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SF PERUSALS

Babes in the Wood

a pantomime

Paul Reakes

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CHARACTERS

Mole }
Wart } the Sheriff's men

Billy }
Milly } the Babes

Nurse Nitwit
Maid Marian
Robin Hood
Little John
Sheriff of Nottingham
Friar Tuck
Will Scarlet
Nausea Nightshade, the Witch
A Demon
A Stranger
Chorus of Townsfolk, Children, Street Entertainers, Merry Men, Servants, Forest Life, Ghosts

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

PROLOGUE

ACT I

SCENE 1 Olde Nottingham
SCENE 2 A Corridor in the Sheriff's Castle
SCENE 3 A Glade in Sherwood Forest
SCENE 4 The Corridor
SCENE 5 The Glade in Sherwood Forest

ACT II

SCENE 1 Court Yard of the Sheriff's Castle
SCENE 2 The Corridor, that night
SCENE 3 The Babes' Bedroom
SCENE 4 The Corridor
SCENE 5 Robin's Camp in Sherwood Forest
SCENE 6 Before the Wedding
SCENE 7 Robin Hood's Wedding—Finale

MUSIC PLOT

ACT I

1. Song and Dance	Townsfolk and Dancers
2. Comedy Song	Nurse
3. Song	Nurse, Babes and Townsfolk
4. Song	Marian and Townsfolk
5. Duet	Robin and Marian
6. Song	Robin and Merry Men
7. Dance	Dancers and Children
8. Song	Robin and Merry Men
9. Dance	Dancers and Merry Men
10. Song	Robin, Babes and Merry Men

ACT II

11. Song and Dance	Townfolk and Dancers
12. Comedy Song	Nurse, Mole and Wart
13. Song	Robin, Marian and Townsfolk
14. Song	Nurse and Babes
15. Dance	Dancers
16. Comedy Song	Sheriff and Nausea
17. Comedy Trio and Dance	Friar Tuck, Little John and Will Scarlet
18. Song	All
19. Sing-a-long	Nurse, Mole, Wart and Audience
20. Finale Song	All

PRODUCTION NOTES

Staging

The pantomime offers opportunities for elaborate staging, but can be produced quite simply if facilities are limited. There are four full sets:

Olde Nottingham

A Glade in Sherwood Forest. This set can be used for "Robin's Camp", Act II, Scene 5, with a different arrangement of trees, etc., and a device to conceal the "Demon". It can also be used for the Finale, with the addition of a triumphal arch and flower garlands.

Court Yard of the Sheriff's Castle

The Babes' Bedroom

All these scenes are interlinked by tabs or "corridor" frontcloth scenes.

The Babes' Bedroom calls for a sliding panel in the wall and a wardrobe with a self opening door for the "ghosts" appearances. It is advisable to have this set well in use before the actual performance to ensure a slick routine.

The Demon's Entrance is left to the ingenuity of the director and stage management. A simple method is to have a large tree at the back of the stage, concealing the "Demon" until its appearance. Whatever the method, it should be effective and spine chilling, giving the audience a fright! Clever lighting and sound effects will help.

CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES

Mole and Wart are a pair of lovable Buffoons—soppy soldiers in the service of the Sheriff. They provide plenty of slap-stick fun and audience participation. Their comic uniforms consist of ill-fitting suits of chain mail, tunics and Norman style helmets. For the prologue they wear medieval herald tunics, baggy tights and wigs. When they impersonate two children in Act I, Mole wears a "Little Lord Fauntleroy" suit and wig, and Wart a "Shirley Temple" style outfit with short dress and curly wig. Finale uniforms.

Billy and Milly (the Babes) must be played by children. If adults are used, the scenes in which Mole and Wart are disguised as children will be spoilt. The Babes should not be portrayed as "sweet little darlings", but as normal, down to earth kids. They are not afraid of showing their dislike for the Sheriff and only resort to being "babyish" when trying to get around Nurse Nitwit. Medieval children's costumes. Finale costumes.

Nurse Nitwit is a silly old fusspot who has no control over her young charges—or herself! She thinks she is a cut above the rest and even fancies her chances with the Sheriff! All her costumes are madcap medieval and outrageous. In Act I she gets to wear a suit of armour made from kitchen utensils, and in Act II, a ludicrous nightgown. Finale costume.

Maid Marian (principal girl) is a beautiful young woman with a charming manner and a sweet singing voice. Exquisite medieval costumes. Finale costume.

Robin Hood (principal boy) is the handsomest and bravest young fellow ever to swosh a buckle and don fishnets! Apart from this, he can sing, dance, fence, impersonate old women and french dressmakers! He wears the principal boy's version of Lincoln Green with thigh boots and feathered hat, etc. The old woman disguise in Act I is simply a long, hooded cloak. For the dressmaker in Act II he wears a very flamboyant gown and hat with wig and false beard. Finale costume.

Little John is Robin's trusty right-hand man. He should be tall, burly and sporting a bushy beard. Lincoln Green outfit. A dressmaker's gown and hat for Act II.

The Sheriff of Nottingham is the man we all love to hate—the vilest villain ever to raise a boo and hiss! Ideally, he should be lean and wizened with a sallow complexion and a black, villainous beard. He is gorgeously robed in dark, evil medieval attire.

Friar Tuck is a fat, merry monk in a brown habit and tonsure wig. A dressmaker's gown and hat for Act II.

Will Scarlet is a prominent member of Robin's band. Lincoln Green with red feathered hat. A dressmaker's gown and hat for Act II.

Nausea Nightshade, the witch, is written to be played Welsh. This can be changed, if so desired, with the necessary alterations to the script. She should be portrayed as a zany, comical character rather than an out and out nasty. Traditional witch's costume with pointed hat, etc., or "freaky" outfits with multi-coloured wigs can be worn. She only appears in Act II.

The Demon is a huge hideous horror from hell! A costume designer's dream—or nightmare! However elaborate the outfit it must be remembered that easy movement is essential for the fight with Robin and the Stranger. It only appears in Act II.

The Stranger, who makes a dramatic entrance, destroys the "Demon" and saves the day, is none other than—King Richard, The Lion Heart! He should be tall and impressive with a fine speaking voice. A hooded cloak conceals his splendid gold chain mail, white crusader's tunic with red cross and crown. He only appears in Act II.

The Chorus, Dancers and Children appear as townsfolk, street entertainers, merry men, servants, animals of the forest and ghosts.

PROLOGUE

After the OVERTURE, *there is a pause, then a fanfare is played. Mole enters from down* R *in front of the main* CURTAIN. *He moves* C *into a spotlight and bows flamboyantly to the audience Wart blunders on from down* L *and crashes into Mole. Both are comically dressed as medieval heralds. Wart does a comic bow and as he bends low the fanfare ends in a loud discord. He reacts to the conductor or pianist*

Mole (*addressing the audience*)
Good morrow, friends and welcome, all, to this our pantomime.

Wart (*addressing the audience*)
It's full of laughter, thrills and spills, and bits that sometimes rhyme.

Mole Before 'tis time for "Curtain Up", ye prologue we must spake.

Wart We promise that it won't take long, so try to keep awake!

Mole Our tale is set in days of yore when King Richard ruled the land.

Wart Crusades were all the rage that year so he thought he'd try his hand.

Mole He sailed away from England's shore content that all was fine.

Wart But his wicked brother John crept up and said, "The throne is mine!"

Mole Now Prince John was the cruellest man, his deeds too black to tell

Wart The people of Old England wished he'd go and rot in——

Mole (*to Wart*) Shh!

(*To the audience*) His henchman ruled throughout the land, the country shook with fear.

Wart They taxed the people right and left and even rationed beer!

Mole But in Nottingham they had it worse for the Sheriff ran that town!

Wart Boo! Hiss!

Mole (*to Wart*) Shh! Get on with it!

Wart He cancelled all school holidays and he closed the bingo down!

Mole He stopped the old age pension, the family allowance too.
Wart And those who couldn't pay their tax, he flushed 'em down the loo!
Mole Now as the folk of Nottingham were feeling far from good
Wart Up jumped a bold young fellow—
His name was Robin Hood!
(*Cheering*) Hurray!

Mole (*to Wart*) Shh! Control yourself!
(*To the audience*) He robbed the rich to pay the poor, as a hero he arose.
Wart The Sheriff snarled, "I hate that Hood, he gets right up my nose!"
Mole So, into the age-old legend of gallant Robin Hood—
Wart We present for you, a pantomime—
Mole Its name? Why—

Mole / **Wart** (*together*) Babes in the Wood!

There is a fanfare

Mole and Wart gesture grandly towards the CURTAIN. *They go to bow and knock their heads together*

In a dazed state Mole and Wart exit R *and* L *respectively*

As the CURTAIN *rises*

ACT I

SCENE 1

Olde Nottingham

The grim façade of the Sheriff's Castle is promiment R. *A ramp leads up to a large gateway with raised portcullis, etc. The side wings show houses, shops and taverns. At the back are market stalls. The backcloth shows the rest of the town with a distant view of Sherwood Forest*

The Townsfolk are discovered in medieval merriment. Nobles, Peasants, Urchins, Stall Holders and Vendors, etc., fill the stage and burst into song. A troupe of Street Entertainers, Jugglers, and Acrobats, etc., rush on and perform to the crowd. Then, perhaps, a fire eater can display his art or a performing bear could do a dance!

1. Song and Dance (Chorus and Dancers)

After the number, the Street Entertainers exit

The Townsfolk disperse upstage and go about their business

Unseen by them, Billy and Milly (the Babes) enter from DL *running. They are laughing and giggling uncontrollably, and pause* C, *to get their breath back*

Nurse (*yelling; off* L) Babes! Where are you?! Babes!!

The Babes hoot with laughter and exit DR, *running*

Nurse Nitwit staggers on DL, *bow-legged and exhausted from running after the Babes*

(*To the audience; holding her sides and gasping for air*) Be—right—with—you! (*Comic business as she finishes gasping and wheezing*)

Oh, bother them Babes! They've run away again!
I've chased 'em 'til I'm out of puff, and—Oo! I've got a pain!
Please do forgive the state I'm in, I bet you think I'm tight.
Well, I never touch a single drop— except on Friday night.
And then I might have eight or nine, no more 'cos that's me limit.
My favourite tiple's good brown ale with a pickled onion in it!

I'd better introduce meself. Nurse Nitwit is the name.
My duty is to nurse the Babes and crikey! What a game!
They've gone an' done a runner and left me feelin' chronic,
So as the pubs ain't open yet, I'll have a dose of tonic!
(*She takes a bottle of beer from her bag and opens it*)
Through the teeth and round the gums,
Look out, tummy, 'ere it comes!

(*She takes a long swig*)

The Townsfolk move down and watch in amused amazement

(*To the audience, blissfully*) Oh that's better! I can feel it codling me corns an' bathing me bunions already! Oh, this is wonderful stuff, this tonic! One bottle of this and I'd 'ave Frank Bruno on 'is back before 'e knew what 'it 'im! I . . . (*She becomes aware of the Townsfolk and quickly puts the bottle away, then she trips about the stage, calling very sweetly*) Yoo hoo! Billy? Milly? Darling Babes! Where are you? Come to Nursie, there's little dears! (*Then bellowing fiercely*) Come 'ere, ya perishin' pair of pipsqueaks! You wait til I get my 'ands on you! (*Then forlornly*) Oh, buckle me bedpans! Where *are* they!

1st Woman Can we be of any assistance?

1st Man Aye, you seem troubled, good mistress.

Nurse (*indignantly*) Mistress! 'Ere! Who are you callin' a mistress?! I've never been a mistress! (*Aside to the audience*) Worse luck! (*To the 1st Man;*

her nose in the air) I'll have you know that I am a respectable miss! *A miss!*

1st Man Well, you're certainly no hit!

The Townsfolk laugh

Nurse Oh! How rude! (*To the audience*) What a rude rabble of riff-raff! I hope you're not going to be rude to me as well. (*By-play with the audience, then to the Townsfolk haughtily*) I think you ought to know that I hold a very big position.

2nd Man Yes, we can see it!

The Townsfolk laugh

Nurse And my qualifications are enormous.

3rd Man We can see them as well!

The Townsfolk laugh

Nurse Oh, I'm not used to being spoken to in this fashion! Where I come from ladies like me are held sacred.

1st Man Oh, you come from India then?

The Townsfolk roar with laughter

Nurse (*to the audience*) Oh, what an ill-mannered mob of morons! I shall hignore them. (*She sticks her nose in the air and turns her back on the crowd*) I know! I'll sing a little song to myself and perhaps they'll all clear off! It's funny, but people seem to do that when I start to sing! (*To the conductor and the pianist*) Hand brake off, dear!

The Townsfolk cover their ears and exit in disgust as soon as: the Nurse starts to sing

2. Song (Nurse)

(*To the audience, after the song*) Have they gone?

Audience Yes!

The Townsfolk enter

Townsfolk Oh, no, we haven't!

Nurse (*reacting*) Oh, they're back again! They're worse than the—(*local gag*)! I wish I could find them Babes! (*Calling*) Billy! Milly! Come 'ere at once! (*She is now frustrated and near to tears*) Oh, I'm fed up, fed, fed, fed right up!

2nd Woman What's the matter?

Nurse Matter? I'll tell you what's the matter. It's Billy and Milly, them perishin' Babes! I've brought 'em all this way to live with their Uncle. I've been through everything to get 'em 'ere safe! Fire an' water! Marks and Sparks! Gin an' tonic! I've been through the lot! I've even been through—(*local town or village*)! And this is all the thanks I get! The little so-an'-so's run off and leave me on me tod! Me, a poor defenceless girl in a strange town! Boo hoo! (*She wails loudly*)

3rd Woman Cheer up. They can't have gone far.
2nd Woman Perhaps they went straight to their uncle's house.
Nurse How could they?! They don't know where he lives! I don't know where he lives!
2nd Man Who is their uncle!
Nurse He's the Sheriff! The Sheriff of Nottingham.

The Townsfolk react

Nurse Do you know him?
Townsfolk (*grimly*) Oh, yes! We *know* him!
Nurse Oh, what am I going to do! I can't go to him without the Babes! Fine nurse he'll think I am, lettin' 'em run off like that! I'll probably lose me job!
3rd Man (*to his companions*) And that's not all, if we know the Sheriff! (*He makes a throat slitting gesture*)
Nurse (*calling*) Babes! Come to Nursie this minute, or I'll—(*she screams in alarm*) ahhh!
3rd Woman What's the matter now?
Nurse (*with growing dread*) This is Nottingham!
Townsfolk Yes.
Nurse Sh—Sherwood F—Forest?
Townsfolk Yes.
Nurse R—R—Robin Hood?!
Townsfolk Yes!
Nurse (*in a panic*) *He's* got 'em! Robin Hood has got the Babes! (*She runs up and down*) Help! Help!
1st Man Calm down!
Nurse Calm down?! How can I calm down when that cut-throat's got my mites in his mitts!
1st Woman Robin Hood is no cut-throat!
Nurse They're *dead*! Robin Hood's deaded 'em! I can feel it in me various veins! Oh! What am I going to do now! (*She moves* DL *in a very melodramatic fashion*) Oh, woe is me! Woe is me! This is the end! This is the finish! (*Aside to the audience*) This is where *real* acting starts! Meryl Streep eat yer heart out! (*On with the "drama"*) I shall never be able to show me face to the world again! I, who allowed those poor, innocent little Babes to go to their deaths! Oh, the agony and the ecstasy! Oh, the holly and the ivy! Woe is me! I am undone! I am a broken woman!
2nd Woman (*going to her*) But——
Nurse (*pushing her away*) Sherrup! I 'aven't finished yet! (*On with the "tragedy" again*) Oh, to think, I shall never have to wipe their mucky little kissers again! Never shall I hear them call me droopy drawers again! Oh! They are dead! Dead! Deaded! (*She falls to her knees, clasps her hands and looks heavenwards*) Babes, I hope you will forgive me! Send a sign to show that you forgive your poor old Nursie!

The Babes enter DR *and move to* C, *unseen by the Nurse*

(*Heavenwards*) Please send me a sign. (*Timidly*) Is there anybody there?

Babes (*brightly*) Hello, Nursie!

Nurse (*overwhelmed*) Oh! They've answered my call! (*To the audience*) Marvellous reception too, isn't it? (*To the "above"*) I hope you two are behavin' yerselves up there!

Milly (*to Billy*) What's she doing on the floor?

Billy She's been at the tonic again!

Nurse (*annoyed: looking at them*) Shh! (*She looks heavenwards, then does a huge "double take" and leaps to her feet with a scream*) Ahhh! (*To the audience; shaking with fear*) It's g—g—ghosts! (*To the Babes, very scared*) Are you—are you *spirits*?

Billy Well, we're a couple of *shorts*, if that's what you mean.

The Babes and the Townsfolk laugh

Nurse (*going to the Babes; far from amused*) You naughty little horrors! What do you mean by runnin' off like that! You've made me look a right wally!

Billy That's not difficult!

More laughter from the Townsfolk

Nurse I've been worried witless! (*To the audience*) Haven't I? (*To the Babes*) I didn't know what had happened to you? I thought you'd been viaducted by the outlaw Robin Hood!

Billy Cor! I wish we had! I can't wait to meet *him*!

Milly Same here! I've heard he's *ever so* handsome!

Nurse Well, you're not goin' to meet him! The only person you're goin' to meet is your nice nunkie, the Sheriff!

Babes (*groaning*) *Oh, no!*

Nurse What do you mean—(*mimicking them*) *Oh no!?*

Milly We've just heard that the Sheriff is *horrible*!

Billy Yeah! They say he's a rotten old stinker!

Nurse (*outraged*) The Sheriff, a rotten old stinker! I don't believe it!

Billy (*indicating the audience*) Well, ask these people.

Nurse (*to the audience*) The Sheriff's not a rotten old stinker, is he?

Audience Yes!

Nurse Oh, no he isn't!

Babes
Townsfolk
Audience
} (*together*) Oh, yes, he is!

"Oh, no, he isn't! Oh, yes, he is!" routine follows

Nurse (*to the audience*) How do *you* know?! You haven't even seen him yet! (*To the Babes*) I'm sure he's a lovely man. You believe what old Nursie tells you. Nursie always knows best. Now, come along let's practise that little song we've prepared for your nunkie.

Babes (*with disgust*) Oh, do we *have* to!

Nurse Yes, you do! Nice and sweet, just like I taught you. After three. One—two—three!

3. Song (Babes, Nurse and Chorus)

A "gettin to know you" type song. At first, the Babes bellow it out and try to get through the song as fast as they can. Nurse Nitwit stops them, and with comic business and threats, gets them to sing it properly

(*Taking the Babes by the hand*) Now, let's go and find where your uncle lives. (*To the Townsfolk haughtily*) Could any of you uncouth commoners direct us to the Sheriff's residence?

Townsfolk (*in voices of doom; all pointing to the Castle*) There!

Nurse (*very impressed*) Oh, look, Babes! What a big abode your nunkie's got! He must have shares with—(*topical gag*)! Come along.

The Nurse leads the Babes towards the Castle

A fanfare sounds. Mole and Wart enter from the Castle and do a comic march around the stage. They are now in soldiers' uniforms and carry spears. Wart has a large, rolled up scroll

The Townsfolk whistle the "Laurel and Hardy" theme as Mole and Wart march about

Finally Mole and Wart come to a halt and give a comic salute

(*To the audience*) It's Bill and Ben, the flower pot men! (*Or replace with another popular TV duo*)

2nd Man (*to the Nurse*) That's Mole and Wart. The Sheriff's bodyguards.

Nurse They look more like a couple of old *fireguards* to me! (*She goes over to Mole with the Babes in tow*) Mornin' Mr Guard. I am Nurse Nitwit and I've got the Babes.

Mole I don't care if you've got the mumps! Be off with you!

Nurse But I've come to see the Sheriff!

Mole Well, you can't! He's busy! Ain't he, Wart?

Wart Yes. He's entertaining a friend.

Nurse (*much impressed*) Is he? Oh, how lovely!

An agonized scream, ending in a death rattle, echoes from the castle

All react

W–What was that?

Mole
Wart } (*together*) The friend!

General reaction

Nurse (*trying to make light of it for the Babes' sake*) Well—er—he seems to be havin' a good laugh!

Mole Oh yes! The Sheriff usually has 'em in *stitches*!

Nurse Well, I must see him at once!

Mole You *can't*, so—*clear off*!

Nurse I refuse to move from this spot until I see the Sheriff! I'm stayin' right 'ere! (*She turns her back on them and stamps her foot in defiance*)

Mole jabs her in the rear with his spear

The Nurse yells and hops about

The Babes and the Townsfolk roar with laughter

Mole (*to the Nurse*) Are you leaving now?
Nurse (*rubbing her rear*) Yes! I get your point! Oh . . . (*Rounding on Mole*) Don't think you've 'eard the last of this, you gormless guardsman, you! I'm reportin' you to the Sheriff! And I hope he reduces you to the ranks, and—and cuts yer medals off! So there! Come, Babes! (*She tries to make a dignified exit, but her wounded posterior decrees otherwise! To the audience*) Oh! I think he's ruined me radial!

The Nurse exits L, *hobbling and rubbing her painful bottom*

The Babes follow her, giggling and copying her actions

Mole (*addressing the crowd*) Citizens of Nottingham! Hark ye! We have a proclamation from his nobleness, the Sheriff! So, pin back yer lug 'oles!
Townsfolk Boo!!
Mole Wart, have you got the scrolls?
Wart (*dumbly*) Eh?
Mole Have you got the scrolls?!
Wart (*dumbly*) No, I always stand like this.
Mole (*indicating the scroll*) The proclamation!
Wart Oh! (*He holds up the scroll to the crowd*) Yes! Here is the Sheriff's proc—procla . . . What he just said!
Mole (*to Wart*) Go on, then! Read it out!

Comic business with Wart trying to unroll the scroll and manage his spear at the same time. Mole goes to his assistance and they get into a hopeless tangle. Eventually, they sort things out and Wart opens the scroll, only to find it keeps rolling back up! Finally, he gets it under control

(*Exasperated*) Read it! Read it!
Wart (*after a polite little cough, reading*) Ahem! "One pound of sausages. Half a dozen eggs from—(*a local shop*). Can of oil for new chain mail jockey shorts. Loaf of bread. One—"
Mole Stop! That's our shoppin' list! Turn it over! Turn it over, you fat head!
Wart (*pouting*) All right! There's no need to get nasty! (*He turns the scroll over and reads*) "To the riff-raff of Nottingham."
Mole (*to the Townsfolk*) That's *you* lot!
Townsfolk Boo!
Mole (*to Wart*) Pray continue with your oration.
Wart (*dumbly*) Eh?
Mole Get on with it!
Wart (*reading*) "Here is a personal massage——"
Mole Message!
Wart Er—"message from his effluence, the Sheriff——"
Mole What?!

Wart points out the word

That's eminence, you clot! Oh, give it 'ere!

Mole snatches away the scroll, and dumps the spears on Wart

(*Reading*) "This morning at ten o'clock there will be a tax collection. Signed—your loving friend, the Sheriff of Nottingham!"

Townsfolk (*protesting loudly*) What! Not another one! Oh, no! etc., etc!

Mole (*loudly*) P.S.

The Townsfolk go silent

(*Continuing to read*) "P.S. Refreshments will be served to all those who cannot pay their taxes."

Townsfolk (*dumbfounded*) What!

Mole Shh! (*Reading*) "These refreshments will consist of—thumbscrew therm dore, followed by piping hot irons and a generous helping of boiling oil!" (*He rolls up the scroll*)

The Townsfolk roar with anger

Mole takes the spear from Wart

(*Shouting a command*) Sheriff's bodyguard by the left—*quick march*!

Mole and Wart march round the stage as the angry Townsfolk yell and shake their fists at them

Mole and Wart make a comic exit into the Castle, with Wart getting his spear stuck, etc.

3rd Man *Another* tax collection!

3rd Woman We had one only yesterday!

Townsfolk And the day before that!!

1st Woman If only King Richard would return. He'd soon settle Prince John and his evil cronies like the Sheriff!

2nd Woman At least there's one man who isn't afraid of the Sheriff—Robin Hood!

Townsfolk Aye!

1st Man Why doesn't Robin finish the scoundrel off once and for all?

2nd Woman If he did, they'd only send another sheriff to take his place!

2nd Man True. But 't would be nice to see the old blackguard dangling from the end of one of Robin's arrows!

All Aye!

3rd Woman (*looking towards the castle*) Hush! Here comes Maid Marian, the Sheriff's ward! Be careful what you say!

The Townsfolk disperse

The beautiful Maid Marian appears in the Castle gateway

Marian Good morrow, good people.

There are a few gruff replies from the Townsfolk as Maid Marian descends the ramp to C

My word, you all seem very gloomy. What ails you?

3rd Man (*gruffly*) Ask your guardian, the Sheriff!
Marian (*with concern*) Oh, dear! What has he been doing now?
1st Woman There's to be another tax collection this morning at ten!
Marian (*appalled*) Another!
Boy He's nothing but a mean, grasping old——
Townsfolk (*to the boy*) Hush!
Marian (*to the boy*) No, pray continue, or shall I finish it for you? He's nothing but a mean, grasping old tyrant! There! Is that what you were going to say?

The Townsfolk react

(*To the Townsfolk*) You seem shocked.
2nd Woman Well, we thought ...
Marian Yes, I know what you thought, but you are wrong! (*Passionately*) I loathe the Sheriff as much as any of you! He is the vilest creature on two legs! It pains me to see his cruel treatment of you. Believe me, good people, if it were in my power to stop him, I would! But, alas, I am as helpless as the rest of you.
1st Woman But if you hate him so much why do you stay with him?
3rd Man Aye, surely you are free to leave. You have riches of your own.
Marian Alas, the small fortune left to me by my father has long since been usurped by my evil guardian. I am penniless and have nowhere else to go.
2nd Woman There is only one hope for you, Maid Marian.
Marian And what is that, pray?
3rd Woman Marriage! You must hope that one day soon a young man will come and take you away from all this.
Marian (*smiling*) 'Tis a pleasant thought, and one that has occupied my mind more than once.

4. Song (Marian and Chorus)

After the song, the Townsfolk exit leaving Marian alone DL

Little John enters DR, *helping Robin Hood. Robin is disguised as an old crone in an all-enveloping, hooded cloak. Slowly, they move to* C

Little John (*to Marian*) Good-morning, good mistress.
Marian (*turning to them; a little startled*) Oh! Good-morning.
Little John Would I be right in saying that this is Nottingham Town?
Marian Yes, it is.
Little John Thank'ee. (*To Robin*) 'Tis Nottingham, Mother.
Robin (*as an old crone*) Eh? What's that you say?!
Little John (*to Marian*) She's a little hard of hearing. (*To Robin, loud and slow*) *This—is—Nottingham!*
Robin Not real jam! What be you talkin' about, boy?
Little John I said ...
Marian (*moving over to them*) Can I be of any assistance?
Robin Son! What's 'appened to yer voice?
Little John That wasn't me, Mother! It was the young woman.
Robin Young woman! What young woman?

WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

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