



ROBIN THE OUTLAW

CAST

ROBIN	<i>Poor Son of a Forester</i>
FATHER	<i>Forester, Father of Robin</i>
MARIAN	<i>Wealthy Maiden</i>
SHERIFF	<i>Sheriff of Nottingham</i>
GAMEWELL	<i>Wealthy Landowner</i>
WILL	<i>Son of Gamewell</i>
MAN	<i>Man Caught Poaching</i>
SOLDIER ONE	<i>Henchman of the Sheriff</i>
SOLDIER TWO	<i>Henchman of the Sheriff</i>

NARRATOR: In the days of merry old England, when the forests of England were not defeated and dwindling as they are today, there stood a stone castle on the verge of Sherwood Forest. Its strong turrets and tall walls were a testament to man's skill and strength. Yet its strength was nothing when compared to the ancient agelessness of the surrounding wilderness.

As this castle struggled to assert its

dominance, a small girl, dressed all in white, appeared from its stone gates—slipping stealthily away from her nurse's care and making her way into the forest.

Under the tree boughs the bright summer day darkened into twilight, but the little girl continued undaunted. Here and there bright spots of sun broke through the canopy of leaves and made swirling, green patterns upon the forest floor.

Then abruptly her adventuring stopped. Something was standing motionless ahead of her in one of these ghostly pools of light. It was a little boy—his clothes as green as the foliage around him.

MARIAN: (*gasp*) I was hoping I'd see one of you! You're a wood spirit, aren't you?

NARRATOR: The green-clad boy wrinkled his nose.

ROBIN: (*young voice*) No! I am Robert of Locksley. My father calls me Robin.

MARIAN: (*laughs*) A robin is a tiny bird! Are you a bird? My name is Marian. (*pause*) If you are not a wood spirit, are you an outlaw then? My nursie says that only ghosts and outlaws live in the woods.

ROBIN: No, my father is the forester. We live in Locksley, but we spend most of our days here—protecting the forest. (*pause*) Here is my bow.

NARRATOR: From his shoulder the boy unslung a bow—one made just his size.

MARIAN: How wondrous! Can I try?

NARRATOR: Far away in the forest a horn sounded. (*horn sound*) Robin turned toward it.

MARIAN: Don't fly away, Robin!

ROBIN: That is my father's signal, but I will come again.

NARRATOR: As the boy disappeared into the underbrush, the little girl reluctantly returned to the forest edge, where she was promptly scolded by her nurse for running away. This was just the first of many meetings between Robin and Marian under the spreading branches of the greenwood.

The girl made it a game to elude her nurse as often as she could. More often than not, Robin was there in the wood waiting for her. Many times they took turns firing Robin's bow—aiming at knotholes. One day, their archery lesson came to an abrupt halt when a tall, hooded man stepped through the trees as silently as a deer.

MARIAN: (*gasp*) Look out!

ROBIN: Father!

NARRATOR: The man did not address Robin but stared at Marian intently.

FATHER: Run home, girl.

NARRATOR: Without another word Marian ran back to her castle. Robin's father turned and began making long strides through the forest. As Robin scurried to keep up, he knew his father was upset. He always had such a gait when he was upset about something.

ROBIN: I am sorry, Father.

FATHER: I blew my horn three times, and you did not hear it. (*pause*) That girl and her family are Normans—powerful lords. They rule over us. It is not right for us to speak with them as equals.

ROBIN: Father, are we outlaws?

FATHER: No. An outlaw is someone who lives outside the law. We are Saxons, and we live under it.

NARRATOR: Robin's father stopped near the base of an ancient tree.

FATHER: Now climb into this tree here and hide yourself. I must search a bit further off. I received a report that men were here killing the king's deer.

ROBIN: Are *they* outlaws?

FATHER: Probably just men trying to survive. These are hard times. Now climb up.

NARRATOR: Robin's father disappeared into the trees and was gone for a time. Then a low whistling at the bottom of the tree signaled his return. (*whistle*)

FATHER: No sign of them.

NARRATOR: The father and son nestled down among the tree's gnarled roots and unwrapped a small loaf of bread for their lunch. As they ate silently, the sound of the forest living all around them filled their senses. The cry of a hawk pierced the air. (*cry of a hawk*) The large, powerful hawk was closing in on a small, red-breasted bird.

FATHER: Look, Robin. Your namesake.

ROBIN: The robin is such a weak bird.

FATHER: Not so. The robin is small—but not weak. Do not confuse the two. Watch.

NARRATOR: The pursued robin turned abruptly in the air and beat at the hawk with its wings. (*bird cries*) The larger bird, in confusion, lost its momentum. The robin used this distraction to escape into the canopy above. (*frustrated hawk cry*)

FATHER: See? The smaller bird has won—by using his wits and his courage. There is a lesson for you.

NARRATOR: Robin chewed thoughtfully for a second.

ROBIN: May I go back and see Marian again, Father?

FATHER: No, son. That is done.

NARRATOR: On a day not long after, Robin and his father were walking down the road that led through Sherwood Forest when his father suddenly paused.

FATHER: Climb up, Robin. Someone is coming.

NARRATOR: Robin obeyed his father, and soon a shabby, grumbling man broke through the underbrush. Thrown across his shoulders was a fresh deer carcass. Robin's father stepped out onto the path before him.

FATHER: Hello, friend.

MAN: (*screaming*) Ah! By Our Lady, what are you trying to do? Scare me to death?

FATHER: I am the forester of Sherwood.

NARRATOR: The man's face suddenly turned white with fear. Robin had never seen someone fear his father before.

MAN: (*in fear*) I—I—can explain! My family is starving! The sheriff taxes us so heavily, we have nothing for ourselves!

FATHER: That is the king's deer.

MAN: I will leave it here! Don't turn me into the sheriff! He is a hard man! He will mutilate me! Or worse—throw me into prison and then my family will have no one to support them!

NARRATOR: Robin's father looked into the frightened face of the man pensively.

FATHER: Take your deer. But do not make a habit of it. I cannot protect you from the sheriff or his men if you are caught.

MAN: Thank you! Thank you! God bless you!

NARRATOR: The man, still struggling under the weight of the deer, hurried on down the road. When he was gone, Robin climbed down from his high perch.

ROBIN: Father, you called that the king's deer. Does he own all the deer in the forest?

FATHER: A Norman king owns *everything*—all the land, forests, and animals of England. But he does not own the people. You see, when the Normans came, they took all the land from us Saxons—building their stone castles to tighten their grip—and

strangle our will. *(pause)* Quick, Robin! I hear horses coming!

NARRATOR: Robin scurried back up into the branches above. *(hoofbeats)* Tearing down the forest road came a group of soldiers on horseback, led by a regal man wearing a flowing cape and a golden medallion. Seated on horseback behind him with his hands tied behind his back was the man Robin's father had just released. The caped man in the lead reined up his horse and sneered down at Robin's father.

SHERIFF: Are you the forester they call Locksley?

FATHER: *(calmly)* I am, lord sheriff.

SHERIFF: Did this man not just pass you—bearing one of the king's deer on his person?

FATHER: He did.

MAN: Forester, I did not tell him of your kindness to me! He must have been spying on you!

SHERIFF: *(yelling)* Close your filthy mouth!

(smacking sound)

NARRATOR: The sheriff struck the man roughly in the mouth—causing him to pitch sideways from his horse and fall to the ground. *(crashing sound)*

SHERIFF: Locksley, did you or did you not let this criminal escape?

FATHER: A man who is trying to feed his family is not a criminal.

SHERIFF: Ha! You are so generous with the king's property!

FATHER: Perhaps the king has taken more than his fair share. Can he not spare a single deer to feed a starving family?

SHERIFF: Watch your words, Locksley! In order to redeem yourself, I want to see you deal with this man.

NARRATOR: The sheriff drew a dagger and tossed it upon the ground.

SHERIFF: We will let him off easy this time. Take off his nose and his ears—as a warning. Then he will never again dare challenge me again.

NARRATOR: Robin's father stared down at the dagger but did not move to take it.

SHERIFF: If you defy my order, you will be stripped of your position. Then you will be scrabbling for food like this worthless wretch.

FATHER: I cannot do what you ask of me.

SHERIFF: Ha! You are weak—just like the rest of your Saxon kinsman!

FATHER: Is it weakness to show Christian mercy to a fellow man?

SHERIFF: Seize him at once! We will take both of these criminals back to Nottingham! Perhaps some time in the dungeon will soften this forester's ethics!

ROBIN: *(to himself)* Father!

NARRATOR: Robin, still concealed in the high branches of the tree, pulled his bow from his shoulder, nocked an arrow into the string, and drew back it tightly—his arrow aimed for the sheriff's heart. But, as if sensing his movements, Robin's father made a low whistle. (*whistle*) Hold, it said.

FATHER: Lord sheriff, I have a son. What will become of him?

SHERIFF: What do I care? Let him roam these woods like a stray cur!

FATHER: I only hope he will go to the home of our beloved cousin, Squire Gamewell. Perhaps there he will find refuge. I hope he never forgets that he is Robert of Locksley.

SHERIFF: (*sarcastically*) Oh yes! Never let him forget he was born from Saxon dogs! Take these men back to Nottingham!

NARRATOR: It only took the soldiers a second to whisk Robin's father off to his doom. Then, helpless and heartbroken, Robin climbed down from his refuge. Lying between the ancient roots of the tree was his father's hunting horn. Robin clutched it to his chest and ran and did not stop running until he had reached the door of Squire Gamewell.

ROBIN: (*yelling*) Open up! Please!

NARRATOR: The kindly Saxon landowner invited the shaking boy inside and heard his harrowing story.

GAMEWELL: This is grave news indeed! No one has ever escaped from the sheriff's

dungeons. You will just have to lodge with us until we can find a solution to all this.

NARRATOR: So Robin came to live in the hall of Squire Gamewell. The landowner had a son named Will, who was nearly the same age as Robin.

ROBIN: Will, my father taught me how to shoot a bow and live off the woods. I will teach you my skill if you will teach me yours.

WILL: What skill do I have?

ROBIN: You can read and write. I want to write a petition to the king for my father to be freed from the sheriff's prisons.

WILL: It's a deal! But your skill is much mightier than mine. Letters are boring compared to archery.

ROBIN: Not so. My father always told me that a man who masters words can write his own destiny.

NARRATOR: So Will and Robin shared their knowledge, and as they grew into young men, they lived like brothers. Yet Robin never forgot his father. No matter how many petitions he made to the king, all were met with silence.

WILL: Give it up, Rob. Kings don't listen to their subjects. That is just the way things are.

ROBIN: But it is not the way they should be.

WILL: But who is going to change it? You? Soon I will leave to learn at the university in

Londontown. Then I will see firsthand how the royal court works—or doesn't work. *(pause)* You have been too downtrodden lately. I know! There is a fair in the village today. Let's go and see the sights!

ROBIN: There is nothing of interest to me there.

WILL: We shall see! Come on!

NARRATOR: Robin reluctantly agreed. As they entered the teeming village streets, a variety of sights and smells greeted them—merchants selling mince pies, acrobats and jugglers doing their routines, and many a fair maiden. Amid the crowd, Robin spied a girl, dressed all in white—with a wreath of green leaves woven into her long hair. Will saw his friend's longing gaze.

WILL: *(laughing)* Nothing will interest you here, huh? That must be Marian Fitzwalter.

ROBIN: *(breathlessly)* Marian!

WILL: You know her? She is the daughter of a Norman lord. I hear she has a bitter tongue.

ROBIN: I must speak to her.

WILL: Rob! Wait!

NARRATOR: Robin made his way over to Marian's side. As he did, Marian's nurse, an old, prune-lipped woman, eyed him suspiciously.

ROBIN: Marian! I...*(nervous cough)*

MARIAN: Yes? Have you gentlemen come to enter the archery contest as I have?

WILL: Ha! A maiden in an archery contest!

MARIAN: You find that humorous? Enter the contest and see how you fare against me.

WILL: Well, er—not today. I pulled my shoulder...

NARRATOR: Marian turned her dark eyes upon Robin.

MARIAN: What about you, sir...?

ROBIN: Robert. Robert of Locksley.

NARRATOR: As Marian peered into Robin's face, her eyes lit up with recognition.

MARIAN: Robin! I can't believe it! It's been years! I see you have grown up.

ROBIN: You have grown, too—more beautiful.

NARRATOR: Marian's nurse started to make a hemming sound in her throat and shoo her away. *(grumbling of the nurse)*

MARIAN: *(laugh)* My old nursie thinks young ladies should not live their own lives. *(whispering)* But do not worry. I can escape her as easily as ever. Farewell, Robin—until our next meeting.

NARRATOR: As Marian departed, Will turned to Robin with a look of amazement.

WILL: Now you must tell me just how the fiery Marian Fitzwalter knows humble Robin of Locksley!

NARRATOR: Robin told Will all about their childhood visits in the forest.

ROBIN: I just can't believe she remembers me after all these years.

WILL: Well, how many children do *you* meet running around in the woods like an outlaw?

ROBIN: (*sigh*) Good point.

NARRATOR: As the evening shadows lengthened, the young men headed back toward home.

ROBIN: Do you think Marian will be sent away to Londontown—like you—to study?

WILL: I assume she will be sent to serve as a lady-in-waiting at the royal court—like all high-born maidens are.

ROBIN: Perhaps I could write to her there.

WILL: Please be realistic, Robin. She is a Norman lord's daughter, and you are just a Saxon.

ROBIN: (*defensively*) So are you!

WILL: Yes, but *I* am a wealthy Saxon. She is just toying with you.

ROBIN: (*sigh*) Maybe you are right.

NARRATOR: Just then a hooded rider rode from the trees and threw back her hood to reveal her face.

ROBIN: Marian! What are you doing here?

MARIAN: I told you I could still escape my nurse when I please.

ROBIN: The forest is a dangerous place for a maiden. You could have been ambushed!

MARIAN: Oh please. I heard you two boobs coming a mile away. And you are right—I am being sent away to Londontown. But before I go, I want to give you this.

NARRATOR: Marian undid the clasp of her necklace.

MARIAN: I have heard of the plight of your father. It is a cruel injustice. Perhaps this will help you in some small way.

ROBIN: I cannot take it!

MARIAN: Consider it a present—from an old friend. Farewell, Robin.

NARRATOR: She lowered the necklace down into Robin's hand and disappeared back down the road. Robin turned to Will with a smile of satisfaction.

ROBIN: Just toying with me, huh?

WILL: Be careful, Rob.

NARRATOR: The harvest came and went, and then it was time for Will and Robin to part company.

GAMEWELL: My boys are growing up too fast! I wish I could afford to send you both to the university, but I cannot.

WILL: Cheer up, Robin. When I am in Londontown, perhaps I can send you news

of your special love! That is, if I don't steal her away from you myself. *(laughing)*

ROBIN: *(laughing)* That does not concern me. But take care, my brother!

NARRATOR: In the following lonely months, whenever Robin received a letter from Will, he hung upon its every word. He learned all about the royal court of King Henry II and his noble son, Richard the Lionhearted. Robin would read Will's letters aloud to the old squire as they sat by the fire.

ROBIN: Richard is a great warrior and a man of the people! Once Richard is king, perhaps he will do away with these corrupt officials like the Sheriff of Nottingham. Then my father will be free.

GAMEWELL: *(sigh)* Do not put too much hope in kings, son. They only think of themselves.

NARRATOR: As the years passed and the old king died, Richard did take the throne—bringing new hope to his people. But then something unexpected happened. The new King Richard accepted the call to crusade and departed England with his best knights to retake Jerusalem and the Holy Land from the infidels.

ROBIN: *(reading)* If Richard's departure was not a sore enough blow, there is also a rumor that King Richard's wicked brother, John, plans to steal his throne. *(pause)* Hmm. He makes no mention of Marian. I wonder if she is well. *(sigh)*

GAMEWELL: Cheer up! You need to get your mind off things! *(pause)* You know, the

Sheriff of Nottingham is hosting an archery tournament. With your skill you have a great chance to win it!

ROBIN: I've never journeyed to Nottingham. Maybe I could speak to my father in the prisons there—even though I know it would be a mighty risk.

GAMEWELL: You will have to travel through Sherwood Forest. Stay to the road and be wary of bandits.

NARRATOR: With his father's hunting horn hanging at his side, Robin set off down the road to Nottingham. It had been years since he had gone deep in the forest. Being beneath the boughs again brought back many memories to the young man and filled him with hope.

ROBIN: The forest is pure and free. That's what I love about it.

NARRATOR: Along the forest-roadside Robin happened upon a party of men roasting a deer carcass over a campfire.

ROBIN: Good morrow, gentlemen! I will warn you—there is a steep penalty for roasting one of the king's deer.

SOLDIER ONE: Mind your own business, pipsqueak!

ROBIN: Suit yourself. It's just that the Sheriff of Nottingham is a hard man.

SOLDIER ONE: Tell us something we don't know. We are the sheriff's foresters.

ROBIN: Hmm. Foresters roasting the king's own deer, huh? That does not seem right.

SOLDIER TWO: (*mouthful of food*) And what would your name be?

ROBIN: I am Robert of Locksley.

NARRATOR: The soldiers spewed out their mead. (*spewing and laughter*)

SOLDIER TWO: (*laughing*) Robert of Locksley? Not the son of that fool forester!

ROBIN: My father has been wrongly imprisoned in Nottingham castle.

SOLDIER TWO: Not anymore.

ROBIN: What do you mean?

SOLDIER TWO: (*laughing*) Didn't you know? He finally died—just last week. Took him long enough.

NARRATOR: Robin's insides grew cold.

SOLDIER TWO: Face it, kid. Your father was a fool—and he died a fool's death.

ROBIN: (*angrily*) You will not speak of him that way!

NARRATOR: The foresters rose menacingly.

SOLDIER TWO: What are *you* going to do about it?

SOLDIER ONE: Threatening the sheriff's men—that's a hanging offense. We demand respect.

ROBIN: Respect you? Ha! You are villains! Stealing the same deer you are to protect!

SOLDIER TWO: We did nothing of the kind. *You* poached that deer. We all saw you do it. Didn't we, fellas?

SOLDIER ONE: Now that your father has checked out, I think we have a vacancy in the dungeons. It is only fitting that you take his place!

NARRATOR: The soldiers closed in on Robin, and he did all he knew to do—run.

SOLDIER TWO: Get him!

NARRATOR: As Robin ducked through the underbrush, he felt a shaft fly close by his ear. (*Shoom!*) He turned, drew his bow, and fired his own arrow at his pursuers. (*Shoom!*) It caught a soldier in the chest, and he fell to the ground lifeless. Robin did not look back or stop fleeing—until he was deep in the forest. There he fell upon the ground—gasping ragged breaths.

ROBIN: My father is dead, and I have killed one of the sheriff's men.

NARRATOR: So with a single act Robin of Locksley had become an outlaw. But this was not the end of his adventure—only the beginning.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is noble about Robin's father?
2. Are Robin and Marian in love? Explain.
3. How should we respond to injustice?
4. What do you think Robin will do next?