks you are blind.

LORD DUNSTAN: Blind?

SHERIFF: To the trap we can set and bait to catch our good bishop in the act of stealing deer.

LORD DUNSTAN: But he doesn't steal deer.

SHERIFF: Not yet—

LORD DUNSTAN: Then?

SHERIFF: But he will...when I tell the king.

LORD DUNSTAN: My Lord Sheriff, you would lie to the king about the bishop?

SHERIFF: Oh, really, Lord Dunstan, wars are nothing but well placed lies designed to deceive your enemy.

LORD DUNSTAN: But my Lord the Bishop is not our enemy!

SHERIFF: Nor is he our friend!

LORD DUNSTAN: But he has the ear of the people.

SHERIFF: And I have the ear of King John.

LORD DUNSTAN: But the bishop!

SHERIFF: Yes? What about the bishop?

LORD DUNSTAN: He could turn all the peasants against us—

SHERIFF: Really? And against the entire King's soldiers too?

LORD DUNSTAN: But it would take weeks for the King's soldiers to reach us from London, and by that time, my Lord Bishop could have— *(Pauses)*

SHERIFF: *(Noticing the pause; becoming quite cynical.)* Our heads, you mean? *(Lord Dunstan appears to be so frightened at this thought, he can only shake his head in agreement with the Sheriff's words.)*

SHERIFF: Nonsense!

LORD DUNSTAN: Say that when the peasants are banging on your door, demanding— *(Another long pause).*

SHERIFF: *(Noticing the pause; becoming even more cynical.)* My head? *(Lord Dunstan appears even more frightened, so much so he can only shake his head in agreement with the Sheriff's words.)* Believe me, Lord Dunstan, I do not intend to allow that to happen...ever.

ROBIN HOOD, whistling, boldly enters Sherwood Forest, carrying a large wooden staff. SHERIFF spots ROBIN HOOD.

SHERIFF: And what is this, my Lord Dunstan? A thief in the King's Forest?

ROBIN HOOD: No, my Lord.

SHERIFF: But you carry a staff!

ROBIN HOOD: All the King's subjects carry wooden staffs.

SHERIFF: Not all, especially not the serfs who work the farms, and not a subject entering Sherwood Forest. *(Becoming angered; his volume increasing.)* Unless that subject means to do harm with that wooden staff!

ROBIN HOOD: *(Quite honestly.)* I mean no harm to you—

SHERIFF: *(Very cynical.)* How good to know that.

ROBIN HOOD: —nor to anyone. I carry the staff only to show his Majesty the King.

SHERIFF: What!?

ROBIN HOOD: What?

SHERIFF: *(Unnerved.)* Yes, what? *(Quoting Robin Hood.)* "To show his Majesty the King" what?

ROBIN HOOD: That I could be among England's finest defenders.

SHERIFF: Really?

ROBIN HOOD: I'm on my way to London now. To the King's palace. I wish to seek an audience with the King.

SHERIFF: *(Cynically impressed by this youth's boldness.)* An audience with his Majesty! You? A serf?

ROBIN HOOD: I am not a serf.

SHERIFF: *(Taken aback.)* But you look as if you are a lowly serf!

ROBIN HOOD: What I look like has no bearing on what I am.

SHERIFF: How interesting, my lord— *(Pauses, searching for a name.)*

ROBIN HOOD: Robin, my lord, Robin Fitzooth of Locksley.

SHERIFF: *(Merely repeating the name, quite unimpressed.)* Robin of Locksley.

ROBIN HOOD: And as I was saying I'm on my way to volunteer to serve our King.

SHERIFF: Really!

ROBIN HOOD: And to show our King true skill with the staff.

SHERIFF: *(Continuing to be quite cynical about this boastful knave.)*

How bold! How courageous! And what a braggart you are!

ROBIN HOOD: No, my Lord. A braggart speaks loudly only about that which is not true. What I speak is—

SHERIFF: *(Interrupting.)* Truth, I suppose!

ROBIN HOOD: *(Confirming.)* Truth, my Lord.

SHERIFF: Then, if you be so skillful with that wooden staff of yours, show me! Show me what you are able to do with that tree limb!

ROBIN HOOD: But why?

SHERIFF: Do as I say! And don't question!

ROBIN HOOD: A rather strong command *(Imitating the Sheriff's earlier tone and comment about himself.)* for a serf walking through Sherwood Forest.

SHERIFF: *(Angered.)* I am not a serf!

ROBIN HOOD: Nor am I!

SHERIFF: Then, Robin of Locksley, I command you—

ROBIN HOOD: Command! You command me!? Who and what are you to command me?

SHERIFF: Tomas Allard, Sheriff of Nottingham.

ROBIN HOOD: *(With a laugh.)* Merely a tax collector then, aren't you?

SHERIFF: The King's representative I am!

ROBIN HOOD: And I am one of the King's nobles!

SHERIFF: But obviously, not a noble close to the King! Or King John would already know of your self-proclaimed valor, your strength at least of your boasts, and your so-called "skill" with that wooden staff!

ROBIN HOOD

ROBIN HOOD: I wish to serve the “true” king.

SHERIFF: John.

ROBIN HOOD: Richard.

SHERIFF: Traitor!

ROBIN HOOD: No, my lord! When King John learns of my skill, he will quickly send me to the Holy Land to fight the infidel Saracens side-by-side with good King Richard, Richard the Lion-Hearted.

SHERIFF: Richard is not “king.”

ROBIN HOOD: Richard should be “king!” And Richard will be “king!” When he returns from the Crusades.

SHERIFF: *If* he returns from the Crusades. Most men don’t.

ROBIN HOOD: I will make certain Richard does return.

SHERIFF: But until his odes return - with or without your help - knave, John is King, King of all England.

ROBIN HOOD: John is a tyrant who has stolen England’s throne! Stolen from his own brother Richard while Richard was off courageously defending all of Christendom!

SHERIFF: Foolish words, Robin of Locksley! Foolish words for a nobleman!

ROBIN HOOD: True words, my Lord Sheriff! True words for any man: noble or serf!

SHERIFF: Then, not only are you an impudent fool, Robin of Locksley, but indeed, you are a treacherous traitor to King John and to England!

ROBIN HOOD: *(Raising his staff as if to threaten the Sheriff.)* I will show you, Tomas Allard—Sheriff of Nottingham, who is an impudent fool speaking words of treason! It is you and your kind, my lord Sheriff, my lord *thieving* Sheriff, who are the true traitors! Traitors to King Richard! Traitors who are stealing not only a good man’s throne but robbing England’s poor serfs of their hard-earned shillings, stealing the very food from out of their mouths and destroying their families and their homes! You, Tomas Allard, and the tyrant King John, are the traitors to England! *(The Sheriff pulls his sword.)*

SHERIFF: You dare call me a traitor!

ROBIN HOOD: I dare speak the truth! *(His staff poised to do battle, Robin Hood moves toward the Sheriff.)*

SHERIFF: And you dare threaten me!

ROBIN HOOD: My Lord Sheriff, it was you who only moments ago commanded me, your lowly subject, to show you my skill with this tree limb! So, indeed, you shall now see my skill with this staff!

The battle is on! ROBIN pushes his staff toward the SHERIFF who retaliates by swinging his sword. There is a shuffle between Robin Hood and Tomas Allard throughout the forest. Quite unnerved by the fight, LORD DUNSTAN stands by watching for several moments, fretting actually, then, realizing the SHERIFF is losing the fight, the bumbling LORD DUNSTAN grabs his own sword and begins doing battle with Robin, who must fend off two obnoxious attackers! In the midst of their battle, the Sheriff shouts:

SHERIFF: Robin of Locksley, I arrest you in the name of King John.

ROBIN HOOD: Arrest me?!

SHERIFF: For attacking one of the King's representatives!

ROBIN HOOD: One of the King's thieves you mean! *(And the shuffle continues until, almost unexpectedly, Lord Dunstan "captures" Robin Hood. Robin Hood is thrown to the floor, and for a brief moment, the Sheriff of Nottingham feels victorious, standing above the fallen Robin Hood.)*

SHERIFF: I arrest you in the name of King John. *(But with that charge, the Sheriff of Nottingham suddenly finds himself "flying" through the air as Robin Hood grabs, turns and twists the Sheriff's ankle.)*

SHERIFF: *(Shouting from the ground.)* You'll live to regret this action, Robin of Locksley!

ROBIN HOOD: And you'll live to regret your traitorous actions against the peasants of England, Sheriff of Nottingham!

SHERIFF: A foolish move! A move, which makes you an "outlaw" throughout all of England! An outlaw to be hunted down and when caught, to swing from the end of the hangman's rope!

ROBIN HOOD: Then, from this day on, I, Robin of Locksley, will no longer be Robin of Locksley, but instead Robin Hood! I will be the “outlaw” you have made me! (*A warning.*) So take care, Sheriff of Nottingham, lest you be the one who finds himself swinging high above the ground at the end of the hangman’s rope! (*Robin Hood vanishes, leaving the Sheriff of Nottingham and Lord Dunstan stunned, sputtering. Spots fade to black. From the rear of the staging area, a Towncrier - actually, Friar Tuck in another costume - announces.*)

TOWNCRIER: Hear ye! Hear ye! Let it be known this day Robin Fitzooth of Locksley, now known as Robin Hood, is a vicious and dastardly outlaw wanted by the Sheriff of Nottingham for breaking the King’s law. Anyone having anything to do with this Robin Hood will also be considered an outlaw, guilty of breaking the same laws! A reward is being offered for the capture of this Robin Hood by the Sheriff of Nottingham.

ACT ONE, SCENE 3

Maid Marian’s sitting room. MAID MARIAN is brushing her hair, talking with her HANDMAIDEN.

MAID MARIAN: And what do you think this Robin Hood is like?

HANDMAIDEN: A fiend, I suppose, my lady, a fiend of the worst kind.

MAID MARIAN: Really, Cassandra? Why so?

HANDMAIDEN: Why else would the Sheriff of Nottingham proclaim him an *outlaw*?

MAID MARIAN: All the more reason I’d like to know what this Robin Hood is like?

HANDMAIDEN: My lady?

MAID MARIAN: Anyone the sheriff dubs an “outlaw” must be a most respected individual.

HANDMAIDEN: Surely you jest, my lady.

MAID MARIAN: (*Quite playfully*) Do I?

HANDMAIDEN: Well, you needn’t worry about that outlaw Robin Hood coming here, my lady.

MAID MARIAN: Oh? And why?

HANDMAIDEN: I hear he only—

MAID MARIAN: You hear?

HANDMAIDEN: Gossip, my lady, rumors, idle talk heard among scullery maids and kitchen help.

MAID MARIAN: And what have you heard, Cassandra?

HANDMAIDEN: He lives somewhere deep inside Sherwood Forest.

MAID MARIAN: The King's own forest! Impressive. He must be quite courageous.

HANDMAIDEN: And he is promising to help the peasants.

MAID MARIAN: How so?

HANDMAIDEN: By robbing the rich, my lady.

MAID MARIAN: A novel idea.

HANDMAIDEN: But only in Sherwood Forest.

MAID MARIAN: Only in Sherwood Forest?

HANDMAIDEN: Rumor says Sherwood Forest is where he was made an outlaw. So, Sherwood Forest is where—rumor says—he'll be an outlaw. So, my lady, he won't be troubling you here.

MAID MARIAN: So, I would have to go to Sherwood Forest then?

HANDMAIDEN: What, my lady?

MAID MARIAN: Nothing, Cassandra, nothing. *(Sighs.)* I do hope the Sheriff's ball will be exciting tomorrow evening.

HANDMAIDEN: Whenever you attend an event, Lady Marian, that event becomes exciting. *(Appearing as if from nowhere, Friar Tuck has a word to say to the audience.)*

FRIAR TUCK: She's Maid Marian Fitwalter, a well-to-do lady from a large manor bordering Sherwood Forest . . . and her interest in the outlaw Robin Hood appears to be more than – well, you decide!

ACT ONE, SCENE 4

Meanwhile, the Sheriff seems powerless to do anything about the one he made an outlaw. Sheriff's sitting room.

SHERIFF: Have we any reports of him yet?

LORD DUNSTAN: None sire. It's as if he has vanished!

SHERIFF: No man just vanishes.

LORD DUNSTAN: Robin Hood is no ordinary man, sire, and Sherwood Forest is huge. A man could hide in that forest forever and never be found.

SHERIFF: My men will find him.

LORD DUNSTAN: Not if he doesn't want to be found.

SHERIFF: You doubt the skills of my men?

LORD DUNSTAN: Not in the least, but I also know the skills of this Robin Hood, and rumor has it—

SHERIFF: (*Scoffing.*) Rumor!

LORD DUNSTAN: Rumor has it this former Robin of Locksley, now the outlaw Robin Hood, is collecting a band of men, who also live in Sherwood Forest.

SHERIFF: A band of men?

LORD DUNSTAN: But surely your informants among the peasants have already told you.

SHERIFF: (*With disdain.*) Of course, so some of the peasants are foolishly joining him, thinking they can mount some kind of crusade against the King.

LORD DUNSTAN: (*Correcting the Sheriff.*) Not only peasants are joining this Robin Hood, even some nobles.

SHERIFF: Who obviously were traitors to King John long before this *Robin Hood* appeared on the scene?

LORD DUNSTAN: But I am told—

SHERIFF: More rumors.

LORD DUNSTAN: —this Robin Hood and his band of men are not against King John.

SHERIFF: That is a lie.

LORD DUNSTAN: But against you!

SHERIFF: As I said, more rumors! But let them come against me. Let all of Nottinghamshire come against me! I represent the King, and to come against me is to come against the King. And that, my Lord Dunstan, is indeed treason.

LORD DUNSTAN: About which you are obviously powerless to do anything.

SHERIFF: We shall see, Dunstan, we shall see. (*Lights fade, indicating a passage of time; then lights once again illuminate the Sheriff's sitting room. The Sheriff is seated at a counting table, Lord Dunstan reads from a scroll, a Serf stands near the table.*) What, my Lord Dunstan, is this wretch's taxes this harvest?

LORD DUNSTAN: (*Reading from the scroll.*) Our good King John assesses this wretched serf eight shillings.

SERF: Eight shillings! I cannot possibly pay eight shillings.

SHERIFF: (*Without feeling.*) Then you'll rot in debtor's prison until you can.

SERF: But who will feed my family?

LORD DUNSTAN: That is none of your Lord Sheriff's concern.

SERF: But my family will starve!

LORD DUNSTAN: Let your relatives feed your family while you rot in prison.

SERF: But our relatives are just as poor as I am. They cannot provide for my wife and children.

SHERIFF: Then you are most unfortunate, a fate about which I can do nothing. King John's law says "eight shillings" and that's what your tax to the King shall be.

SERF: But—

SHERIFF: —plus two more shillings to your Sheriff.

SERF: Two more shillings to you?

SHERIFF: For the benefit of my protection for you and your family who live within Nottinghamshire.

SERF: This is robbery!

SHERIFF: No, my wretched serf, Robin Hood is the robber; I am the law. Now pay or off to debtors' prison with you.

Lights fade, indicating a passage of time. When the lights come up, the SHERIFF is counting the King's tax as Lord Dunstan watches. The tax is actually pieces of chocolate candy wrapped as gold coins. The SHERIFF continues counting.

SHERIFF: (*Scooping these shillings into a pile and placing the coins in a box.*) One hundred and ten shillings for King John . . . as his law demands.

LORD DUNSTAN: You've done an excellent job collecting his Majesty's taxes. King John will surely be pleased, very pleased.

SHERIFF: (*Working with another pile of coins.*) And fifty shillings for me. (*Which he places in a leather purse.*)

LORD DUNSTAN: And for me?

SHERIFF: A handsome reward.

LORD DUNSTAN: Oh, fine, sire, thank you very much.

SHERIFF: —when you return from London.

LORD DUNSTAN: When I return from London? Why would I be going to London?

SHERIFF: That's where you must go to deliver the King's tax money.

LORD DUNSTAN: I'm delivering the King's tax money?

SHERIFF: Well, someone's got to do it! Besides, who would suspect you, my Lord Dunstan?

LORD DUNSTAN: Suspect me of what?

SHERIFF: That's just what I said. Who would suspect a lone traveler walking through Sherwood Forest?

LORD DUNSTAN: A lone traveler?

SHERIFF: To send any of my men with you would attract attention, *his* attention.

LORD DUNSTAN: But I couldn't do this...carry the King's tax money to London...especially alone.

SHERIFF: Would you want King John to think you disloyal?

LORD DUNSTAN: Me? Disloyal?

SHERIFF: And you know the penalty for disloyalty.

LORD DUNSTAN: (*Gulping.*) The tower.

SHERIFF: If you're fortunate. The gallows if you are not.

LORD DUNSTAN: (*Gulping again.*) But not even one soldier?

SHERIFF: Not even one soldier. You will wander aimlessly through Sherwood Forest carrying a simple box.

LORD DUNSTAN: And what will be in this simple box?

SHERIFF: (*Opening the box.*) The King's tax money, dunce!

LORD DUNSTAN: But it's heavy.

SHERIFF: Give that as your excuse to King John when I tell him you refused to carry his tax money because it's *heavy*.

LORD DUNSTAN: And if I don't come back?

SHERIFF: Don't come back?

LORD DUNSTAN: From Sherwood Forest.

SHERIFF: You'll come back. This Robin Hood's a thief, not a murderer! *(As Lord Dunstan gulps again. Maid Marian enters.)*

MAID MARIAN: My Lord Sheriff.

SHERIFF: *(Pleased.)* Lady Marian. How lovely you look.

MAID MARIAN: *(As she models her gown.)* Do you like it?

SHERIFF: But of course. Anything you wear I like.

MAID MARIAN: *(Noticing Lord Dunstan.)* Oh, am I interrupting important affairs of state?

SHERIFF: Not at all. Lord Dunstan was just leaving.

LORD DUNSTAN: *(As he is exciting.)* Not for good, I hope.

MAID MARIAN: And where is Lord Dunstan going?

SHERIFF: London.

MAID MARIAN: London!?

SHERIFF: On an errand of great importance.

MAID MARIAN: But to go to London, he must go through—

SHERIFF: Sherwood Forest. Exactly.

MAID MARIAN: But Sherwood Forest! The outlaws are there!

SHERIFF: Now, my pretty lady, don't worry yourself about the outlaws in Sherwood Forest.

MAID MARIAN: But Lord Dunstan, alone! Perhaps I should go with him.

SHERIFF: Nonsense, Lady Marian. Lord Dunstan will do quite fine on his own. Besides, we have important matters to discuss.

MAID MARIAN: *(Apparently a bit distracted.)* Important matters to discuss?

SHERIFF: How to make all of our noble guests feel welcome at the ball.

MAID MARIAN: Guests always feel welcome in your manor, sire. I really feel someone should go with Lord Dunstan. Perhaps I could—

SHERIFF: Lady Marian, if he is attacked by the outlaw, what could you do to protect the lord?

MAID MARIAN: I guess you're right, my Lord Sheriff, what could I do?

ACT ONE, SCENE 5

Sherwood Forest. Friar Tuck, now dressed as Will Scarlet, one of Robin Hood's men, has a lively discussion with Robin Hood.

WILL SCARLET: Last week's tax collection from Nottinghamshire will be taken from the Sheriff's manor to London later today, Robin. *(To the audience.)* You know beneath all this scarlet finery it is really me - Friar Tuck - but in telling our story, I must now become a nobleman known as Will Scarlet. He was called Will Scarlet for a most obvious reason: he dresses in the finest of red silks and satins. And also, I must dress as Will Scarlet because Robin Hood has not yet met Friar Tuck. Oh, how we met— *(Looking heavenward, most piously.)* —a delightful little tale, but that will come later. At this moment, a more important matter. *(Turning back to speak to Robin.)* Yes, sometime today, passing through Sherwood Forest will be the Sheriff's representative laden down with a very large and heavy amount of shillings, Nottinghamshire's taxes.

ROBIN HOOD: You mean blood money stolen from the purses of Nottinghamshire's peasants.

WILL SCARLET: I'm not certain the Sheriff would agree with you.

ROBIN HOOD: The Sheriff is a rat.

WILL SCARLET: A rat who represents King John.

ROBIN HOOD: An even bigger rat.

WILL SCARLET: Spoken like a true outlaw.

A loud noise is heard from offstage. LORD DUNSTAN approaches.

WILL SCARLET: Shh, over there. Look. One of the Sheriff's men. I see a large box. Could it be?

Lord Dunstan enters, lugging a large and apparently quite heavy box.

ROBIN HOOD: Good morrow weary traveler, and God speed you on your way.

LORD DUNSTAN: God speed to you too, sire.

ROBIN HOOD: You look tired and quite weary, my friend.

LORD DUNSTAN: Indeed, I am.

ROBIN HOOD: And your box looks to be quite heavy.

LORD DUNSTAN: Its looks do not deceive you.

ROBIN HOOD: Perhaps you need some help?

LORD DUNSTAN: No.

ROBIN HOOD: But you look so tired.

LORD DUNSTAN: I can manage.

ROBIN HOOD: You look so weary. Perhaps you should rest a bit from your heavy burden.

LORD DUNSTAN: No. I do not have much farther to go.

ROBIN HOOD: Oh? And where might you be going?

LORD DUNSTAN: Not far.

ROBIN HOOD: Not far...then surely I can help you. I am not so busy today that I cannot help my fellow man with his burden.

LORD DUNSTAN: I do not need help, my Lord.

ROBIN HOOD: But surely with such a heavy burden you will not make your destination by nightfall. And you would not want to find yourself deep in Sherwood Forest at nightfall. *(Stage whisper.)* Outlaws, you know.

LORD DUNSTAN: Yes, I know.

ROBIN HOOD: Then let me help you lighten your load so you can hasten your journey and be out of Sherwood Forest before the sun sets.

LORD DUNSTAN: No!

ROBIN HOOD: Friend, your heavy load does indeed need to be lightened! Lightened of the shillings your Sheriff has stolen from the peasants of Nottinghamshire.

LORD DUNSTAN: I carry no shillings.

ROBIN HOOD: So, you carry no shillings? Then, my Lord, what makes your box so heavy?

LORD DUNSTAN: *(Searching for an answer.)* Chestnuts.

ROBIN HOOD: Chestnuts?

LORD DUNSTAN: Yes, chestnuts.

ROBIN HOOD: Ah, chestnuts gathered from throughout the forest?

LORD DUNSTAN: Yes, my box contains only chestnuts gathered from throughout the forest.

ROBIN HOOD: The King's chestnuts then? *(From the stunned look on his face, Lord Dunstan knows he is about to fall into a trap of words.)*

ROBIN HOOD: Now, you wouldn't be stealing the King's chestnuts, would you? *(Lord Dunstan does not reply.)* Probably to keep your poor family fed?

LORD DUNSTAN: Yes, that's it. These chestnuts will help to keep my poor family fed.

ROBIN HOOD: Then perhaps you would not mind showing me, another poor fellow trying to keep many families fed, where you gathered your chestnuts?

LORD DUNSTAN: Ah, over there and under that tree...

ROBIN HOOD: *(Moving toward the tree to which Lord Dunstan pointed.)* Under that tree?

LORD DUNSTAN: Yes, under that tree.

ROBIN HOOD: You gathered chestnuts from under that tree?

LORD DUNSTAN: Many. Many.

ROBIN HOOD: Then, my Lord, not only are you a weary traveler, but you are also something of a miracle worker.

LORD DUNSTAN: Miracle worker?

ROBIN HOOD: Yes. Because that tree and all the other trees around that tree for as far as the eye can see, are maples. You couldn't possibly gather chestnuts from maples.

LORD DUNSTAN: Perhaps the wind blew them under that tree.

ROBIN HOOD: And perhaps your box contains not chestnuts, but shillings!

LORD DUNSTAN: No.

ROBIN HOOD: Shillings posing as tax money. Shillings stolen from Nottingham's peasants!

LORD DUNSTAN: No.

ROBIN HOOD: Then open your chest!

LORD DUNSTAN: You have no right to order me about! *(Robin Hood raises his staff, much as a threat.)*

ROBIN HOOD: My staff orders you to open that box! *(Frightened, Lord Dunstan drops the box, which Robin Hood quickly acquires and opens. He finds gold coins, lots of gold coins.)*

ROBIN HOOD: And how, pray tell, was your wife going to cook these, my Lord? *(As he shoves a handful of coins toward Lord Dunstan.)* But, unlike you, I do know many wives, in fact entire villages of wives, that will be happy to cook with these - their hard-earned shillings - which first belonged to their families before you and your cheating Sheriff robbed our peasants!

LORD DUNSTAN: Treason!

ROBIN HOOD: I, Robin Hood—

LORD DUNSTAN: *(With fear.)* Robin Hood!

ROBIN HOOD: —will help make your way back to the Sheriff of Nottingham much easier and your burden much lighter. *(Robin Hood walks toward the front of the staging area where he meets the Bishop of Hereford — Friar Tuck in a change of costume. Robin Hood dumps the contents of Lord Dunstan's box into a purse or sack held by the Bishop.)*

ROBIN HOOD: *(As he is emptying Lord Dunstan's box.)* I am only taking what rightfully belongs to the peasants.

LORD DUNSTAN: You'll swing for this.

ROBIN HOOD: Perhaps, but before I do, the peasants of Nottinghamshire will be better fed. *(Walking toward Lord Dunstan.)* Now take your box, your empty box back to your thieving Sheriff! *(Taking the empty box, Lord Dunstan exits.)*

ROBIN HOOD: *(To the Bishop.)* And you, Bishop, please see that the peasants receive back what is rightfully theirs.

BISHOP OF HEREFORD: *(Nods.)* With my blessing. *(The Bishop of Hereford turns toward the audience and gently tosses the gold coins (chocolate candies) to the audience. As he does, the Bishop of Hereford admonishes the audience as if they were Nottinghamshire's peasants.)* From Robin Hood. Your stolen shillings are being returned to you by Robin Hood.

ROBIN HOOD

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