

ROBIN HOOD

Series One, Episode Ten

Peace? Off!

written by Richard Kurti and Bev Doyle

directed by Graeme Harper

**This is not an official copy. This was typed up by a fan
of the show strictly for personal enjoyment.**

CAST

| | |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| Robin Hood | Jonas Armstrong |
| Marian | Lucy Griffiths |
| Guy of Gisborne | Richard Armitage |
| Sheriff of Nottingham | Keith Allen |
| Little John | Gordon Kennedy |
| Much | Sam Troughton |
| Allan A Dale | Joe Armstrong |
| Will Scarlett | Harry Lloyd |
| Djaq | Anjali Jay |
| Harold | Rhys Meredith |
| Prince Malik | Raji James |
| General | Ali Amadi |
| Peasant Man | Soma O. Szabó |
| Peasant Woman | Agnes Bénéfalvy |

Scene One

Locksley.

Harold runs with a thin log to the church where several others have already been set leaning above the door. He runs back for a bundle of thin sticks and puts it by the logs. He strikes a flint until the sticks catch fire, then steps back, smiling maniacally.

The villagers yell, "Fire!"

PEASANT MAN

Sees Harold. You!

Harold turns around to face him.

We told you to go!

Harold looks back at the fire burning as the villagers call to one another to help.

PEASANT MAN 2

Quickly! Help! Help!

PEASANT MAN

Heretic! Heretic!

The villagers come running to confront Harold. The first man charges and tries to throw a punch, but Harold blocks the blow and brings up his other arm at throat-level so that the man runs right into it. He turns to face a second man with a thin branch and jumps back from his swing, then steps beside him, taking the makeshift staff in one hand and throwing the man's arm back with the other, knocking him to the ground. Robin, hooded and on horseback, rides in from behind the manor, sees the commotion and Harold fighting well, ducking another staff and taking out its owner's feet with his, until he is hit squarely in the back with a branch and drops like a sack of potatoes. Meanwhile, other villagers throw water on the burning logs. The men pick up the dazed man and drag him to the pond. The villagers gather behind them, yelling for punishment.

PEASANT WOMAN

Kill the heretic! Kill him!

PEASANT MAN 2

Put him in!

Harold doesn't try to break free as he is put facedown into the water, but once under he comes to his senses and struggles violently. Then two arrows, in succession, hit a tree near the spectators. They scream and look back at Robin. His horse rears and he gallops forward.

PEASANT WOMAN

It's the devil!

ROBIN

Stop!!!

Harold is lifted from the pond.

PEASANT WOMAN

He's come to save his own!

ROBIN

Riding towards them: The devil couldn't make it. You'll have to deal with me instead.

PEASANT MAN

This is no business of yours, Robin. The stranger's been killing our livestock, fouling our well!

PEASANT WOMAN

What kind of a man burns churches?

Robin stops the horse in front of them.

ROBIN

I'll let you know...

The horse moves and Robin circles him back into place.

... when I've asked him. He fights like a Crusader.

Harold is sitting calmly on his heels staring out over the pond.

Barking orders to Harold: Soldier? Break! Battle!

Harold immediately runs to Robin and jumps on the back of his horse as the villagers protest.

PEASANT MAN

Bring him back! Heretic!

Robin gallops out of the village.

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OPENING CREDITS

Scene Two

Sherwood Forest. Outlaws' camp.

Harold stands staring at nothing from under his brows as the gang stand around him.

MUCH

So... master, forgive me, but you found him trying to burn a church, yet you saved him and not the church.

ROBIN

Because I could not fit the church on my horse!

Will goes up to Harold and gently pulls back his collar a bit. Harold has tattoos everywhere and a cross hung round his neck.

WILL

What are they?

Robin steps forward to look.

ROBIN

These look like Eastern symbols. Djaq? Do these mean anything to you?

Djaq carefully opens Harold's shirt further, looks and gasps silently.

DJAQ

Lies: I don't know.

Robin frowns at her.

It could be some kind of code.

Much glances at Allan, who is holding his hand to his chin thoughtfully, as Djaq stares knowingly and fearfully at Harold.

ROBIN

It's strange. He fought like a Crusader back in Locksley.

WILL

Yeah, on the wrong side by the looks of him.

Little John circles behind Harold.

ROBIN

No. He definitely went out with King Richard.

Picking up and looking at Harold's cross: He's beyond sides now. War has turned his mind.

MUCH

Realising: Crusader's sickness.

Djaq takes a step back.

ROBIN

And there'll be thousands more like him while the war drags on. He needs care.

Robin looks at Much, who is nodding in agreement, still staring at Harold.

Leans into Much. Much, you need to look after him.

MUCH

Chuckles in disbelief: Oh, no. *Pleads:* Master...

Robin folds his arms and looks at Harold.

Master, please. I mean, look at him. Surely...

ROBIN

Well, you looked after me all these years.

ALLAN

Yeah, but... he's a menace!

MUCH

Nods. Yes! *Looks back at Allan.* You know, I think that's the first time we've actually agreed on something.

ALLAN

Well, it's not...

Little John peers around at Harold.

MUCH

He's been burning down churches and fouling wells.

Allan turns and walks away. Robin holds out his hand to Harold as a handshake. Harold looks down at the hand, then up at Robin. Robin withdraws his hand. They stare at each other a moment longer as Little John shakes his head at him, then walks away. Will steps away, too.

Sighs. Fine. I'll look after him. Just answer me one question. How are you meant to look after a deranged heretic?

Robin looks at Harold's staring eyes as Much looks at Robin. Robin frowns and sighs slightly, not knowing how to answer Much.

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Scene Four

Sherwood Forest.

Will and Allan run downhill, leading Little John and Robin to their discovery.

WILL

Amazing! You've got to see this wagon, boys. It's completely unique!

ALLAN

I'll tell you what, I've never seen a set of wheels like it!

Allan and Will laugh in anticipation.

WILL

Independent suspension, reinforced chassis...

They come upon an overturned coach, whose top and sides are made of solid wood. The younger ones climb up on top, but Little John is content to walk around it.

ALLAN

I mean, what is it?

WILL

It's a fine machine, Robin!

Will sits on top as Robin crawls across and peers inside.

ALLAN

What's that?

WILL

Rich owner, too. *Flips out his axe and makes a tiny cut in the bottom.* 'Cause this wood... it's not English wood.

Allan looks inside with Robin.

ALLAN

This is spectacular!

WILL

Eastern cedar! My dad got a block of it once to make dagger handles with. It's very easy to rout. I'm serious, Robin, cut through a knife like butter...

ALLAN

Crawls on top to look in then lets himself slide down the side. Slide right down.

ROBIN

This must have got caught up in the storm two weeks ago. This gully must have been a torrent.

ALLAN

Reaches into the back door from up top and pulls out a piece of parchment. Hey, looks like some kind of list. Is that directions?

Robin takes it and looks at it as Will slides down to them.

ROBIN

It's the castle, I think.

WILL

Takes the parchment and looks at it. Looks like the Sheriff's got himself a rich visitor.

Little John, standing between the wheels, spies something that has fallen out the back, screams in panic and runs away a bit. Robin jumps down between the wheels.

ALLAN

Stands up to watch Little John. What's up, John?

LITTLE JOHN

Pointing behind the coach, terrified: There! There!

Robin looks over the wheel.

ALLAN

Goes over to Little John. Eh? Steady up, John. What's got into you?

Will comes over to them and then Robin suddenly bursts out of the brush with a black helmet over his head, rushing at Will. Little John yells again and he and Allan crouch down in fear as Will scrambles out of the way. Robin stops and pulls off the mask.

It's no joke, Robin. It's witchcraft!

ROBIN

Hardly.

Robin turns the mask towards himself and Will takes it from him to examine it. The black leather helmet has long pins stuck in it and mud caked on it from the washout.

WILL

It's a fine piece of work...

Little John cowers away from the mask as Allan crosses himself then puts his hand to his lips in the habit of eating the bread of the Eucharist.

Pulling a pin in and out: ... for a nasty mind. Robin... Quickly hands it back to Robin.

Scene Six

Sherwood Forest. Outlaws' camp.

MUCH

Standing, leaning over to Harold, trying to sound excited:
Right! We're going to try some cooking!

Harold just stares.

Very calming, understand? *No answer. Quietly:* I'll take that as a yes.

Much sits back down behind a large, wavy slab made of hewn bark and supported by horizontal poles. Much picks up a knife and with it points to each small pile of food on the table in turn. Harold watches, moving only his eyes.

Now we have, er, pork, carrots, onions, parsnips. Now, most servants would tell you that this is a stew. But... *lifts up a carrot and sets it on the cutting board.* Well, this I call the Much... *cut...* Touch... *cut.* Take the same ingredients... *cut...* chop them up... *putting pieces on:* skewer them on a broken arrow... cook it over a fire... you're left with something far more interesting.

Much holds up the laden arrow, then hands it to Harold, who takes it.

Learnt that in Cyprus. *Resumes slicing:* There, they, er, call it—

HAROLD

Interrupting: Shish kebabi.

Much stops and stares at him, surprised he talked and that he knew what it was. Sitting behind him up the rise peeling a stick, Djaq does the same.

MUCH

Then you'll know how delicious they are.

Much hands the board and the knife to Harold.

DJAQ

Are you sure it's a good idea to give him the knife?

Much stops, realising she has a point, but calmly turns to face her.

MUCH

He does have a name. He's called, er... *glances to see Harold chopping vegetables...* he's called Harold.

Much turns to Djaq again and she raises her eyebrows sceptically. Much nods to emphasise it.

to Harold: Maybe this is your true calling. Your new life.

Harold sharpens a stick with the knife.

I've often thought that a man could make a good living doing this. Get himself a cart, wheel it up to the ale-house of an evening, set out his wares. Some of these, a bit of stew, meat pies... *chuckles...* make a killing.

Much hears the arguing voices of the gang as they come back to camp.

ALLAN

It's true! I'm telling you!

ROBIN

Rubbish!

ALLAN

It is! And another thing. My cousin definitely saw a man turn into a frog. He did! Just outside of Dorchester!

WILL

I thought you said he was always drunk, your cousin.

ALLAN

Well, he is, but still...

Robin, holding out the mask by its straps, steps over to Much, who is skewering food onto an arrow and ignoring the bickering.

ROBIN

Another mouth for dinner.

Robin drops the mask in Much's face and Much jumps up, startled out of his wits and yelling, and runs away a few steps.

Not you as well?

MUCH

Catching his breath: What is that?

ROBIN

Put it this way. *Holds it up to look at it.* I would not like to be on the receiving end of this.

MUCH

Looks like it's for torture.

ALLAN

Whatever it is, that is not Christian.

Robin pushes a pin in and out.

Scene Nine

Knighton Hall. Stable. Exterior.

Marian is admiring her new horse, which is tethered to a post outside the stable.

ROBIN

Appearing from the shadows of the stable: Don't tell me the Nightwatchman's been dipping into the profits!

MARIAN

Happily, toying with Robin: Some men take pleasure in giving women gifts.

ROBIN

Chuckles and points to the horse. This is a lot of gift. *Strokes the horse's mane between its eyes, then leans on the post.*
Flippantly: And tell me, was it a lot of pleasure?

Marian scoffs.

And how were you thinking of reciprocating?

MARIAN

Looking at Robin: Maybe you'd find out if you gave me a gift. As it is... *turns to the horse...* you only come out of the woodwork to ask me for favours. Like now. So?
Looks back at Robin.

ROBIN

Do we have an interesting guest at the castle?

Robin holds up black mask by its straps and Marian takes it.

The owner of this was on his way there. We found his wagon. We think he's from the East.

MARIAN

A bit disgusted by the mask, but not scared: You've been eating too many mushrooms in that forest.

ROBIN

My men think that the Sheriff has been using a sorcerer.

MARIAN

Holding the mask out at Robin. Well, they've been eating too many mushrooms.

ROBIN

Taking it back, flustered she's not being serious: Agreed! But if you can tell me who it is, I can reassure my men. *Softer:* John will not even leave the forest.

MARIAN

Brightly, facetiously, looking at the horse: Hmm. Another one who only comes out of the woodwork when he has to.

Robin turns away in frustration. Marian notices and changes her tone.

Seriously: I'll see what I can do.

Robin nods.

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Scene Twelve

Nottingham Castle. Interior corridor. Early the next morning.

The Sheriff is walking briskly down the corridor with a guard, visibly irritated.

SHERIFF

Didn't you inform our Saracen guest that I was sleeping?

GUARD

He wouldn't take no for an answer, sir!

SHERIFF

Please... let them come soon, please!

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Malik's chamber.

The Sheriff appears in the door.

SHERIFF

You're a morning person, I see.

MALIK

Walking to meet the Sheriff. Sheriff, I've had an excellent idea.

SHERIFF

Really?

MALIK

If you would lend me some soldiers, I can go find my carriage.

SHERIFF

Oh, what? That old wreck? I already said, I'll get you a new one.

MALIK

Unless Prince John is arriving today, Sheriff, it would make me most happy to find my carriage. It was specially made for my father.

SHERIFF

Well, in that case, how could I refuse?

MALIK

Bowing head. You are a most gracious host.

SHERIFF

Claps his hands together as in prayer. Bismallah!

The Sheriff turns and leaves with a scowl on his face.

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Interior corridor.

The Sheriff turns the corner with the guard close on his heels.

SHERIFF

to the guard: Wake Gisborne.

GUARD

At this hour, sir?

SHERIFF

If I can't sleep, neither can he. *Licks his fingertips, then holds up one finger and stops.* Tell him to keep the Saracen happy. *Brushes down the triangle of hair on top of his head with his moist fingers.* At least give him the illusion... *licks his fingers again and pulls the hair forward...* of freedom.

The Sheriff continues down the corridor.

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Malik is thrown down at Little John's feet. Little John jumps up, startled. Robin circles round.

ROBIN

So... tell me, John.

Little John stands as Robin tosses his bow down.

What is so powerful about him, hm?

Djaq speaks Arabic to Malik, who turns to her. Djaq falls to her knees and Malik speaks angrily at her in the same language. Djaq replies.

Mouths, frowning at Djaq: What?

MALIK

to Robin: At least one of you knows how to show respect.

DJAQ

Goes up to Robin. What are you doing?

ROBIN

What are you doing?

DJAQ

This man is Prince Malik al-Ayyubi ibn Shadi!

Robin frowns and shakes his head, as the name means nothing to him.

Nephew of Saladin! *Looks at Robin, then Much.* I served under him.

MUCH

The Saladin?

Djaq nods proudly.

ALLAN

Looks at Will. Oops.

DJAQ

He is royalty. *Taps Robin's arm.* Bow down to him. *Kneels and bows her head.*

ROBIN

Nobody bows down to anybody!

Robin pulls Djaq to her feet.

Not in this forest. John?

LITTLE JOHN

Mm.

Immediately understanding, Little John grabs Malik under one arm and Robin grabs the other and they both drag him to the mask in the tree.

ROBIN

Come and say hello to...

DJAQ

No!

LITTLE JOHN

You I do not like.

ROBIN

My friends would like to know about this mask.

MALIK

What have you done to it?! I cannot present it now!

Robin lets go of Malik.

MUCH

That's a gift?

MALIK

It was. *Looks at Robin.* A peace offering.

ALLAN

Peace? Let's stick needles in his head, see how he likes it.

Robin is just soaking in the conversation.

MALIK

And this is what happens when cousins marry. *Points at the mask.* This is a model for teaching. Needles placed correctly on parts of the body can cure all sorts of ailments.

ALLAN

Scoffs. Sounds like dodgy magic to me.

MALIK

This is science, not magic.

WILL

What, so... you're a physician then?

ROBIN

Gently: You see, John? A physician. That's all.

MALIK

I'm not physician. I'm an ambassador. This gift for Prince John is a gift of healing... to celebrate our new peace treaty.

ROBIN

With disbelief: Prince John wants peace?!

MALIK

I want peace. The Holy Lands are drenched in blood.
Thousands of men die on both sides.

Robin nods.

This is not the will of Allah. It is the duty of all good men
to put an end to this barbarity. So I come to negotiate
with Prince John and the Sheriff.

ROBIN

If you really want peace in the Holy Land, then Prince
John and the Sheriff are the last people you should be
speaking to. Whatever they have told you is a lie.

MALIK

And how can I believe what you say? You and your band
of [*looks at gang*] superstitious, ignorant outlaws.

*The gang take a step forward as Robin glares at Malik in
indignation.*

Now, I demand you let me go.

ALLAN

Laughs. I'm not being funny, mate. We've only just caught
you.

MALIK

Keeping his eyes on Robin: Let me go. Or let the blood of
thousands be on your conscience.

*Robin seriously thinks about this situation, torn between letting
him go or keeping him safe from the Sheriff.*

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Scene Fifteen

Nottingham Castle. Exterior corridor.

*The Sheriff and Gisborne are walking briskly down the north
corridor.*

GISBORNE

You ordered me to take him into the forest!

SHERIFF

You were supposed to bring him back!

GISBORNE

All right! I will find him somehow.

SHERIFF

A ransom requires a hostage! What am I supposed to give
them? *Stops and glances back at Gisborne.* You? *Resumes
walking.* How much do you get for lovestruck idiots
these days?

They turn the corner towards the cloister.

GISBORNE

Well, the Saracens don't seem to be hurrying to rescue
the prince now, do they?

They enter the cloister. The Sheriff stops and faces Gisborne.

SHERIFF

They will come!

GUARD

Open the door!

The gate opens and Malik strides inside.

SHERIFF

Well... and who was it who said the sun only shines on the
righteous? *Chuckles.* He has returned. The Saracen
must really believe we're going to speak peace. Oh,
such a brave man. And yet, such a stupid man... stupid
man.

The Sheriff leaves to meet Malik and Gisborne follows.

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Scene Nineteen

Nottingham Castle. Malik's chamber.

MALIK

Enough excuses! We must start the peace negotiations tonight. Every day that passes, more innocent lives are lost!

The Sheriff stands, hands on hips. Gisborne stands behind him, arms folded.

SHERIFF

Ya-di-ya-di-ya.

MALIK

Stepping towards the Sheriff: I warn you, Sheriff. I have heard aspersions cast on your honesty.

Gisborne frowns.

SHERIFF

Glances back at Gisborne. Sarcastically: Aspersions? Surely not.

MALIK

Now, I insist... *puts his face in the Sheriff's...* we start the talks today or I travel to London and find Prince John myself!

SHERIFF

You see, Gisborne, this is what you have to look forward to already. He's starting to sound like a wife.

MALIK

How dare you insult me!

SHERIFF

Mouthing, silently mocking Malik: "How dare you insult me." Two words. *Turns to leave.* Peace? Off. Throw him in the dungeon.

MALIK

Sheriff!

Two guards each grab an arm.

Sheriff come back! Get off! Sheriff! Sheriff!

Gisborne follows them out with his arms still crossed.

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Scene Twenty

Sherwood Forest. Outlaws' camp.

Robin leans on a tree, thinking out loud about the situation as they know it.

ROBIN

The prince thinks he's here to negotiate peace... and the Sheriff thinks a ransom is on its way... *walking toward the fire:* ...but neither of them know that Salah ad-Din has sent assassins instead. So...

Robin squats by the fire and puts his hands by his mouth, thinking. Harold leans on the tree by his cage, Much stands near him, Little John sits on the ground, Will stands behind him. Allan flips his cloak over his shoulder and goes to stand in front of Harold.

MUCH

So we stay here and do nothing. We let those al-Fajanis kill the Sheriff and rescue the prince.

ALLAN

Fastening his cloak: That sounds good to me.

DJAQ

No! The al-Shuj'aan do not rescue. They're killers. That's what they do. Kill, or die in the attempt.

MUCH

Well, if they're not going to rescue the prince, then what are they doing here?

ROBIN

They're here to kill the prince.

Djaq nods in agreement.

MUCH

Why would Saladin want to kill his own nephew?

ROBIN

A nephew that wants peace at any cost. Salah ad-Din wants a fair deal.

WILL

So why send him over here in the first place?

ROBIN

But that's the thing. He didn't. He came on his own.

Robin stands and walks a step; Djaq stands up, too.

Turns to Djaq: We have to rescue the prince.

Scene Twenty-One

Nottingham Castle. Courtyard.

The General leads the women carrying the litter through the main gate. The Sheriff stands at the top of the steps and sighs delightedly.

SHERIFF

War is so much more profitable than peace. Especially after today.

GISBORNE

Be careful they don't cheat us. You know what these Saracens are like.

SHERIFF

Well, if they do, we shall give them back their prince on a pro rata basis. *Going down the steps:* Chunk by chunk.

GENERAL

Salaam alaikum.

The Sheriff passes him, eyeing the chest in the litter.

SHERIFF

Absently: Yes, yes, yes. Salaam alaikum. *Arrives at the litter and bends over the chest.* My dear ransom. *Chuckles.* The, er, the key? *Motions turning a key.*

GENERAL

With a glint in his eye: A sample of the treasure.

The Sheriff stands, smiling in anticipation. The General pours a jewel out of a small bag into the Sheriff's palm. The Sheriff bends over the chest again.

SHERIFF

Oh, yes, it's very—ooh! [*doubletake at the jewel*]—good, but I'd rather have the key.

GENERAL

First we must see our prince.

SHERIFF

Mumbles, fiddling with the lock: Yes. Yes, of course. Gisborne? Take him to the dungeons.

Gisborne clicks his tongue and jerks his head towards the castle, smirking. The General looks sidelong at the Sheriff, who stands up from the chest to face him, chuckling with frustration.

What now?

GENERAL

I cannot leave the women undefended.

SHERIFF

Chuckles again. Under his breath to Gisborne: I was really rather hoping to do without the hospitality. *Steps around the litter.* All right. Leave your weapons outside.

The General presents his scimitar to Gisborne.

Bring the prince to my quarters.

† † † † † † † † † † † † † † † †

Sheriff's quarters.

Malik is dragged into the room by two guards. The Sheriff sits behind the table and Gisborne stands at his side. The chest sits on another table in the middle of the room, flanked by the four women and the General.

SHERIFF

Ah! One prince.

The General looks at Malik. Malik looks up at the Sheriff, then recognises the women, one of whom looks at him out of the corner of her eye.

MALIK

No! *Eyes widen in fear.*

SHERIFF

Take him to the Great Hall.

Malik is dragged away and the doors close. The Sheriff motions to the General for the key.

GENERAL

But you have not given him to me.

SHERIFF

You have not given me my money.

GENERAL

Then you leave me no choice. Here is your key.

The General holds up the key, then places it on the table by the chest and goes to stand by the door. The Sheriff glances at Gisborne, giving him a slight jerk of his head. Gisborne greedily goes to the chest, unlocks it and opens it. A geared wheel rises out of it, with a short, small, flat-bottomed glass bottle lying on its side and mounted to the wheel by a thin rod. The Sheriff stands. A bell chimes. The Sheriff looks at Gisborne, puzzled. The women pull their veils over their faces and the General puts a scarf around his. Gisborne notices them, but is quickly distracted by the contraption clicking as the wheel turns, turning the bottle to pour its contents into another glass jar beneath. The Sher-

iff and Gisborne glance at each other. The wheel turns again and the bottle empties. They take a step back as the mixture creates thick white smoke, then a small but bright blast. The Sheriff and Gisborne are momentarily blinded and cover their faces with their hands. The women reach behind their backs for two short swords each and spin them. They kick away the guards behind them and stab them in perfect synchronisation. They spin their swords quickly and skilfully, turning on the guards protecting the Sheriff and Gisborne as they escort them towards the door.

SHERIFF

Gisborne! Gisborne, help me!

The Sheriff backs towards the door, holding a guard in front of him. Gisborne, coughing and gasping, slides to the floor as his guard engages the women. The Sheriff's guard is killed as he makes a dash for the door and opens it.

Gisborne, fight!

The Sheriff opens the door and steps into the corridor as more guards are killed. Gisborne looks up and quickly closes his eyes, playing dead as an assassin approaches spinning her swords above him.

North exterior corridor.

The Sheriff stumbles halfway along the corridor as he coughs from the smoke and covers his eyes. He stops, leaning against the wall, then opens his eyes with relief, catching his breath. He hears a man scream from his room and starts off down the corridor again.

SHERIFF

Guards!

The Sheriff takes a few steps, then is tripped by the General, who has been hiding behind a corner. The Sheriff falls to the ground and rolls over. The General holds the tip of his scimitar at the Sheriff's throat.

Frightened, desperately: Wait! Please! Take him! Take the prince!

The General narrows his eyes.

Forget about the ransom! You can have him for free!

GENERAL

You misunderstand, my friend. We're not here to rescue the prince. We come to bury him along with all talk of peace!

The General raises his sword over his head to strike as the Sheriff screams, but an arrow pierces the General's chest

from behind. His scimitar falls from his hands and the Sheriff catches it, whimpering loudly, as the General falls backwards. The Sheriff whimpers again at the sight of Robin and starts to stand, but Robin, Djaq, Allan and Much point their swords at him, and Little John holds the end of his staff at him. The Sheriff rolls to his back. Will is standing along the wall on Robin's other side, watching.

ROBIN

Quietly, sternly: Where's the prince?

SHERIFF

Forget him. You stay here. Protect me.

The gang bring their weapons closer.

I'll give you your prince.

ROBIN

Quietly: Where?

SHERIFF

Glances behind him. In the hall.

Robin looks at Little John, Allan, Much and Djaq and gently jerks his head towards the hall and the four of them go.

ROBIN

Will, get the horses to the east gate. We'll get Malik.

Will crosses in front of Robin, who hands him his bow before following the others to the Great Hall. Will runs down the corridor and turns down the steps just as the Sheriff, still with the General's scimitar, sees the women jump in at the end of the corridor.

SHERIFF

Don't leave me!

The Sheriff scrambles to his feet as the women see him and, whooping a trilling war cry, rush at him with swords spinning. The Sheriff runs to the top of the steps in the courtyard.

Guards! Guards! Points down the corridor with the scimitar, then runs into the castle.

GUARD

This way!

The guards engage the women but are quickly mown down.

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The Great Hall.

Four guards are surrounding Malik, who is sitting on his heels near the centre in front of the long table which has been pushed against the back wall. Robin and the gang burst in through the upper doors.

GUARD

Get them! Stop them!

ROBIN

Forget us! Watch the entrance!

SHERIFF

Just entering behind Robin: You heard him! Guard the doors!

MUCH

The Sheriff's with us?

Robin and the gang go downstairs and gather defensively round Malik. Robin stands next to him. The Sheriff paces anxiously in front of them, with Little John switching sides opposite him each time.

MALIK

Did no-one ever tell you that fools do not deserve to be rescued?

ROBIN

This is not a rescue yet, Malik.

SHERIFF

La-di-da-di-da. Will you two just shut up?

The Sheriff stops and all are silent, staring up at the doors as they hear swords clash and the guards scream outside them. Malik mouths a silent prayer. After a bit, the screams stop. Robin pulls back on Malik's shoulder.

ROBIN

Get behind me.

The gang set themselves in a defensive position. The Sheriff steps backwards to Robin, who puts a hand on his shoulder and guides him back.

SHERIFF

Do you have any ideas?

ROBIN

Keeping his eyes on the door above: Much, Djaq, John, over there. Nods under the balcony. Allan, Vaizey, with me.

Much, Djaq and Little John dash to their assigned location.

SHERIFF

Me?

ROBIN

Do it or we die.

The Sheriff steps over to Robin's left side, uncertain how to defend himself. They wait a moment and the doors burst open. The women enter calmly and pull off their veils and long vests, revealing their tattooed arms and backs, similar to Harold's, then hold up their swords. Malik silently retreats behind the table. The women charge, whooping down the stairs to face Robin, Allan and the Sheriff in a line.

LITTLE JOHN

Taps his staff on the floor. Oi!

The women look back and see Little John, Djaq and Much.

Come on, then.

The women spin their swords and circle round as the gang spread out round the room: Little John near the stairs, Allan in front of the fireplace, Robin and the Sheriff in front of the long table, Much and Djaq along the south wall. The women continue to spin for several long moments, repositioning themselves in the centre, all facing out, then finally stop.

ROBIN

Ready? Now!

All attack. Robin steps forward with his scimitar. The woman blocks and Robin steps back. The Sheriff crosses in front of Robin, who pushes him out of the way and spins round to face the woman again as the Sheriff takes a hack at her. The woman blocks both their swords and turns to face them. Little John swings his staff and the woman ducks. He turns around, using his momentum, and butts her with his staff, but she turns it aside with her sword. Robin and the Sheriff both attack their foe, who easily fends them off, one with each hand. Allan swings and is blocked, then is kicked backwards. The woman spins round to face Little John, and his opponent spins round to take on Djaq as Much is kicked backwards in the face. The Sheriff brings his sword down in front of the woman. Robin pushes the Sheriff out of the way and spins round to face her. The Sheriff swings again and is knocked down. Two women attack Djaq and Much, who are defending together and block them. The Sheriff and Robin each attack and are blocked by the woman, one with each hand. Little John swings his staff and the woman turns from Allan and blocks with both swords, then pushes his staff to the floor with one before spinning round to take on Allan and bringing the other sword up under the staff at the same

time, pulling it up and forcing Little John to step backwards. Robin and the Sheriff knock back the woman, but she jumps to sit on the table behind her and kicks out at Robin. Much and Djaq defend again. Robin falls to the floor and the woman spins off the table with her right leg flying at the Sheriff's head, avoiding his overhand swing and landing deftly on her feet. Robin quickly stands, puts an arm round the Sheriff, and pushes him aside while spinning to face the woman. Much swings his sword and is blocked. The Sheriff attacks and is pushed back with a foot. Robin charges and is blocked low, then she brings her sword up in an arc and around, pushing Robin's out of the way. Spinning swords come at Little John, who defends by holding his staff over his head, but then is pushed back with a foot to his stomach. Allan attacks, but the woman defends, spins and kicks him, sending him sailing into the corner after his sword. Robin blocks and is pushed back into the table. He grabs the woman's right arm and twists it behind her back. She immediately kicks him behind her back, knocking him into the Sheriff, who is already crouched on the floor.

SHERIFF

I hate this! This isn't much fun at all!

Robin falls behind the Sheriff. Much and Djaq are pressed back into the window by two women. Much has his sword arm round Djaq and holds his shield up to protect them both as Djaq kicks out, forcing the women back. The Sheriff ducks under the table and covers his head with his hands.

Suddenly there is a new person whooping a war call. Everybody turns their attention to the upper doorway as Harold rushes in, bare chested, showing all the tattoos. He leaps up to stand on the railing in an easy, graceful move. The women regroup, facing the balcony. Harold does a front flip to the floor below and comes up standing, two swords ready. He and the women stare at each other a moment, then Harold starts spinning his swords and the women join in. They form a circle round him as the gang watch, ready to step in. The first woman attacks. Harold blocks and spins round to face the one behind him. He blocks again. The women circle round, but Harold is ready to block any one of them, his swords spinning. He defends one in front, then turns and defends behind him. The Sheriff comes out from under the table. Harold ducks just enough to dodge a blade, jumps up, then ducks another and leans back to defend behind him. He and the latter woman both spin round and Robin steps in to engage the first woman as the Sheriff ducks her sword.

ROBIN

Get Malik out now!

Harold advances on two as Robin blocks, turns and blocks another. Little John goes behind the table to get Malik. Allan

engages the fourth and is blocked and kicked backwards. Much and Djaq stand ready to defend as Little John gets Malik, who is sidling away from him along the wall. Harold jumps and spins round, forcefully knocking blades to push one to the floor. He immediately turns and blocks as the Sheriff swings and a woman ducks. Harold ducks as his opponent spins round. The Sheriff attacks again, but Robin grabs the back of his coat, pulling him back out of the way and blocking at the same time, but is knocked down. Harold reaches back as the woman reaches out to defend and he quickly slices across her belly with his other sword.

HAROLD

One.

He turns and goes down to one knee, stabbing another as she raises an arm to attack and Little John, Djaq, Much and Malik make their way along the south wall behind her. Allan's opponent spins round, jabbing behind her, and Allan kicks her in the back with his foot as Harold pulls his sword out of the body.

Two.

Allan's opponent catches her balance near Harold. Much, Little John and Djaq protect Malik as they make their way to the stairs.

LITTLE JOHN

to Malik: Keep behind me. Keep behind me.

Harold ducks a swing. The remaining two women turn on him, leaving Robin and the Sheriff crouching in front of the table. Harold blocks a sword each, raising his arms over his head, and they both kick him back as the gang, sans Robin, watch from the stairs. Harold regains his balance as one circles round behind him. Harold glances back at her, then turns and raises one arm over his head to defend her from behind as the one in front spins her swords. Harold jabs his right sword behind him, stabbing her, then spins round and slices across her belly with the other.

HAROLD

Three.

The last one rushes him, leaping over her fallen comrade, and he blocks. She tries to stab him, but he jumps aside and gets his swords under hers and brings them across in an arc, knocking both swords from her hands in succession. He immediately brings both his swords to her neck and slices outward, severing her head.

Four.

The gang, standing on the steps with Malik, are absolutely awestruck at the skill Harold has shown to take out the four assassins practically single-handedly. Harold stares at the last victim on the floor at his feet, catching his breath. The Sheriff stands up.

SHERIFF

Points at Malik: Get him, Prince Bismallah... far away from here.

MALIK

The feeling is mutual.

Robin puts his arm round Harold's shoulder and leads him towards the stairs.

SHERIFF

And Locksley, remember...

Robin stops at the base of the stairs and looks over his shoulder at the Sheriff.

... business as usual... tomorrow.

ROBIN

I'll look forward to it.

The gang go upstairs.

† †

Scene Twenty-Two

Sherwood Forest. Outlaws' camp.

Malik removes a needle from the cleaned-up helmet Harold has over his head. The gang stand behind him, watching, as Malik holds the blunt end of the needle to his lips, thinking.

ROBIN

And you've never done this before.

MALIK

I've studied the theory.

MUCH

Will it work?

MALIK

Ask him yourself.

MUCH

to Harold: How do you feel?

HAROLD

It doesn't feel bad. It's been a long time since I could say that.

Malik pulls out the rest of the needles.

DJAQ

How long will the needles have to stay in?

MALIK

Of that I am not certain. *Removes the mask.* I will send more instruction once I have reached Jerusalem.

HAROLD

No need. I'll come with you. See you safe.

Malik nods.

MUCH

You're gonna go back there?

HAROLD

There'll be no true peace in here... *points to his temple...* until there's peace out there.

ROBIN

I'm afraid your hopes for peace may be in vain.

MALIK

Frowns and turns to face Robin. Not so. Think about it, my friend. Saladin sends his finest soldiers to kill me, yet I survive. *Glancing up:* It is the will of Allah. Allah wills peace. Saladin may be ruthless, but he is also a good Muslim, and even he must follow the will of

