



Clint Snyder

Inspired by the 1500 ballad "Robin Hood and the Potter"

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ROBIN HOOD AND THE PEDDLER

FARCE. Inspired by the 1500 ballad “Robin Hood and the Potter.” Robin Hood and his Merry Men—or in this case, “Serious Women”—stop a peddler traveling through Sherwood Forest and demand that she pay a toll. The peddler swindles Robin Hood out of his money and leaves him with an assortment of stainless steel cookware and ponchos. Robin Hood and Little John travel to Nottingham to sell the cookware and ponchos but are confronted by the Sheriff of Nottingham, who wants to shut them down for failing to pay taxes. Audiences of all ages will love this modern, madcap Robin Hood tale!

Performance Time: Approximately 30 minutes.



Robin Hood statue in Nottingham, England (left).
Illustration of the Sheriff of Nottingham by Louis John Rhead, 1912.

ABOUT THE STORY

Robin Hood (Robyn Hode) is a medieval folk hero who is described in the earliest existing ballads as a common yeoman who lives in Sherwood Forest with his Merry Men, a band of outlaws. The earliest Robin Hood ballads include “Robin Hood and the Monk” (c. 1450), “A Gest of Robyn Hode” (c. 1475), and “Robin Hood and the Potter” (c. 1503). The phrase “merry man” was originally a term used to describe the follower of an outlaw, knight, or leader. Little John is just one of three Merry Men who were given a name, the other two being William Scarlock, and Much the Miller’s Son. In the 15th century, Nottingham, located in the East Midlands area of England, was known for exporting religious sculptures and had a population of about 3,000. Today, Nottingham is a modern city with a population of more than 300,000. In the 14th century, Nottingham had a sheriff who was in charge of capturing outlaws, preventing hunters from poaching the King’s deer, and securing trade routes through Sherwood Forest. Once a royal hunting forest, Sherwood Forest is now a nature reserve where the annual Robin Hood Festival is held.

CHARACTERS

(3 M, 1 F, 17 flexible)

(With doubling: 2 M, 1 F, 10 flexible)

ROBIN: Leader of the Merry Men; male.

LITTLE JOHN: Robin's sidekick and leader of the Merry Men; small and thin compared to the others; has a pillow stuffed up his shirt to make him look larger; male.

MORENE: Sassy peddler who sells pots, pans, and ponchos and refuses to pay a toll; female.

MERRY MAN 1: Resents the term "Merry Men"; flexible.

MERRY MAN 2: Resents the term "Merry Men"; flexible.

MERRY MAN 3: Resents the term "Merry Men"; flexible.

MERRY MAN 4: Dislikes "merry" and prefers "serious"; flexible.

MERRY MAN 5: Prefers to call the group "Serious Women" instead of "Merry Men"; flexible.

MERRY MAN 6: Doesn't want the group to be called "Serious Women" since he's a man; male.

MERRY MAN 7: Prefers to be called "Serious mostly women and a few men"; flexible.

MERRY MAN 8: Wants the group to be called "The Serious People" since they are not merry or men; flexible.

MERRY MAN 9: Wants dental insurance; flexible.

MERRY MAN 10: Wants group to be called "Glitter Kitten Adventure Club"; flexible.

CUSTOMER 1: Doesn't have any money, only elbow macaroni; flexible.

CUSTOMER 2: Needs to find a bathroom; flexible.

CUSTOMER 3: Hates geese and mayo; flexible.

CUSTOMER 4: Loves mayo; flexible.

CUSTOMER 5: Thinks Little John has nice eyelashes; flexible.

CUSTOMER 6: Wants a mocha latte; flexible.

CUSTOMER 7: Wants a mocha latte; flexible.

SHERIFF: Sheriff of Nottingham who wants Robin Hood to pay sales tax; flexible.

Options For Doubling

MERRY MAN 1/CUSTOMER 1 (flexible)

MERRY MAN 2/CUSTOMER 2 (flexible)

MERRY MAN 3/CUSTOMER 3 (flexible)

MERRY MAN 4/CUSTOMER 4 (flexible)

MERRY MAN 5/CUSTOMER 5 (flexible)

MERRY MAN 6/SHERIFF (male)

MERRY MAN 7/CUSTOMER 7 (flexible)

MERRY MAN 8/CUSTOMER 6 (flexible)

Setting

Sherwood Forest and the Town of Nottingham.

Sets

Sherwood Forest. A backdrop of a forest, or a bare stage will suffice.

Town of Nottingham. There is a small kiosk. A backdrop of a town, or a bare stage will suffice.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Scene 1: Sherwood Forest.

Scene 2: Town of Nottingham.

Props

Pillow

Assorted pots and pans

Pack or sack

Assorted ponchos

Large sack of "gold"

Women's clothing, for Robin Hood

Women's clothing, for Little John

Coins

Bag of elbow macaroni

**"HEARKEN, good yeomen,
COMELY, COURTEOUS, AND good;
ONE OF THE BEST THAT EVER BARE BOW,
HIS NAME WAS ROBIN HOOD."**

—From the 1500 ballad
"Robin Hood and the Potter"

SCENE 1

(AT RISE: *Sherwood Forest. Robin and Little John are looking off into the distance.*)

ROBIN: (*Looking off.*) I told you, Little John. That is clearly a whale that has sprouted out legs somehow and is coming right this way.

LITTLE JOHN: (*Looking off.*) And I told you that is clearly a landslide coming at us at full speed.

ROBIN: (*Looking off.*) No, no, no. The coloring is all off for a landslide, and that clearly has bristles for gathering plankton.

LITTLE JOHN: What are "bristles"?

ROBIN: They're like whale teeth...sort of.

LITTLE JOHN: My question is...how do you know so much about whales? I don't really see many oceans around here.

ROBIN: Well, you don't see many whales either, now do you?

LITTLE JOHN: I suppose not.

ROBIN: It's called *reading*, Little John. You should try it sometime.

LITTLE JOHN: You don't have to be condescending. I was just implying that it seems a bit strange that someone with a reputation like Robin Hood would have the time to look up a book about whale dental hygiene. (*A pillow falls out of the front of little John's shirt. He quickly stuffs the pillow back up his shirt.*)

ROBIN: What was that?

LITTLE JOHN: (*Covering.*) What was what? I don't have a clue what you're talking about.

ROBIN: Either a pillow just fell out from underneath your shirt, or you gave birth to a giant marshmallow.

LITTLE JOHN: Stop. It's embarrassing...

ROBIN: You have a marshmallow baby?

LITTLE JOHN: No, no, no. I use the pillow to make myself look bigger.

ROBIN: Why?

LITTLE JOHN: Because...I'm a very small person.

ROBIN: I mean...your name is *Little John*...that's kind of what people expect.

LITTLE JOHN: You don't understand. (*Shouts.*) People expect it!

ROBIN: Okay, you don't have to get emotional.

LITTLE JOHN: Well, I've tried gaining weight the natural way—you know, eat 50 tacos a day—but I don't really like Mexican food, and there is only so much you can take before you just want to barf at the sight of a piñata.

(*Morene enters.*)

MORENE: (*Creepily.*) Heeeelloooo.

LITTLE JOHN: (*Screams.*) Ahhhhh!

ROBIN: Oh, look, we were both wrong. It was just a walking, talking, gawking, pile of garbage this whole time. Who knew?

MORENE: (*Insulted.*) I'm not garbage. I'm a lady...a very attractive, very single lady. (*Pillow falls out of Little John's shirt and she grabs it. Excited.*) Oh, look! A pillow! Morene's not sleeping on a rock tonight!

LITTLE JOHN: (*Shouts.*) Hey! (*Louder.*) Hey, you! Give that back!

MORENE: Fat chance!

LITTLE JOHN: That's my problem! I need to be fatter!

MORENE: Why not just eat a lot of tacos?

LITTLE JOHN: (*Shouts.*) No! (*Louder.*) No, I will not eat more tacos! I have filled my taco quota for a lifetime!

MORENE: I didn't know there was a taco quota.

ROBIN: If you wish to pass through my woods, gentle maiden, you must pay the tax.

MORENE: And if I don't?

ROBIN: (*Calls.*) Oh, Merry Men!

(Robin whistles. The Merry Men run on. Note: Most of the Merry Men are women.)

MERRY MAN 1: Excuse me, before we start this whole you-owe-us-money-now-act-really-scary-thing, I just want to point out that I resent the term "Merry Men."

MERRY MAN 2: Me, too!

MERRY MAN 3: Me four! *(Confused, everyone just looks at her.)*
I mean me *three*. I was never very good at math.

MERRY MAN 4: *(To Robin.)* The point is that we are not *merry*.
In fact, I would go so far as to say we are *serious*.

MERRY MAN 5: *(To Robin.)* Serious women.

MERRY MAN 6: *(To other Merry Men.)* I'm a man.

MERRY MAN 7: *(Annoyed.)* Fine. *(To Robin.)* So we're serious, mostly women and a few men.

MERRY MAN 8: *(To Robin.)* We demand that our group name be changed to "The Serious People."

MERRY MAN 9: *(To Robin.)* And we want a dental insurance package!

MERRY MAN 10: *(To other Merry Men.)* Wait. I thought we were changing our name to "Glitter Kitten Adventure Club"?
Is that not what we're changing it to?

ROBIN: Look! Okay! I'll deal with all that nonsense after you deal with this woman. She has to pay the toll to pass.

MORENE: Or what?

ROBIN: *(Threateningly.)* Or these Merry Men will make you pay.

MERRY MAN 8: *(To Morene.)* I just want to clarify for you, miss, that as I said before, we are in no way *merry* or *men*.

MERRY MAN 6: *(Insulted.)* Hey!

MERRY MAN 8: *(To Morene.)* We are *serious people*.

MERRY MAN 4: *(To Robin.)* Yeah! And we're not taking any money from her. I like her. She's sassy!

[END OF FREEVIEW]