

NOTTINGHAM

by

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THERE ARE TWO SIDES TO EVERY LEGEND...

FADE IN:

EXT. CASTLE UNDER SIEGE - NIGHT

A Byzantine fortress overlooking the Mediterranean Sea.

A FULL MOON illuminates a MEDIEVAL ARMY complete with a SIEGE TOWER, CATAPULTS and BATTERING RAMS, ferociously ATTACKING the fortress...

CASTLE MARCAPPUS - CYPRUS - JULY, 1191

The DEFENDERS of the castle fight back, but they're OUTNUMBERED ten-to-one.

THE CREW OF ONE ATTACKING CATAPULT

loads up a BOULDER and prepares to LAUNCH. One of them grins as he cups his hands to his mouth and YELLS up at the Castle Walls:

CYPRriot CREWMAN
(in GREEK w/subtitles)
<<HERE'S YOUR DINNER, YOU ENGLISH
BASTARDS!>>

The Crewman releases the triggering mechanism and we FOLLOW THE BOULDER AS IT SOARS HIGH UP INTO THE SKY -- but our view SHIFTS, leaving the boulder to ARC OVER THE CASTLE WALL as we SUDDENLY PLUNGE STRAIGHT DOWN INTO THE GROUND AND KEEP GOING, DRIVING INTO THE SOLID DIRT, ten feet deep... twenty... thirty -- SUDDENLY BURSTING UPON AN UNDERGROUND CHAMBER -- a TUNNEL...

INT. MINE - UNDER THE GROUND

An ENGLISH NOBLEMAN, barely 30 (middle-aged in 12th Century terms), stripped to the waist, covered in dirt and sweat -- but still wearing a battle helmet -- makes his way through the TORCH-LIT shadows of the TUNNEL, its low roof propped up with rough-hewn WOODEN POSTS AND BEAMS. He's moving fast, but being careful not to spill the WATER he's carrying in a heavy BRASS POT...

INT. FAR END OF THE MINE

HALF-A-DOZEN ENGLISH TUNNEL SOLDIERS line the walls of the Mine. They are all stripped to the waist, covered in sweat and dirt. They carry swords, maces, flails, axes and ENTRENCHING TOOLS -- picks and shovels and wooden buckets. None of them looks happy --

ENGLISH SOLDIER

Fucking hell. I came on crusade to liberate Jerusalem and touch my hand to the True Cross -- not fight Greeks like a worm under the earth!

The English Soldier is suddenly CONKED ON THE HEAD from behind --

NOBLEMAN

(WHISPERING)

Put on your helmet and be quiet.

All eyes turn to the Nobleman --

ENGLISH SOLDIER

(donning his HELMET)

Yes, sir, Sir Robert. Sorry, but --

The Nobleman -- SIR ROBERT TORNHAM -- presses his finger to the Soldier's lips and the Soldier shuts up. Tornham moves to the END of the Mine and sets his bucket of water down against the wall -- then can't help but notice the eyes of all the Soldiers staring at the water as if it were gold...

He hesitates -- then removes his own helmet, dips it into the pot, FILLS IT WITH WATER -- then passes his helmet to one of the men, motioning for him to pass it on down the line --

TORNHAM (NOBLEMAN)

(WHISPERING)

One sip per man.

Tornham's water-filled helmet makes its way through the ranks as he kneels down and stares at the brass pot...

The Soldiers keep SIPPING...

Tornham keeps staring at the pot, his steel-grey eyes NARROWING as he studies the water...

The Soldiers exchange some looks -- what the hell is Tornham doing?

Finally the first English Soldier's curiosity gets the best of him. He silently approaches Tornham, kneels down beside him, WHISPERS in his ear:

ENGLISH SOLDIER

Begging your pardon, Sir Robert --
but what are you -- ?

Tornham raises a hand to silence his questioner and keeps staring at the water: the surface has ever-so-slightly begun to UNDULATE...

Tornham DRAWS HIS SWORD, MOTIONS to the others to do the same. He takes back his battle helmet, fits it on his head --

The Soldier STARES at the pot of WATER -- watching FIRST in confusion and then with dawning realization as its surface starts to SWAY like a tide-pool --

TORNHAM
(a fierce WHISPER to the
Soldiers)
TO ARMS! Ready yourselves!

Tornham's eyes sweep across the MUDDY WALLS of the mine, then shoot back to the brass pot of WATER, then back to the walls, searching --

TORNHAM (CONT'D)
(suddenly POINTING his
SWORD)
Here.

All eyes lock onto the SECTION of the MINE WALL where Tornham is pointing --

TORNAHM (CONT'D)
Torches.

Everyone SNUFFS THEIR TORCHES, turning the Mine pitch black.

Silence.

Then the MUFFLED SOUNDS of DIGGING, in time to the SWAYING OF THE WATER IN THE BUCKET --

Then a SUDDEN CRACK in the MINE WALL -- almost exactly where Tornham was pointing -- and the GLOW of TORCHLIGHT peeking through...

The SOUND of VOICES speaking GREEK...

ANOTHER CRACK and the MINE WALL starts to CRUMBLE, HANDS with PICK-AXES now pushing through...

The MINE WALL COLLAPSES INWARDS, CYPRIOT KNIGHTS now pushing their way through into the shadows --

TORNHAM
NOW!

-- but before the Cypriot Knights can react the English Tunnel Soldiers are on them, ATTACKING from the darkness at close quarters, SLICING with their swords, HACKING with their picks, taking out their surprised enemies one-by-one!

Steel flashes by torchlight and the Cypriot Knights try to fight back, but they're totally unprepared for the English onslaught. The surviving Cypriots RETREAT back into their OWN TUNNEL, Tornham and his fellow English Tunnel Soldiers GIVING CHASE, YELLING GUTTURAL BATTLE-CRIES AS THEY GO!

EXT. CASTLE UNDER SIEGE - NIGHT

The same CATAPULT CREW loads up another BOULDER and the same Crewman YELLS UP to the walls:

CYPRIOT CREWMAN
 <<OPEN YOUR MOUTHS FOR DESSERT, YOU
 ENGLISH BASTARDS!>>

The Crewman goes to fire the catapult -- but before he can make a move he's run through with a SWORD!

Robert Tornham yanks his blade from the Crewman's chest then leads his SCREAMING, BLOODY AND HALF-NAKED TUNNEL SOLDIERS OUT THE ENTRANCE OF THE CYPRIOT SIEGE MINE in a MERCILESS SURPRISE ATTACK ON THE ENTIRE CYPRIOT ARMY!

Up on the parapets of the Castle Walls the remaining English defenders watch and CHEER as their comrades proceed to win the battle...

CUT TO:

EXT. MANORHOUSE - NIGHT

Close to the edge of a FOREST sits a cross between a mansion and a castle, wealthy lodgings surrounded by a defensible wall. But there's no sign of a siege here...

INT. MANORHOUSE - NIGHT

The GREAT HALL is filled with FOOD and DRINK, along with MUSIC and LAUGHTER. It's a FEAST for well-to-do NOBLE and KNIGHTLY FAMILIES, attended to by an array of MALE and FEMALE SERVANTS. A ROUNDEL DANCE is in progress, MEN AND WOMEN age 14 and up twirling in each others arms to the flutes and drums of the MUSICIANS and the lilt of the accompanying CHORAL'S VOICES...

A good time is being had by all -- but one good-looking YOUNG MAN and equally well-bred YOUNG WOMAN, both Nobles, are dancing together and virtually glowing with joy.

They exchange a series of looks, ending with each of them NODDING to the other, then take advantage of the crowd to surreptitiously DUCK OUTSIDE -- the Young Woman reaching out to SNATCH A GOBLET OF BRANDYWINE off a serving tray as she exits...

EXT. MANORHOUSE - NIGHT

The Young Woman sips from the goblet and makes an impromptu SPRINT for the forest, the Young Man giving chase --

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

The Young Man watches as the Young Woman leans back against a LARGE TREE, raises the goblet to her lips and sucks it dry.

YOUNG WOMAN
(feigning sadness)
We're out of brandywine.

The Young Man pins her against the tree, pulls off her head-dress, letting her hair tumble down onto both their faces --

YOUNG MAN
(hushed)
...Good.

-- and kisses her.

DEEPER IN THE FOREST

A STAG with a large pair of antlers silently watches as the young noble couple begins to make love...

CLOSE ON THE YOUNG COUPLE

Wrapped in each others arms, kissing passionately -- until the SOUND of a BREAKING BRANCH startles them. They freeze, the Young Man peering into the shadowy woods around them --

The Stag emerges from the darkness.

The Young Woman smiles at the noble creature.

YOUNG WOMAN
He's beautiful.

The Young Man kisses the Young Woman on the neck --

YOUNG MAN
So are you.

She MOANS as he moves his lips towards her breasts --

A sudden HIGH-PITCHED WHISTLING SOUND fills the night air --

Then a sharp, jagged THUD.

The eyes of both the Young Man and the Young Woman go WIDE, their breath catching in their throats.

A single ARROW has gone through the Young Man's BACK and into the Young Woman's CHEST, IMPALING them both INTO THE TREE.

The startled Buck races back into the woods -- leaving the young couple frozen together in shock, bleeding to death...

CUT TO:

EXT. CASTLE MARCAPPUS - DAWN

The last time we saw this place it was under attack -- but now it sits calm and peaceful beneath the warm light of an early Mediterranean morning...

INT. CASTLE BED-CHAMBER - EARLY MORNING

Robert Tornham wakes, throws off his blanket and sits up in bed -- revealing himself to be completely naked. Blinks his eyes, wipes sleep from them, takes a deep breath -- then pulls himself out of bed, turns to the East, where the sun has just risen, and kneels in PRAYER:

TORNHAM

Our Father, who desires that we all be saved and gives us our daily bread -- the Holy Sacrament for the soul and needful sustenance for the body. For these I confide in you. Amen.

Tornham rises, reaches over to a simple NIGHT-STAND, pours a pitcher of WATER into a bowl and SPLASHES some on his face. Then he wraps a piece of white linen around his index finger, dips it first into the water, then in a small IRON SAUCER OF SALT -- and uses it to BRUSH HIS TEETH. When he's done he crosses to the WINDOW, undoes an IRON BAR and OPENS THE SHUTTERS, allowing the sunlight to stream in.

He breathes in the morning, opens his mouth in a great yawn, then heads through a narrow ARCHWAY and down a narrow stone PASSAGE that winds its way to...

INT. PRIVY CHAMBER - EARLY MORNING

This is what we now call the toilet. Tornham -- still naked -- sits down to do his business...

While he sits he studies a CHESSBOARD laid out beside his seat, the pieces in the MIDST OF AN ONGOING GAME. He thinks for a moment, makes a MOVE -- then spins the board around, so he's now playing black instead of white -- considers a moment, then makes another move...

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE CHAMBER - DAY

Tornham, now fully dressed, enters -- and furrows his brow at the surprising sight of his SQUIRE, THOMAS LESLIE -- 60, wise but not wizened, still in impressive shape for his age -- who is in the midst of PACKING up everything in the room in a series of BAGS and BOXES --

SQUIRE THOMAS

Good morning, Sir Robert. I trust your breakfast met with approval? Can you believe the locals on this island prefer cow's milk on their cereal to wine?

TORNHAM

Thankfully I have you to protect me from such dire threats.

(re: the packing)

What in God's name are you up to?

SQUIRE THOMAS

It seems word of your brilliant counter-mining stratagem and its utter defeat of the rebellious locals reached the Royal ears of King Richard -- and His Majesty was quite impressed. In fact, he sent you a personal message to that effect --

(indicating an unrolled PARCHMENT sitting on the desk)

-- which I took the liberty of opening, not wishing to disturb that blissfully deep slumber of yours.

Tornham shoots the old man a look.

TORNHAM

People warned me about employing a squire who could read.

(nodding at the parchment on the desk)

(MORE)

TORNHAM (cont'd)
 So what does King Richard's
 congratulatory letter have to do
 with you packing up all my things?

SQUIRE THOMAS
 I'm afraid it's a "good news, bad
 news" letter, sir. It seems you
 are no longer the Sheriff of
 Cyprus.

Tornham looks at his Squire in confusion --

TORNHAM
 What? That's not possible.
 Richard appointed me for life.
 (angrily)
 Give me that letter.

The Squire pauses his packing, hands Tornham the parchment --

SQUIRE THOMAS
 Yes, well, that was before he
 decided to sell the Island and all
 its contents and inhabitants to the
 Knights Templar.

Now Tornham's confusion turns to total disbelief --

TORNHAM
 He goid the island? But we just
 won a desperate victory over the
 entire Army of Cyprus defending
 this place for him.

SQUIRE THOMAS
 And don't think he doesn't
 appreciate it. That's where the
good news comes in...

The Squire flips over the parchment and brings Tornham's
 attention to the writing at the bottom of the SECOND PAGE,
 which carries an EMBOSSED ROYAL SEAL...

SQUIRE THOMAS (CONT'D)
 You, Sir Robert Tornham, are no
 longer Sheriff of Cyprus but --
 thanks to your well-proven loyalty,
 courage and resourcefulness -- you
 have just been appointed to be the
 Sheriff... of Nottingham.

Tornham looks like someone just threw cold water on his face.
 He quickly reads over both pages of parchment for himself...

He doesn't look happy or sad --- just stunned.

SQUIRE THOMAS
 (re: packing it up)
 I assume I'll find your chess set
 in the privy...?

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. ENGLISH COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

If you can call it day, between the grey CLOUDS and DRIZZLING RAIN. A PAIR OF HORSEMEN gallop their way down the muddy remnant of a dirt ROAD... it's Tornham and Squire Thomas, both of their horses loaded down with SADDLEBAGS of food, clothing and books...

SQUIRE THOMAS
 (dry)
 Merry old England. Just as lovely
 as I remembered it. Aren't you
 glad to be home, sir?

TORNHAM
 Do you know where the word
 "Sarcasm" comes from, Thomas?

SQUIRE THOMAS
 I believe from the French
Sarcasme...

TORNHAM
 ...who got it from the Latin
Sarcasmus -- which got it from the
 Greek *Sarkasmos* -- which got it
 from the ancient Greek *Sarkazein*.
 Do you know what *Sarkazein* means in
 ancient Greek, Thomas?

SQUIRE THOMAS
 An ignorant squire such as myself?
 Of course not, sir. Please do
 enlighten me.

An awkward beat --

TORNHAM
 Damn. I can't remember. But we're
 nowhere near Greece anymore, so if
 you could lessen the amount of --

SQUIRE THOMAS
Sarkazein?

TORNHAM

It would be greatly appreciated.

The two travellers reach the top of a RISE IN THE ROAD and an URBAN LANDSCAPE becomes visible in the distance laid out below them...

NOTTINGHAM, ENGLAND - SEPTEMBER, 1191

EXT. SUBURBS OF NOTTINGHAM - DAY

The road becomes lined with scattered HOUSES, which quickly in turn give way to BIGGER, MORE EXPENSIVE and CLOSER-PACKED HOUSES and TAVERNS. The road here bears some TRAFFIC, most of it headed in the same direction as Tornham and Squire Thomas: NORTH, towards a tall STONE WALL which looms in the distance...

Outside one of the Taverns, an INN-KEEPER spots Tornham and Squire Thomas as they approach, smiles and CALLS OUT:

INN-KEEPER

Good-day to you, good-sirs! Within this establishment of mine you shall find all manner of comforts, painted chambers and soft beds piled so high with feather mattresses you can nearly touch the ceiling with your finger. Here is your lodging for love affairs -- for you must trust me when I tell you how sweetly becoming are those lovely damsels who abide within!

Squire Thomas inspects the Tavern -- several YOUNG WOMEN poke their heads out of the windows, some attractive, some not, but all looking weary.

TORNHAM

I assume you are familiar with the "Diverse Ordinances and Constitutions for the Regulation of Horrible Sin" as enacted by our late, great King Henry II, may God bless his memory as he rests in peace?

INN-KEEPER

(tentatively)

Mmmm... I've heard of them.

TORNHAM

So... if we were to enter your "establishment" we would find no woman residing there whom you charge more than fourteen pence a week for her room?

INN-KEEPER

(nervously)

Those ordinances were a long time ago! Prices rise, the value of money falls. You have to keep up with the market.

TORNHAM

Nonetheless, I advise you to lower the rent you charge in accordance with the law of the land. I'll send a Bailiff by to check -- and if you're not in accordance, to levy the appropriate fines.

Tornham turns his horse round and makes for the gate. Squire Thomas confides to the Inn-Keeper --

SQUIRE THOMAS

There's a new Sheriff in town.

EXT. NOTTINGHAM - MAIN GATES - DAY

Tornham and Squire Thomas reach an OPEN pair of massive WOODEN DOORS set in the STONE WALL which stretches around the entire perimeter of the CITY.

A steady stream of TWO-WAY TRAFFIC is passing in and out under the watchful gaze of a pair of GUARDSMEN. One of them WAVES to Tornham and Squire Thomas:

GUARDSMAN

Please identify yourselves, gentlemen.

Tornham starts to reply, but Squire Thomas jumps in first --

SQUIRE THOMAS

Sir Robert Tornham -- the newly appointed Sheriff of Nottingham.

The Guards exchange a look and don't seem convinced. Tornham reaches beneath his surcoat, pulls out the PARCHMENT and shows them the EMBOSSED ROYAL SEAL...

SQUIRE THOMAS

I doubt you boys can read but I
have faith you can recognize the
Great Seal of King Richard -- can't
you?

The Guardsmen's eyes go wide and they quickly BOW their heads
to Tornham and gesture for him to pass -- then one begins
ringing an ALARM BELL perched atop the gates --

SQUIRE THOMAS

I would advise us both to be
prepared for either a shower of
riches or a surprise attack.

Tornham and Squire Thomas ride on into the HEART OF THE CITY.
It is a late 12th Century METROPOLIS and so far as English
cities go, second only to London in its population,
urbanization and sophistication.

Before Tornham and Squire Thomas can get much further up the
MAIN ROAD they are suddenly SET UPON by a NOBLEMAN on
horseback, accompanied by FOUR KNIGHTS, all five horsemen
CHARGING their way through the CITY STREETS, pulling their
mounts to a stop just in front of Tornham and his squire --

The Nobleman -- intense eyes, chiseled face and chiseled
body -- nods from atop his horse:

NOBLEMAN

Sir Robert Tornham, Sheriff of
Nottingham, I presume? I've been
expecting you.

(pulling his horse up
alongside Tornham,
offering his HAND)

Guy of Gisborne. I've been serving
as acting sheriff until a royal
appointment was made for the
Office.

TORNHAM

(SHAKING Gisborne's hand)
Pleasure to meet you, Sir Guy.

GISBORNE (NOBLEMAN)

Pardon me for asking, Sir Robert,
but... where is your escort? Your
retainers?

Squire Thomas clears his throat, raises a hand --

SQUIRE THOMAS

That would be me.

Gisborne skeptically eyes the old man.

GISBORNE

No offense, Sir Robert -- but one rusty man-at-arms? It's insanity. There are murdering thieves hiding behind every bush in England these days -- especially along the Great North Road which you took up from London.

Squire Thomas starts to reply but Tornham cuts him off --

TORNHAM

All no doubt looking to ambush and rob blind every Nobleman trotting through the woods with an impressive entourage and wagons filled with treasure and fineries.

(a beat)

I've got one wagon coming with all my belongings and the rest of my retainers. They should be here in the next few days.

Gisborne acknowledges this with a reluctant nod and indicates an impregnable-looking CASTLE atop the hill at the center of the city --

GISBORNE

Your office awaits you in Nottingham Castle. Castle Hill is also the Norman section of the city. You'll want to stay close after hours. The Saxon section is on Saint Mary's Hill -- though there's not much "saintly" about it.

Gisborne continues with the guided TOUR, he and his knights leading Tornham and Squire Thomas on THROUGH THE CITY -- PEASANTS & TOWNSFOLK, LORDS & LADIES, KNIGHTS & SERVANTS all going through their daily routines...

SQUIRE THOMAS

(chiming in)

I believe this town was founded by some of my Saxon ancestors after they invaded the island and wrested great swathes of it from the ancient Britons who inhabited it at the time. The Saxon chieftain in this region was a man named *Snot* and so this place was originally named *Snottingham*.

(WHISPERING to Tornham)

Sarkazein.

Gisborne glares at the old Squire as Tornham suppresses a grin --

TORNAHM

(to Gisborne)

What's the population grown to these days, Sir Guy?

GISBORNE

Two-thousand give or take. Second only to London according to the latest census. A few less recently thanks to that bastard, Hood.

Tornham narrows his eyes --

TORNHAM

Who?

GISBORNE

You haven't heard of him? I'm surprised. The riff-raff have started to compose ballads celebrating his various crimes.

TORNHAM

News from Nottingham doesn't reach all the way to Cyprus.

GISBORNE

Hood -- Robin of Locksley before he turned outlaw -- is a lesser nobleman of Saxon descent who has been robbing, pillaging and now murdering those of Noble birth and Norman descent for the last six months. The serfs and peasants proclaim him some sort of rebel champion.

(MORE)

GISBORNE (cont'd)

A hero of the "common folk" because he throws them a few pennies now and again to keep their mouths shut as to his whereabouts.

(shrugging)

And so long as he only kills wealthy Normans the peasants and townfolk could care less. They blame his murders on the Jews -- though I've yet to meet a Jew who can shoot a strong bow well enough to kill two people with one arrow. Speaking of which...

Gisborne nods to a RUN-DOWN SECTION OF THE CITY, a JEWISH STAR painted on an old wooded sign nailed to a post marking the neighborhood.

GISBORNE

Saint Nicholas Lane -- the entrance to the Jewish quarter.

SQUIRE THOMAS

God's chosen people.

GISBORNE

More like God's cursed. Last year they were burned out of York. Most of the survivors came to join their brethren here. They live piled atop one another like rats.

Tornham SEES a boarded-up SYNAGOGUE in the distance and nods to Gisborne --

TORNHAM

If that's the case, why is their synagogue boarded up?

GISBORNE

It's only a few years old. Richard's new law declared that only those Jewish churches which stood during his father's reign could remain open, so we shut this one down. People say they gather to pray in their butcher shop now -- where it's easy to slaughter Christian children and collect their blood.

Tornham exchanges a look with his Squire...

SQUIRE THOMAS

No surprise there -- most of what people say is nonsense.

CUT TO:

EXT. NOTTINGHAM CASTLE - DAY

THE DOORS are opened to admit Gisborne, Tornham and the others. They ride on, through the TUNNEL-LIKE interior of the castle GATEHOUSE and into...

EXT. CASTLE COURTYARD - DAY

VALETS take charge of the horses as Tornham, Gisborne and the rest dismount --

TORNHAM

I'd like to see the bodies.

GISBORNE

Excuse me?

TORNHAM

The two you said were killed with one arrow. Tell me, who raised the hue and cry when they were first discovered?

An awkward moment of silence -- then Sir Guy confesses:

GISBORNE

To be honest, Sheriff --- I don't really know. Does it matter?

Tornham lets it slide and moves on:

TORNHAM

The scene of the murder then. I'll have to see that -- and anything else you have relating to the earlier murders as well.

GISBORNE

As you wish. Still, it seems a waste to me. Dead is dead and the killer is known to all.

TORNHAM

Right. "Hood" -- formerly Locksley. Well... I would appreciate it nonetheless.

Gisborne stares at Tornham for a moment, then sighs -- and smiles.

GISBORNE

I'm actually quite happy to be replaced, you know. I'm a soldier. War is my vocation. All this dealing with law, inquests, evidence... it's quite senseless to me.

Gisborne nods, BOWS to Tornham and marches off...

CUT TO:

INT. CASTLE CHAMBER - DAY

Tornham and Squire Thomas light CANDLES and place them throughout the large stone room...

The DOOR suddenly swings OPEN and half-a-dozen LABORERS enter carrying TWO LARGE SACKS --

Tornham and the old squire recoil from the SMELL --

LABORER #1

Where'd ya' want 'em, Sheriff?

Tornham POINTS to a LARGE WOODEN TABLE in the center of the chamber.

The Laborers sling both linen bags up onto the tables, then BOW and leave.

Tornham and Squire Thomas quickly tie SCARFS around their faces and approach the bags...

SQUIRE THOMAS

Only two bodies, sir?

Tornham nods as Thomas takes out a SHEAF OF PARCHMENTS and a QUILL PEN and begins to WRITE as Tornham speaks --

TORNHAM

Gisborne said there were three more before these -- each struck down with a single arrow -- but those others have been buried in the earth too long to be of use to us...

Tornham unwraps BOTH BAGS -- revealing the still relatively intact BODIES of the YOUNG MAN and YOUNG WOMAN. Tornham leans close, carefully INSPECTING both corpses --

TORNHAM (CONT'D)

They both have two wounds -- entry and exit. Which would probably place them on top of one another at the time of death.

SQUIRE THOMAS

I can think of worse ways to end one's existence, sir.

TORNHAM

Don't let a priest hear you say that, Thomas. Our existence is not supposed to end with death.

Tornham SEES something on the Young Man's FACE -- a SUBSTANCE which he carefully scrapes off with his fingernail and sets aside in a SMALL BOWL. He inspects the body of the Young Woman, finds some on her lifeless face as well.

SQUIRE THOMAS

What's that, sir?

TORNHAM

Beeswax.

Tornham searches through the rest of the bags -- nothing, just the bodies.

TORNHAM

Dammit. Not a stitch of clothing. Or the arrow.

SQUIRE THOMAS

They must have declared the murder weapon a *deodand* --

TORNHAM

-- a "donation to God," and sold it off to the highest bidder, yes. And the clothes were probably burned --

SQUIRE THOMAS

To keep their immortal souls from getting stuck inside a tunic or gown en route to heaven. Happens all the time -- or so the priests would say.

TORNHAM

(growing angry)

These fools didn't bother to record who discovered the bodies, hold a proper inquest or preserve any evidence. How are we to solve these heinous crimes when all the evidence is gone?

SQUIRE THOMAS

(shrugging)

Sir Guy didn't seem to believe there was anything to solve, sir.

Tornham throws the sackcloth back over the bodies in frustration --

TORNHAM

Hood.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST - DAY

The edge of the woods surrounding the Manorhouse where the Young Couple were killed.

Gisborne, Tornham and Squire Thomas ride up on horseback, Gisborne in the lead --

GISBORNE

This is the place.

Tornham and Squire Thomas dismount, Gisborne watching from atop his horse.

GISBORNE (CONT'D)

It's been weeks. I'm sure the rains have washed away all traces of blood and gore... if that is what you hope to find.

Tornham doesn't reply. Instead he carefully inspects the area -- especially the TRUNK of a large TREE jutting from the ground.

GISBORNE

He hides in these woods, you know.

TORNHAM

(eyes still on the tree trunk)

Who?

GISBORNE

Hood. He has some four-score men who follow him -- and they lurk behind these very trees, camouflaged in Lincoln Green. They wait for unsuspecting fools to provide them with sport, then disappear into the greenwood like the moon on a cloudy night.

CLOSE ON THE TREE TRUNK

A DEEP GASH visible in the bark --

TORNHAM

The young lovers. They were impaled on this tree, were they not? Here's the spot where the arrow hit. One arrow -- through the back -- blood, tissue, bone -- and it keeps going, through more flesh and bone, out another back -- imbedding in this tree.

(chewing on his lip)

It would take at least a 150 pound pull to penetrate all that. And definitely an armor-piercing bodkin -- no standard arrow could do this. And the shooter would have to be close.

GISBORNE

If you say so, Sheriff. My weapon of choice is the sword.

TORNHAM

(explaining)

An upright bow is accurate up to 400 yards but killing range is less than half that. Richard's foot-soldiers prefer more modern crossbows but some still use this traditional weapon. I've seen it often in France, Italy and Cyprus -- though I've never been particularly handy with a bow either. My weapon of choice is also the blade.

Tornham motions for his squire --

TORNHAM

Thomas -- rope please.

Squire Thomas nods, quickly retrieves a BUNDLE of thin ROPE from a saddlebag and HOLDS ONE END UP TO THE ARROW-GASH in the tree-trunk. Tornham estimates the ANGLE OF FIRE, takes the rope in his hands and WALKS OFF through the foliage, TRAILING THE ROPE TAUTLY BEHIND HIM as he goes...

Tornham keeps walking until his way is BLOCKED BY ANOTHER TREE -- roughly 75 YARDS away from the murder site.

Gisborne turns to Squire Thomas:

GISBORNE

What in God's name is he doing?

SQUIRE THOMAS

Trying to discover exactly where the murderer stood when he fired the shot.

Tornham turns and stares back through the foliage -- he has a PERFECT SIGHT-LINE to the tree where the Young Couple were killed. Tornham rejoins Gisborne and Squire Thomas --

TORNHAM

(pointing to the Manorhouse)
Who lives there?

GISBORNE

Lord Fitzwater. It was his party the unfortunate young couple wandered off from that night.

TORNHAM

What was the occasion?

GISBORNE

His daughter, Marian. She sits at home each night, wasting her beautiful young life away waiting for her lover to return. I believe her father was trying to distract her. Remind her there are other birds in the bush and bees in the hive. Encourage her to move on.

TORNHAM

Who's the man who commands such undying loyalty?

GISBORNE

(tight)
Her lover was Robin of Locksley.

Tornham and Squire Thomas exchange a look -- this is getting more interesting by the moment...

CUT TO:

INT. ST. JOHN'S HOSPITAL - DAY

No doctors or surgical facilities -- in fact it's closer to a modern HOMELESS SHELTER or HALFWAY HOUSE than a medical facility. The INMATES include a mix of the OLD, the DESTITUTE and the DISABLED -- as well as able-bodied but impoverished WAYFARERS and those local SICK too ill to care for themselves and too poor to afford a doctor. There is also one last category of inmate: the MENTALLY DERANGED -- one of whom has been ferociously tearing at his side deep enough to draw blood with his long fingernails:

MADMAN
STAY AWAY FROM ME, YOU TEMPTRESS OF
ABOMINATION!

A YOUNG LADY VOLUNTEER is trying to settle him down. Her face has a fiery beauty but her eyes are much calmer, much older, perhaps even a little wise --

LADY VOLUNTEER
Master Haley, I am not here to
tempt you but to tend to you.
Before I can do so you must return
to your bed, take a breath and
relax.

He SCAMPERS away and THROWS THINGS to block her approach --

MADMAN HALEY
CALL A MONK! I WANT A GOOD SON OF
ADAM MINISTERING TO ME, NOT A VAIN
DAUGHTER OF EVE!

The Lady Volunteer makes a grab for the Madman but he SCAMPERS AWAY again, this time CLIMBING ATOP A BED bearing a CRIPPLED YOUNG MAN using a fork to feed himself lunch --

MADMAN HALEY
(tearing at his side more
forcefully)
God ripped me and every man asunder
in order to create you harlots!

Understanding suddenly dawns on the Lady Volunteer's face --

LADY VOLUNTEER

Ripped asunder? You speak of
Adam's rib?

MADMAN HALEY

Of course! On account of you we
are incomplete, hollow and empty
inside!

The Lady stares up at the Madman for a moment, then calmly
smiles up at him:

LADY VOLUNTEER

Shall I tell you what the reverend
master Peter Lombard, a good son of
Adam and a great man indeed, had to
say on this very same subject?

MADMAN HALEY

"Lombard"? Was he Italian? I do
like Italian wine.

LADY VOLUNTEER

(moving CLOSER and CLOSER
to him as she speaks)

Well it was his view that God made a
most perfect selection when he chose
Adam's rib for the creation of Eve.
God did not make woman from Adam's
head, for she was not intended to be
his ruler, nor from his feet, for she
was not intended to be his slave, but
from his side -- for she was intended
to be his companion and his friend.
Not to make him hollow and empty as
you claim, but complete and whole.
The final masterpiece of creation.

By now the Lady is standing smack in front of the Madman on
top of the bed -- but his demeanor has changed and he remains
quite calm. He ponders something for a moment, then shakes
his head:

MADMAN HALEY

Those Italians may know wine but
they don't know women.

(going ice cold)

I say all you heartless witches
deserve to die.

Madman Haley suddenly SNATCHES THE FORK out of the Crippled
Young Man's hand and goes to STAB the Lady with it!

But she manages to GRAB A PILLOW OFF THE BED and uses it to BLOCK THE THRUST!

The rest of the Inmates watch in shock and disbelief from their beds as the Lady and the Madman FIGHT TOOTH AND NAIL for the fork --

A STRONG ARM SUDDENLY WRAPS ITSELF AROUND THE MADMAN'S NECK AND YANKS HIM OFF THE LADY AND OFF THE BED --

It's Tornham. He holds Madman Haley flailing wildly in his arm for a moment, then POUNDS A FIST INTO THE BACK OF HIS HEAD, knocking him UNCONSCIOUS, and lets him drop to the floor.

LADY VOLUNTEER

What have you done?!

Without skipping a beat, the Lady goes to Madman Haley's side and examines him with gentle concern...

TORNHAM

What have I done? Milady, are you --

LADY VOLUNTEER

I am not your lady and I do not appreciate your "heroic rescue." Now come help me get this poor man back into his bed!

Tornham does as he's told and together he and the Lady carry the Madman over to his empty bed and lay him down on it. The Lady instantly starts tending to Madman Haley's self-inflicted WOUND, using clean water, balm and bandages...

LADY VOLUNTEER

He has for some time been fallen out of his right mind and I assure you that beating on him like an animal will not restore his wits.

TORNHAM

It was not his wits I was concerned with restoring but your safety, Ma'am. Forgive me if I have offended you but I believe most men in my position would have been far less merciful and run the maniac through with their sword.

LADY VOLUNTEER

On the road or in the forest perhaps -- but not in a hospital.

(MORE)

LADY VOLUNTEER (cont'd)
 There are different rules of
 behavior here.

The Lady suddenly lifts her eyes from the Madman's wounds and really looks at Tornham for the first time...

LADY VOLUNTEER
 Do I know you?

Tornham looks back at her...

TORNHAM
 No.

LADY VOLUNTEER
 (turning her eyes back to
 the patient)
 Good.

Tornham stands there rather uncomfortably, aware of being watched by all the other Inmates while the Lady volunteer keeps tending to the unconscious Madman. Tornham clears his throat:

TORNHAM
 Ma'am, you do not know me but I am
 in fact here to see you.

LADY VOLUNTEER
 Are you destitute?

TORNHAM
 No.

LADY VOLUNTEER
 Crippled?

TORNHAM
 (annoyed)
 No.

LADY VOLUNTEER
 Ill -- but without means to afford
 a learned doctor's care?

TORNHAM
 (really annoyed)
No.

LADY VOLUNTEER
 Then I am afraid we have no
 facility to serve you.

TORNHAM

(losing his patience)

I am not here for your service,
woman -- but for mine. I am Sir
Robert Tornham, newly-appointed
Sheriff of this city of Nottingham
-- and I must speak with you on
sheriff's business.

(a sudden afterthought)

You are Maid Marian Fitzwater, are
you not?

MAID MARIAN -- the Lady -- gives him a look:

MARIAN (LADY VOLUNTEER)

How did you guess?

TORNHAM

I was told you are most uncommonly
devoted to your work.

(a beat)

Now, if you've finished binding your
maniac's wound, I suggest we find
someplace less crowded with the
infirm and impoverished to talk.

Marian studies Tornham, considers his words...

CUT TO:

EXT. ST. JOHN'S HOSPITAL - DAY

Tornham watches as Marian tends with a SPADE to a large
GARDEN on the Hospital grounds. It's filled with flower
beds, fruit trees, vegetables and herbs --

TORNHAM

Your garden is beautiful.

MARIAN

Thank you.

TORNHAM

And no doubt totally unappreciated
by the lunatics inside.

Marian shoots him a look, pissed.

MARIAN

But it is well appreciated by the great majority of patients who are not mad but simply poor and homeless -- and even the mad appreciate the power of the medicinal herbs to lessen their affliction.

(a beat)

Please ask your questions and go.

Tornham bites back some bile, proceeds:

TORNHAM

I'm told the Hospital staff here dips their own candles...

MARIAN

(nodding)

I do it. It's much cheaper that way -- as long as you know what you're doing. Though I don't see why it would be of concern to you.

TORNHAM

It's been my experience that during criminal inquiries, such small details invariably help reveal that which would otherwise remain hidden.

(a beat)

You are a... friend of the outlaw Robin Hood, known in his previous life as Sir Robin of Locksley.

MARIAN

Is that a question?

TORNHAM

No, Ma'am, it's a statement of fact -- is it not?

MARIAN

Not quite. I'm actually his fiancee.

Tornham tries to hide his surprise -- but fails.

MARIAN (CONT'D)

We were just about to marry when he was unjustly outlawed.

(MORE)

MARIAN (CONT'D)

We decided to postpone the marriage until his good name is exonerated and his lands and titles restored by good King Richard.

(a beat)

It was Robin's idea. He wanted to wait until he could provide a normal life for us -- be a proper husband.

TORNHAM

So you're waiting for Richard to return from the crusades? Do not hold your breath.

Marian shoots him another look.

MARIAN

Clearly you know nothing of love, Sheriff. Of the sacrifices a person can make in its name.

Tornham shrugs.

TORNHAM

I know a good deal about love -- but what I love is justice. And I am prepared to make sacrifices in its name.

Marian keeps glaring up at the Sheriff --

MARIAN

I have to go.
(standing up)
My patients need me.

TORNHAM

You say he was "unjustly" outlawed?

MARIAN

He came to the defense of a miller who had killed one of the king's deer to feed his starving family. The miller was executed and Robin sentenced to be blinded for having defended him. He fled to the forest.

TORNHAM

And began taking his revenge upon the Nobles who ruined his privileged life by hunting them -- the way the miller hunted the king's deer.

(MORE)

TORNHAM (cont'd)

(a beat)

Do you still see him?

Marian doesn't reply -- instead she turns and heads back inside the hospital. Tornham just watches her go... and sighs. She is quite beautiful.

TORNHAM

(to himself)

I could just torture it out of you,
you know.

CUT TO:

EXT. NOTTINGHAM - MAIN GATES - DAY

The Guardsmen share a FLASK and watch over the hustle and bustle of the city -- until suddenly SEVERAL HORSES come charging towards the gates...

GUARDSMAN

What the hell...?

Each horse has a RIDER -- but they are all NAKED, tied across their horses' backs!

CUT TO:

EXT. NOTTINGHAM CASTLE COURTYARD - DAY

The naked Riders -- Tornham's RETAINERS & ESCORTS, all of them bruised, battered and bloodied -- are being untied from their horses by the Guards.

Tornham and Squire Thomas arrive, followed by Gisborne and a couple of his Knights --

TORNHAM

What happened?

RETAINER #1

Outlaws, sir. All dressed in green, blended right into the trees they did.

RETAINER #2

Ambushed us, stole the wagon, all your baggage -- stole everything.

ESCORT

(nursing a BLOODY WRIST)

Weren't sneaky about it either.
Leader was a real braggart.

(MORE)

ESCORT (cont'd)
 Called himself "Hood" and said he
 didn't care who knows it.

Gisborne smiles at Tornham -- "I told you so."

Tornham takes a deep breath. Turns to Squire Thomas, tense --

TORNHAM
 My chess set. Tell me you took it
 with us.

The old man shrugs apologetically --

SQUIRE THOMAS
 I, um... I thought it was less
 likely to be lost or damaged if I
 left it in the wagon, sir.

Tornham nods. Tries to get control of his anger.

TORNHAM
 (to his men)
 Anyone besides Jack injured?

The Retainers exchange looks, shake their heads. Tornham
 turns to Gisborne --

TORNHAM
 These men will be joining the
 castle garrison. See to it that
 they are cleaned up, get them hot
 food, any medical attention they
 need and show them to their
 quarters.

SQUIRE THOMAS
 (chiming in)
 We'll get them some clothes as
 well.

Tornham shoots his old squire a look, then marches back
 inside, visibly upset...

CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBS OF NOTTINGHAM - DAY

A COMMOTION has begun. People are GATHERING and a palpable
 EXCITEMENT is in the air and now we see what it's about:

A vast PROCESSION is approaching the outskirts of the city -- it's a ROYAL HOUSEHOLD travelling on HORSEBACK and in WAGONS, everything from COOKS and BUTLERS to PRIESTS and COUNSELORS, carrying their packed-up kitchens, beds, desks and documents with them, all watched over by a strong force of FOREIGN MERCENARY KNIGHTS. Up at the very front a HERALD announces:

HERALD
MAKE WAY FOR HIS GRACE PRINCE JOHN!

PRINCE JOHN wears a modest crown on his head and a well-trimmed beard on his youthful 25 year-old face. He is one of the most powerful men in England and not at all bad looking -- but bitterness and insecurity fill most of the space where his confidence should be. He flashes insincere smiles at his gathering SUBJECTS as they WAVE and CHEER and CALL HIM BY NAME -- though when the Subject in question is an attractive woman or girl his smile grows more heartfelt.

Riding beside John is ELEANOR OF AQUITAINE -- who has remained THE QUEEN OF ENGLAND, despite the fact that her son Richard -- the absent King -- is married to a queen of his own. At age 72 she is still strikingly attractive and an excellent horsewoman.

Prince John grins at his mother:

PRINCE JOHN
Do you hear them? Can anyone dispute that I am loved by my people?

QUEEN ELEANOR
Love is a fine thing, my son -- but swords are more dependable, castles more defensible and gold more easily transferable.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST - DAWN

A sun-dappled GLADE deep in the greenwood. The same powerful STAG present at the double-murder scene cautiously emerges from behind a wall of trees and bushes. He cocks his head with their huge antlers and listens for a moment -- then RACES OFF AT TOP SPEED deeper into the forest...

The PIERCING NOTE OF A HORN echoes amongst the trees --

-- then a PACK OF BLOODHOUNDS comes CHARGING after the Stag, BARKING LIKE MAD --

-- and a half-dozen HORSEMEN COME CRASHING out of the trees behind the dogs. Prince John is in the lead and with him are the most powerful NOBLE MEN and WOMEN from his household and the Nottingham area -- including Guy of Gisborne, Sheriff Tornham, Queen Eleanor and Lady Marian, escorted by a strong force of ROYAL GUARDS...

EXT. DEEPER IN THE FOREST - DAY

The Stag pauses where several THICK OAKS have been uprooted by storms and formed a FOREST CAVE, complete with a narrow, shadowy entrance...

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Prince John leads the hunt deeper into the woods at full tilt --

EXT. DEEPER IN THE FOREST - DAY

The PACK OF HOUNDS reach the FALLEN OAK CAVE and freeze in their tracks, SNIFFING around the shadowy entrance --

Prince John and his hunting party gallop up and rein in their horses. A moment later the DOG KEEPERS arrive on foot --

DOG KEEPER

The hounds have him, Your Grace!

PRINCE JOHN

(smiling to his fellow
hunters)

Question is -- which of we noble
hounds will have his blood?

Prince John draws a pair of DANISH THROWING AXES from his saddle, DISMOUNTS and carefully approaches the Oak Cave. The other Noblemen all draw axes, spears or bows and dismount as well --

GISBORNE

Take care, Your Grace. A cornered
beast is the most dangerous of all.

PRINCE JOHN

True, Sir Guy. But no beast has
escaped my axes yet...

SUDDENLY SOMETHING CRASHES OUT OF THE OAK CAVE -- not the Stag, but a WILD BOAR who uses the cave as his lair!

The Boar CHARGES STRAIGHT AT PRINCE JOHN!

The Prince freezes in fear --

-- but Tornham RUSHES OVER and IMPALES the beast on his SPEAR!

The huge Boar struggles ferociously, YANKING the spear OUT OF TORNHAM'S GRASP and GOES FOR JOHN AGAIN --

-- but just before he is upon the Prince another member of the Hunting Party LAUNCHES AN ARROW STRAIGHT BETWEEN THE BOAR'S EYES, KILLING HIM INSTANTLY!

The archer is Lady Marian.

Everyone breathes a huge sigh of relief as the boar collapses in a heap.

Prince John steadies his nerves -- then forces a thankful grin to Marian and Tornham.

PRINCE JOHN
Lady -- sir. My deepest thanks.

Queen Eleanor and the other Lady Hunters ride up. The Queen quickly takes in the scene --

QUEEN ELEANOR
Are you all right, John?

John struggles to keep his anger in check --

PRINCE JOHN
Never better, thank you, mother.

Prince John SUDDENLY DRAWS HIS SWORD AND HACKS AWAY at the dead boar, splattering himself with blood. He wipes his face, sheathes his sword and RAISES UP THE BOAR'S DECAPITATED HEAD --

PRINCE JOHN
A fine trophy indeed --
(to Marian)
-- for you, milady.

MARIAN
That's... very kind of you, Your Grace --
but I couldn't, really. The walls of my
father's home are already crowded with
too many of its like.

PRINCE JOHN
(holding the head out to
Tornham)
(MORE)

PRINCE JOHN (cont'd)

Then you, Sir Robert -- a freshly-butchered beast for a freshly-appointed sheriff. What could be more fitting?

Tornham stands there uncomfortably for a long moment, all eyes on him -- then decides to "go with the flow of blood" so to speak, takes the head from Prince John's bloody hands, smiles humbly and bows --

TORNHAM

I can't think of a thing, Your Grace.

PRINCE JOHN

Good.

(glancing at all the dead Boars)

Now, as my mother knows well, I always choose venison over pork -- so the hunt must go on!

Tornham HANDS THE SEVERED BOAR'S HEAD OVER to one of the Royal Guards, then mounts up...

CUT TO:

EXT. SHERWOOD FOREST - ROYAL HUNTING LODGE - DAY

Prince John's MERCENARIES stand guard outside a RUSTIC CABIN, watching over the HUNTING PARTY as its honored members relax and recover from their strenuous activity. The honored guests are WAITED ON by SERVANTS who busy themselves ROASTING and SERVING choice cuts of freshly killed game.

A tall, brawny KING'S FORESTER clad in leather and animal hides IMPALES the severed BOAR'S HEAD atop a SHARPENED STAKE. A moment later Prince John emerges from the Lodge, having exchanged his blood-drenched clothes for fresh and even more stylish garments.

John approaches the Forester, who bows his head and steps away, leaving John to stare into the DEAD EYES of the severed Boar's Head. John spots Tornham in the crowd and gestures to him. Tornham approaches...

PRINCE JOHN

Walk with me, Sheriff.

Tornham falls in beside the Prince as he makes his way through the HUNTING CAMP, smiling and waving to his GUESTS as he goes...

PRINCE JOHN

Tell me, Sir Robert -- why do you think you are the Sheriff of Nottingham?

TORNHAM

(slightly confused)

Because... your brother the King chose me.

PRINCE JOHN

Wrong.

(a beat)

God stays in heaven and the Devil in hell and a king of England cannot rule his kingdom from Cyprus -- or Jerusalem. You are Sheriff because I choose to let you be. You have some reputation as an able man of both action and intellect. I have heard you share my own interest in administration and law, unlike my brother -- whose interests, as you must know, are limited to war and poetry. Make yourself useful to me today, while I rule England in his absence, and there is no limit to what may be in store for you tomorrow.

John gives Tornham an affectionate slap on the back, then spots an ATTRACTIVE NOBLEWOMAN amongst the guests, turns from Tornham and makes a bee-line to embrace her...

Tornham GLANCES AROUND, spots Marian speaking with the King's Forester by the impaled Boar's Head. Tornham walks over --

TORNHAM

Remarkable shot. Did Locksley teach you?

The King's Forester glares at Tornham --

KING'S FORESTER

I taught her, sir.

MARIAN

(introducing the Forester)

My uncle, Hugh Fitzwater -- the King's Forester.

TORNHAM
 (impressed)
 Lucky for His Grace, Prince John.

KING'S FORESTER
 (with concern, RE: the
 gathered Royal panoply)
 I hope you don't plan on this party
 lasting past sunset.

TORNHAM
 I'm well aware of the security
 issues involved. We shall be gone
 long before then.

KING'S FORESTER
 Good.

HUGH gives Tornham a curt nod of deference and marches off.

MARIAN
 Archery's not the only thing I'm
 good at, Sheriff...

Tornham watches Marian stride over to where he horse is
 tethered, unfasten its reins and MOUNT UP --

MARIAN (CONT'D)
 I'm also quite the horsewoman.

With that, Marian spurs her horse and GALLOPS AWAY from the
 Hunting Party, past the Royal Escorts and off into the
 FOREST.

Tornham frantically MOUNTS UP on his own HORSE and GALLOPS
 AFTER HER --

MARIAN

rides DEEPER AND DEEPER INTO THE WOODS all alone -- until
 Tornham catches up with her...

TORNHAM
Lady Marian! I don't know what
 you're doing but that's enough of
 it! We must turn round and return
 to the Hunting Lodge!

MARIAN
 Must we? I know Sherwood as well
 as I know my father's house!

SUDDENLY THE STAG LEAPS OUT FROM BEHIND SOME BUSHES, then takes off at a dead run!

MARIAN

There!

Marian CHARGES her horse after the buck!

Tornham races his horse after her, trying to catch up -- but she's got a head start and she knows these woods better than he does, ZIGGING and ZAGGING her way through the trees, bearing down on the deer --

Tornham starts to fall behind, only CATCHING GLIMPSES of Marian through the thick foliage as she gallops after the deer --

He CRASHES through a tangle of HEAVY BRANCHES and suddenly reigns his horse to a stop --

Marian is gone.

TORNHAM

Damn.

Tornham lets out a sigh of frustration, RIDES DEEPER INTO THE WOODS, searching for any sign of Marian or the Hunting Party...

Still nothing.

And now he's coming to the realization that he's lost.

He reins in his horse, curses under his breath -- then cups his hands to his lips and CALLS OUT:

TORNHAM

MARIAN!

No reply.

Tornham raises his HUNTING HORN to his lips to blow a signal --

-- but the horn is suddenly SHOT OUT OF HIS HAND BY AN ARROW!

Tornham spins his horse around in shock and surprise and goes for his sword --

-- but ANOTHER ARROW CLEAVES THE SADDLE-STRAP OFF THE BELLY OF HIS HORSE, sending him SLIDING HARD TO THE GROUND, losing his grip on his sword as his horse NEIGHS in fright and GALLOPS OFF into the woods!

Stunned, Tornham pulls himself to his feet, searches the ground for his sword -- then freezes. Hears something RUSTLING amongst the trees...

SUDDENLY a pack of HOODED and MASKED MEN in GREEN and BROWN come LEAPING DOWN AT TORNHAM FROM OUT OF THE TREES ABOVE!

Tornham starts RUNNING through the woods, the HOODED MEN CHASING AFTER HIM!

Tornham SPRINTS as fast as he can, suddenly skids to a halt as ANOTHER PACK OF HOODED MEN EMERGE FROM AMIDST THE TREES IN FRONT OF HIM, cutting off his escape!

He SPINS and TEARS OFF in yet another direction, the two bands of Hooded Men JOINING up and CHASING AFTER him!

Tornham suddenly FALLS THROUGH THE GROUND into a DEADFALL PIT -- a DEEP HIDDEN HOLE covered over with broken branches and grass!

The pack of Hooded Men -- their faces CAMOUFLAGED with dry mud and lime -- converge on the deadfall, gripping swords and axes --

-- SUDDENLY TORNHAM'S HAND STABS UP OUT of the pit, grabs one of the Hooded Men by the ankle and YANKS him into the hole!

Tornham is CLINGING PRECARIOUSLY to the edge of the pit with one hand and using the other to GRAB another startled Hooded Man and DRAG him down into the pit also! Tornham PULLS HIMSELF out of the hole and KNOCKS A THIRD HOODED MAN into the pit before his remaining enemies CONVERGE on him --

Tornham is outnumbered but fights like a professional soldier, DODGING their sword thrusts, looking for his opening and taking it, using his hands as BRUTAL WEAPONS, breaking NOSES, bruising THROATS, snapping WRISTS and ARMS with violent efficiency!

Tornham suddenly SEES something -- it's his horse, less than 50 yards away, standing there, confused.

Tornham raises two fingers to his lips, WHISTLES --

The HORSE starts to GALLOP towards Tornham --

Tornham POUNDS ACROSS THE FOREST FLOOR, RUNNING AS FAST AS HE CAN towards his approaching horse, glancing back over his shoulder to see he is again being CHASED BY THE REMAINING HOODED MEN!

Tornham reaches his horse, LEAPS onto its bare back, grabs the reins, spins the animal around and RIDES AWAY from the Hooded Men, GALLOPING OFF to safety ---

-- just as AN ARROW SUDDENLY WHISTLES THROUGH THE AIR AND BARELY MISSES HIM!

But the arrow wasn't aimed at him and goes on to HIT ITS TARGET by SLICING THROUGH A ROPE attached to some sort of RIGGING up in the branches --

-- which RELEASES a HUGE LOG hidden in the trees above and SENDS IT SWINGING RIGHT FOR TORNHAM --

-- who is KNOCKED RIGHT OFF HIS HORSE by the SWINGING LOG-TRAP! He FLIES BACKWARDS THROUGH THE AIR and LANDS HARD on the ground.

Tornham -- barely conscious, the wind knocked out of him -- stares up at the TREES and SPIES a Hooded Man perched on a branch with a STRONG-BOW in his hands.

The Hooded Man looks down at the bruised and battered Tornham, then THROWS BACK HIS HOOD -- revealing a strikingly handsome FACE, lips spread in a ROGUISH SMILE:

 HOODED MAN
Welcome to Sherwood.

Just before losing consciousness Tornham realizes that this good-looking and gleeful fellow can only be one man --

 TORNHAM
 (barely audible)
Locksley...

Tornham's eyes roll up into his head and everything GOES BLACK.

HOLD FOR A MOMENT.

Then the WHISTLING SOUND which we now recognize as an ARROW piercing the air --

 SMASH CUT TO:

CLOSE ON TORNHAM

as his eyes SNAP OPEN -- just in time to SEE the ARROW coming straight at him -- then BARELY MISSING HIM, thudding into a tree behind his head just inches from his face.

EXT. OUTLAW CAMP - DUSK

Tornham has awoken to find himself BOUND TO A MASSIVE TREE TRUNK, arms stretched out at the shoulders, tied there like Christ on the Cross, his entire body surrounded by the JUTTING SHAFTS AND FEATHERED VANES OF DOZENS OF ARROWS.

THIRTY YARDS AWAY the now un-hooded Hooded Men -- who are of course the MERRY MEN -- are DRINKING, EATING, LAUGHING, PLAYING DICE... and using Tornham for target practice with their bows and arrows.

HOOD (HOODED MAN)
Good of you to join us, Sheriff.

Tornham watches tensely as ROBIN HOOD notches an arrow on his string, draws the bow, aims and fires -- sending it SOARING STRAIGHT AT HIM!

The arrow hits dead center on its target, eliciting UPROARIOUS LAUGHTER from the ranks of Merry Men: it has lodged in a NARROW STRIP OF BARK visible between Tornham's legs, just below his crotch.

HOOD
(NOTCHING another arrow)
Lucky it's not me up there -- my cock would've just lost near half its length!

The laughter DOUBLES --

MERRY MAN
That's not what I heard, Robin!

HOOD
From your sister, eh?

The laughter TRIPLES as Robin Hood shoots his arrow, this time sending it thudding into the tree just above Tornham's head.

Tornham struggles against his bonds but it's no use -- he can't budge an inch.

HOOD
Relax, Sheriff. From the dungeon of Sherwood there is no escape.

Bloodied, bruised and humiliated, Tornham narrows his eyes and speaks, slowly, deliberately:

TORNHAM
I... want... my... chess-set.

A confused look between Robin and his men.

HOOD
Your what?

Tornham grits his teeth, tense:

TORNHAM
My chess-set. I want my chess-set
back.

Robin Hood raises an eyebrow in disbelief --

HOOD
Is that all you can think of at a
time like this?

TORNHAM
I want my bloody chess-set back!

Silence -- until both Robin and the Merry Men ERUPT in
LAUGHTER.

Robin Hood carefully notches ANOTHER ARROW --

HOOD
You must be quite the player.

-- then FIRES, SPLITTING THE HAIRS ATOP TORNHAM'S HEAD.

TORNHAM
You, sir, are a brigand, thief and
murderer -- and I swear before God
almighty and your ragged mob that
you shall be brought to justice!

MORE LAUGHTER rolls from the Merry ranks. Robin Hood marches
up to Tornham and proceeds to retrieve his arrows from the
tree around the bound Sheriff..

HOOD
(to his men)
He's got nerve, does he not?
(to Tornham)
I'll tell you about "justice,"
Sheriff: I was outlawed without
cause.

(MORE)

HOOD (cont'd)

All the land I held as a loyal tenant of the King, the land my father held and his father before him -- all was forfeit and taken by Prince John, and every possession I owned sold off and every half-penny of profit pocketed by that tyrannical bastard.

TORNHAM

If you were unjustly outlawed you should have lodged a plea in court.

HOOD

With Guy of Gisborne overseeing the inquest? I'd sooner be tried in hell by a jury of the damned with Lucifer himself as Judge.

Tornham shakes his head:

TORNHAM

You were a noble. If you doubted the fairness of the court here in Nottingham you could have taken your plea all the way to the King's Court of Justice at Westminster in London.

For the first time since we met him a serious look fills Robin Hood's face:

HOOD

The courts be damned. They administer Norman justice for those of pure Norman blood. When a lowly Saxon such as myself --

(GESTURING to his Men)

-- or one of my men is involved, justice is banished from court.

MERRY MEN (VARIOUS)

Aye! -- That's no joke and right! --
You tell him, Robin!

Tornham looks at the crowd of green and brown-clad woodsmen, then back at their leader...

TORNHAM

So you wrap your murder and robbery in a blood-soaked flag of rebellion? Tell me -- Earl of Locksley -- do you know anyone of "pure" Norman blood? I don't.

(MORE)

TORNHAM (cont'd)

Norman and Saxon have been enthusiastically inter-breeding their blood for more than a century. You're stuck in the past, "Robin Hood" -- we're all English now.

Robin Hood glares at the Sheriff -- then DRAWS HIS SWORD and POINTS IT at Tornham's THROAT --

HOOD

Lots of Norman blood in those veins of yours -- eh, Sheriff?

Tornham's eyes blaze with defiance:

TORNHAM

Go ahead. Murder a helpless prisoner. I would expect no less from the likes of you.

Robin Hood flashes a rather charming grin --

HOOD

Sorry to disappoint you then...

-- and uses his sword to CUT THE ROPES binding Tornham to the tree.

HOOD (CONT'D)

I didn't bring you here to kill you -- or even for the high-price in gold you would earn in ransom. I brought you here to tell you that though I am indeed guilty of many things, I'm not the murderer you seek.

(shrugging)

Now I've got to cover your face so you can't come back to kill me. Stick to your castle of stone and leave us to ours of bark and branch.

Tornham rubs his raw wrists, contemplates attacking Robin right then and there -- but there are far too many of the outlaw's men surrounding all around. Instead he locks eyes with Hood:

TORNHAM

The law doesn't end at the edge of the forest.

Robin Hood's perpetual smile disappears, replaced with a grim intensity.

A STEADY DRIZZLE starts raining down on the forest...

Robin Hood slips on his HOOD:

HOOD
Yours does.

Robin Hood nods to a HULKING WOODSMAN -- the biggest of a rather big bunch. He steps up, COVERS Tornham's eyes with a BLINDFOLD, takes him by the shoulders and starts leading him away -- but Tornham stops short --

TORNHAM
Locksley...

Robin Hood turns, pissed.

HOOD
My name is Robin Hood.

TORNHAM
(shrugging)
Whatever you call yourself...
(with an edge)
Lady Marian Fitzwater is not of
pure Saxon blood -- is she?

Robin smoulders. He calls to the Hulking Woodsman:

HOOD
Little John, take him back where he
belongs -- and don't hurt him on the
way -- unless he mentions her again.

LITTLE JOHN
Done, Rob.

The pattering DRIZZLE continues as Little John takes Tornham in his hands and LEADS HIM OFF into the woods, Robin Hood watching them go...

CUT TO:

EXT. MANORHOUSE - NIGHT

The rain is now POURING on the grounds where the young couple was murdered -- also the home of Lady Marian Fitzwater.

Tornham emerges from the edge of the woods -- bruised, cut, soaked and looking like hell.

The blindfold hangs around his neck and he's in the midst of UNTYING his bound hands with his teeth. He marches up to the ENTRANCE to the house, face grim, nostrils flaring, POUNDS on the door and waits...

After a few moments a thin SLOT on the heavy wooded door is SLID OPEN -- revealing the aging EYES of an OLD MAN --

OLD MAN (FROM BEHIND THE DOOR)
Who are you -- and what in God's name do you want at this hour?

TORNHAM
I'm Robert Tornham, the Sheriff of Nottingham. My apologies for the lateness of the hour, Lord Fitzwater, but I must insist on seeing your daughter -- at once.

OLD MAN (FROM BEHIND THE DOOR)
You want to see my daughter...?

We hear the sound of several bolts being THROWN, the door opens a CRACK -- then swings WIDE OPEN and the Old Man ushers Tornham with a BEAMING SMILE:

LORD FITZWATER (OLD MAN)
Well, by all means, good sir, a strapping noble fellow such as yourself comes to see my Marian at this hour, it must be a matter of some importance! A proposal of marriage perhaps?

Tornham smiles back at the Old Man...

INT. MARIAN'S BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT

Marian sits in her bed, wearing a 12th Century nightgown. She has an open MANUSCRIPT in her lap and is JOTTING NOTES in the MARGINS with a QUILL PEN as she READS...

Tornham SUDDENLY THROWS OPEN the door, marches in. Marian quickly wraps a BLANKET over her nightgown --

MARIAN
Sheriff? What are you doing here?
We feared you were lost or killed
or --

TORNHAM
Betrayed.

MARIAN

I have no idea what you're --

TORNHAM

(in her face)

You led me into Robin Hood's hands
like a lamb to the slaughter.

Marian is speechless for a moment. Then regains her composure and speaks curtly --

MARIAN

That's ridiculous. Is it my fault
that you couldn't keep up? I am
just a woman, after all.

(a beat)

Tell me, did you learn anything
during your time in the forest?

TORNHAM

Such as?

MARIAN

That Robin of Locksley is not the
killer you seek.

TORNHAM

Really? He nearly killed me.

MARIAN

"Nearly," Sheriff? So you made a
heroic escape from his evil clutches?

Tornham hesitates for an uncomfortable moment, then answers:

TORNHAM

Not exactly.

MARIAN

I see. I take it that means if he
wanted you dead... you would be?

TORNHAM

(tight)

He will live to regret passing up
the chance to kill me today. It
won't come again.

Tornham notices for the first time that Marian's hair is down loose around her shoulders... then eyes the MANUSCRIPT in her hands:

TORNHAM

What's that you're reading?

Marian narrows her eyes at Tornham, caught a bit off-guard by his interest.

MARIAN

A new telling of "*Tristan and Isolde*" by a Frenchman named Beroul.

TORNHAM

Beroul's only original contribution to the ancient tale is to have Tristan kill Godwin with an arrow through the eye -- the way your fiancée would have done it.

Marian glares at him.

MARIAN

I haven't gotten that far in the story.

TORNHAM

Sorry. Didn't mean to ruin the ending.

Marian shrugs back at him:

MARIAN

I believe the love triangle between Sir Tristan, Lady Isolde and her husband the King is a metaphor for our own spiritual struggle -- the choice between duty... and passion.

Tornham thinks on that one for a moment, then notices the writing in the margins and steps closer to Marian --

TORNHAM

What's this?

MARIAN

(self-consciously)
My notes. Alternate lines, commentaries, critiques of the text. I myself write on occasion. Poetry.

TORNHAM
 (impressed)
 King Richard writes poetry in his
 first language -- *Provençal*.

MARIAN
 Is it any good?

Tornham carefully weighs his answer...

TORNHAM
 Passable at best. But if you tell
 anyone I said it's less than genius
 I'll probably be executed for
 treason.

Marian can't help but smile:

MARIAN
 So... it seems I hold your life in
 my hands, Sheriff.

Tornham looks from Marian's words to her eyes. She looks
 back. The silence between them grows intense -- then:

TORNHAM
 My name is Robert.
 (a beat)
 Do you ever let anyone read your
 poetry?

MARIAN
 No. But you must remember, most of
 the people around here can't read.

TORNHAM
 What about Locksley? Can he read?

MARIAN
 He reads my heart.

Tornham nods, thinks this over.

TORNHAM
 You told me I'd be dead if he
 wanted me so. I tell you he
 doesn't know what he wants -- other
 than to serve his own pride.

They keep staring at each other --

-- but the moment is broken by the LOUD SOUNDS OF BELLS
 RINGING AND PANICKY VOICES CRYING OUT:

VOICES (O.S.)
 ALARUM! ALARUM! ALARUM!

Tornham goes to the window -- spots a GROWING CROWD in the near distance, carrying by TORCHES and STORM-LANTERNS --

CUT TO:

EXT. GREAT NORTH ROAD - NIGHT

Tornham marches down the road towards the RIVER TRENT and the relatively new STONE BRIDGE which crosses it. The CROWD is gathered at the foot of the bridge, still RINGING THEIR HANDHELD BELLS and CALLING OUT THEIR ALARMS --

EXT. TRENT BRIDGE - NIGHT

Tornham reaches the CROWD -- it's made up of half-a-dozen SERFS and a few TOWNSPEOPLE...

TORNHAM
 CEASE YOUR ALARM!

The Crowd turns its attention to Tornham -- just as SQUIRE THOMAS and GISBORNE arrive with a force of SERGEANTS from the Castle Garrison, all on HORSEBACK.

SQUIRE THOMAS
Sir Robert?
 (DISMOUNTING and racing
 over to GRAB him by the
 shoulders)
 You're all right!!!

Tornham nods:

TORNHAM
 Alive at least.

SQUIRE THOMAS
 Thank god for that!
 (WHISPERING)
 I feared if you were done for they
 might promote me to Sheriff.

GISBORNE dismounts and walks up to Tornham --

GISBORNE
 Sheriff! This is a happy surprise.
 Were you lost -- injured --
 captured?

TORNHAM
 Later, Sir Guy.
 (to the Crowd)
Who raised this Hue and Cry?

A young SERF hesitantly LIFTS HIS HAND...

SERF
 Begging your pardon, sir, but it
 was me, sir.

TORNHAM
 Were you victim of a crime?

SERF
 No, sir. It was my lord and
 master, sir Walter LeGriff.
 (shaking)
 It's horrible, sir...

TORNHAM
 What's your name?

SERF
 Hugo, sir.

TORNHAM
 Well, Hugo -- it's now your duty to
 show us what you found and tell us
 what you know.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVERBANK - NIGHT

Tornham, Gisborne, Squire Thomas and the CROWD march through
 the rain, STORM-LANTERNS held in their hands, all FOLLOWING
 Hugo to the RIVERBANK...

HUGO
 Master Walter went fishing as usual
 -- but he's always back before
 nightfall. When he didn't return I
 went looking and that's when I
 found...

Hugo trails off, his hands now shaking uncontrollably...

They have reached the EDGE of the riverbank -- and the BODY.

Tornham takes a STORM-LANTERN from the CROWD and holds it over the corpse of a well-dressed MAN in his 40's, sprawled on his back, eyes wide open, face contorted in agony, blood everywhere -- an ARROW jutting out of his throat.

TORNHAM

(to Squire Thomas)

Still fresh.

(to Hugo)

When did you last see him alive?

SERF

After the mid-day meal but before
the church-bells sound for *Vespers*.

Tornham hands the storm-lantern to Squire Thomas, takes a RAG from his pocket and carefully proceeds to PULL the arrow out of the man's neck. Gisborne eyes the bloody arrow:

GISBORNE

"LeGriff" -- a proud Norman name.

Tornham looks down from the arrow to the dead man's face -- then scoops a few traces of BEESWAX off the man's lifeless cheeks, shows it to Squire Thomas:

TORNHAM

The bees have been busy.

Squire Thomas WHISPERS to Tornham:

SQUIRE THOMAS

At least you got here before they
could sell the arrow.

Tornham WRAPS the arrow in the rag, hands it to Thomas, takes back the storm-lantern, looks over the body again, then begins INSPECTING the riverbank, the lantern ILLUMINATING the wet, shadowy area --

HUGO

Damn that Robin Hood. Damn him to
hell.

Tornham SEES a NET and FISHING POLE lying on the MUDDY GROUND a few yards away from the body. He casts his light over the trees nearby -- revealing a large ARTERIAL SPRAY-TRAIL OF BLOOD covering the LEAVES.

TORNHAM

He was hit here -- the throat wound
sprayed his life all over the green
-- then he stumbled towards the
water...

Tornham NARROWS HIS EYES at the GROUND around their feet --
messy and covered with the SCATTERED FOOTPRINTS of the CROWD.
He then lowers the lantern to the SHOES of the victim -- no
mud.

Tornham is quiet for a long moment, considering. Then --

TORNHAM

You're sure it was before *Vespers*?

HUGO

Yes, sir.

TORNAHM

But it didn't start raining till
just before sundown...

Tornham stands, turns to one of the SERGEANTS --

TORNHAM (CONT'D)

Wrap the body in burlap, take it
back to the castle.

GISBORNE

I'll see to the documents for the
Murdrum fine...

TORNHAM

No.

GISBORNE

I'm sorry?

TORNHAM

No murdrum on this one.

GISBORNE

You're aware the law states that
whatever district is home to foul
play must be summarily fined?

TORNHAM

It's a foolish law.

GISBORNE

On the contrary -- it deters people from thinking they can get away with murder.

TORNHAM

Why punish an entire community for the act of one man? We face special circumstances in this case. After all -- as you, Sir Guy, will be first to argue -- everyone knows Robin Hood resides in Sherwood forest, not in the neighborhood of Trent Bridge.

Gisborne fumes -- but nods his head in grudging acceptance.

TORNHAM (CONT'D)

(to the CROWD)

RETURN TO YOUR HOMES! King Richard and his government thank you for discharging your duties as honest subjects of the realm -- especially you, Hugo. You have helped us down the road to finding your lord's murderer and bringing him to justice.

HUGO

I hope so, sir.

The Crowd begins to disperse...

Tornham turns to Squire Thomas, WHISPERS:

TORNAHM

It wasn't Locksley.

The old man looks at the Sheriff in disbelief:

SQUIRE THOMAS

What? How can you be certain?

TORNHAM

(indicating the FEET of the corpse)

Sir Walter LeGriff dragged himself from the trees to the edge of the riverbank but there's no mud on his shoes. He was killed after the mid-day meal but before the bells rung for Vespers -- before it started to rain...

(MORE)

TORNHAM (cont'd)

(a beat)

...at which time I was deep in
Sherwood Forest, being held
captive... by Robin Hood himself.

Squire Thomas's eyes go wide.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. NOTTINGHAM CASTLE - BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT

Barely illuminated by the MOONLIGHT trickling in through
several expensive LEADED GLASS WINDOWS.

Tornham sleeps in a big comfortable bed -- much nicer than
the one he had in Cyprus -- but his sleep is anything but
comfortable.

He tosses and turns --

-- then SUDDENLY SNAPS AWAKE with a violent start,
hyperventilating, trying to catch his breath.

He calms himself down, realizes that it's still night.

TORNHAM

Christ...

He slowly sits up naked in bed and CROSSES HIMSELF, oblivious
to the cold, his BREATH visible in the frosty air.

He suddenly SENSES something and narrows his eyes... HEARS
the faint sound of BREATHING from somewhere else in the dark
room...

Tornham holds his own breath for a split-second --

-- then GRABS UP his SWORD and LUNGES, pointing it into the
SHADOWS:

TORNHAM

Come out or I'll gut you like a
pig!

Tornham's eyes suddenly GO WIDE --

QUEEN ELEANOR rises from where she has been sitting on a
chair in the corner and approaches Tornham..

He lowers his sword and drops to his knees, bowing before her:

TORNHAM

(nervous)

Forgive me, your highness -- I
thought you were an intruder.

Eleanor smiles:

QUEEN ELEANOR

I am.

Tornham quickly COVERS HIMSELF with his BLANKET --

QUEEN ELEANOR

No need for modesty, Sheriff. I've
had two husbands and five sons.
There's nothing on you I haven't
seen a thousand times before.

Tornham nevertheless pulls on some CLOTHES, then LIGHTS A
CANDLE --

TORNHAM

This is... most unusual, your
Highness. I'm not sure what to say.

QUEEN ELEANOR

Say nothing. Use your ears
instead.

(a beat)

On his way home from crusade, my
son Richard -- our king -- has been
captured by the Austrians.

Tornham's face fills with shock and disbelief.

QUEEN ELEANOR

Right now less than a dozen souls
in all of England know -- though it
will be common knowledge soon
enough.

(a beat)

A ransom request is sure to arrive
soon -- and just as sure to demand
the greatest sum since King David
collected all the gold of Jerusalem
to decorate the Temple of the
Israelites. Taxes are going to go
up again. Rather severely I'm
afraid. And all methods, no matter
how unpleasant, will be warranted
for use in their collection.

(MORE)

QUEEN ELEANOR (cont'd)

The people will hate to pay -- but they will love it when their money brings their hero back to them, covered in glory.

(a beat)

As for John... he will do everything in his power to keep the money you must raise from being delivered to Richard's captors.

Queen Eleanor sits down on the edge of Tornham's bed.

QUEEN ELEANOR (CONT'D)

John fears he has been swallowed up in Richard's shadow. I make a point of remaining at John's side to encourage his confidence and teach him patience. I tell him every dog will have his day -- even the runt of the litter.

(shaking her head)

But with news of Richard's capture... it will be difficult even for me to restrain him in the face of such a golden opportunity.

TORNHAM

Why are you telling me all this?

Eleanor leans uncomfortably close to Tornham.

QUEEN ELEANOR

Because in all of England, John's supporters are strongest here, in Nottingham. But you, Sir Robert, are not among them. That is why I worked so hard to convince John not to interfere with your appointment. Richard gave you this job and Richard is the rightful -- and lawful -- king. And a land where the king can be overthrown is a land where no law will be respected. So tell me, Sheriff... where does your duty lie?

TORNHAM

(quietly)

To Richard... and his safe return.

QUEEN ELEANOR

(nodding)

No matter what it may cost... in gold -- or blood.

TORNHAM

Yes.

QUEEN ELEANOR

Say it, Sheriff.

Tornham hesitates for a moment. Then --

TORNHAM

No matter what it may cost... in
gold -- or blood.

Queen Eleanor rises --

QUEEN ELEANOR

Now go back to bed. And have a
good night's sleep.

(a sly grin)

I order it.

-- then SNUFFS OUT the candle, plunging the room back into
darkness. She opens the door, walks out and SHUTS it behind
her, leaving Tornham very alone...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. NOTTINGHAM CASTLE - DAY

A WINTER SNOW drifts down as a ROYAL WAGON with a thin ESCORT
of KNIGHTS and SERGEANTS rides into the COURTYARD. The wagon
pulls to a halt and the VETERAN KNIGHT in command -- drenched
in sweat and grime -- dismounts from his horse, REMOVES an
IRON STRONG-BOX from the wagon and carries it into the KEEP,
limping a bit as he goes...

CUT TO:

INT. NOTTINGHAM CASTLE - HALL OF THE SHERIFF - DAY

The Veteran Knight marches in and sets the Box down on a big
wooden desk, which Tornham is sitting behind, then hands
Tornham a RING of KEYS --

VETERAN KNIGHT

We only stopped 10 times to sleep
between Durstein and Dover -- and
not once since landing.

Tornham fills his own silver cup with ALE from a small cask
on his desk and hands it to the Knight --

TORNHAM

Have a drink. You and your men can
rest up here for the night.

(examining the Box)

What's in it?

The Knight slams the empty cup down, wipes his sleeve across his mouth and SHRUGS matter-of-factly:

LEAD KNIGHT

Can't say I have any idea.

Tornham UNLOCKS the Box and opens the lid. Stares inside and furrows his brow, then reaches in and pulls out the contents...

...an old, somewhat rusty and blood-stained suit of CHAINMAIL ARMOR.

HERALD (O.S.)

Look upon it, good people of
Nottingham -- this humble suit of
armor which graced the heroic body
of our glorious King Richard when
he fought like an avenging angel in
Christ's name to free the kingdom
of Jerusalem from the tyranny of
the Saracens...

EXT. NOTTINGHAM - TOWN SQUARE - DAY

The CITY HERALD is in the midst of addressing a CROWD of people who have gathered around a cross between a scarecrow and a mannequin which has been draped in the CHAINMAIL that was just delivered to Tornham. A crudely fashioned CROWN sits atop the royal mannequin's head...

HERALD (CONT'D)

Look upon it -- for if such a grand
and mighty king could don the
humble armor of a poor knight and
cross land and sea to reach the
burning sands of the desert and
shed his royal blood for the sake
of our holiest places, then cannot
we -- his loyal subjects -- reach
into our pockets and find a few
more pennies to help free him from
the cruel dungeon of Durstein
Castle in Austria where he is held
prisoner by betrayers and heretics?

After a moment a few brave souls from the crowd approach the royal mannequin. One of them reaches out to touch the royal armor -- but the Herald GRABS his hand:

HERALD

First you pay -- then you touch.

The TOWNSMAN digs into his pocket, pulls out a PENNY COIN and drops it into a COPPER POT at the Herald's feet. The Herald SLAPS him on the back and GESTURES for him to go ahead. The Townsman reaches out again and this time actually gets to run his fingers along the links of King Richard's chainmail...

Others start lining up behind him...

CUT TO:

EXT. SAINT MARY'S HILL - DAY

The Saxon section of Nottingham City. Mostly PEASANTS and TRADESMEN milling about and watching nervously as THREE of the Sheriff's BAILIFF'S confront a poor, soot-covered COAL BURNER --

BURNER

But I paid my taxes last month!

BAILIFF #1

There's been new taxes levied -- movable goods. A percentage on your wagon, your burnin' huts and your wood.

BAILIFF #2

(chiming in)

As well as an additional 20 percent of your earnings.

BURNER

(desperate)

Christ, man -- I'll have nothin' left to feed my family!

BAILIFF #3

You should feel honored. Your money's going to free good King Richard from the Austrians.

BAILIFF #1

(to the GATHERING CROWD)

That's right -- and anyone who doesn't pay will be branded a traitor to England!

MURMURS from all around -- growing fear and anger from the crowd...

BURNER

I can't do it -- I won't! How am I supposed to chop enough wood, make enough coal, if me and my boys are starving to death? How?

BAILIFF #1

If you're so hungry, how about you eat some of your precious coal!

The Bailiff GRABS the Burner and THROWS him towards an ENORMOUS COAL PIT, filled with smouldering embers --

BURNER'S WIFE

NO!!! Leave him alone, you bastards!

She and her TWO SMALL CHILDREN try to help her husband, but the other two Bailiff's hold them back and the first Bailiff grabs a handful of the Burner's hair and FORCES HIS FACE TOWARDS THE HOT COALS --

Suddenly a HAND STABS OUT and YANKS THE BAILIFF OFF HIS VICTIM!

The Bailiff SPINS in surprise and anger -- then freezes.

It's the Sheriff.

TORNHAM

What are you doing, Gamwill?

The Bailiff lowers his eyes, sullen, but defiant:

BAILIFF #1

He refused to pay, Sheriff.

BURNER'S WIFE

He can't pay! Please... we're near broke as it is. Please...

Tornham surveys the crowd of onlookers, his Bailiffs, the Burner's Wife and Children...

He walks over to the Burner, roughly pulls the terrified man off the ground, SHOVES his towards his small HUT, pushes him inside --

INT. BURNERS HUT - DAY

A dirt floor, hardly any furniture to speak of.

Tornham follows the Burner inside, looks around, then looks back to the Burner.

BURNER

(starting to break down)

Please, Sheriff. Have mercy. My wife and I go hungry some days -- don't make our babies go hungry too. I love King Richard, but --

TORNHAM

(cutting him off)

Enough.

BURNER

Please, sir, I --

TORNHAM

I said -- enough.

Tornham turns away from the pathetic man, rubs his eyes, takes a deep breath.

TORNHAM

God... damn... it.

(turning back to the

Burner, dark)

These things I'm forced to do. I have no choice. It's the law. Do you understand that? I have no choice.

Tornham reaches into a pocket, slips out TWO SMALL GOLD COINS and forces them into the Burner's hand.

The Burner looks up at him in shock and confusion.

TORNHAM

(quietly)

The bailiffs will be back in a month. Make sure you put something aside for them. And don't tell anyone about this -- or I'll burn your tongue out myself.

The Burner nods -- still stunned.

EXT. SAINT MARY'S HILL - DAY

Tornham emerges from the Hut, DRAGGING the Burner by the collar behind him --

TORNHAM

He was holding out on you, Gamwill.

The Burner hands the stunned Bailiff his TWO GOLD COINS --

The Sheriff marches away, pushing through the crowd -- who begins BOOING him as he goes...

Suddenly Squire Thomas RIDES down the road and CALLS TO Tornham:

SQUIRE THOMAS

Sir Robert! Your presence is required at Nottingham Castle.

Tornham glares up at Thomas --

TORNHAM

Required by whom?

SQUIRE THOMAS

By our new monarch -- Prince John.

Tornham's face fills with unease...

CUT TO:

INT. NOTTINGHAM CASTLE - ROYAL CHAMBERS - DAY

Tornham, Gisborne and several other important NOBLEMEN stand gathered before Prince John...

PRINCE JOHN

I have it on excellent authority that my brother is as good as dead. In fact, by now, he may well be dead. Not one more English coin shall be wasted pursuing his exorbitant ransom. If he is to return to England it shall be as a ghost. The ransom money that remains shall be transferred to my control.

(a beat)

(MORE)

PRINCE JOHN (cont'd)

Furthermore, in an effort to secure long-lasting peace with our neighbors the French, I have decided to marry King Phillip's sister, Princess Alais.

TORNHAM

But you are married, Your Grace -- to Countess Isabelle.

PRINCE JOHN

That union is such that it has never found favor in God's eyes -- or mine. The Archbishop has assured me that God wants it annulled.

(a beat)

My brother has led England to the very brink of ruin, largely due to his unbridled ambition for conquest in France. This marriage shall end all that. It will set the stage for peace in our Continental territories and prosperity here at home.

(chuckling)

It's true, she's quite a bit older than I -- but the French maid is to sit beside my throne when I hold court, not share my bed every night.

Tornham, Gisborne and the other Nobles stand the uncomfortably -- until Gisborne steps forward and BOWS to Prince John, saying:

GISBORNE

Godspeed, Your Grace --

(catching himself)

-- forgive me... Your Majesty.

Prince John smiles and the rest of the Nobles join in, echoing Gisborne's acknowledgement of John as their new King. Tornham is the last to say, "Godspeed, Your Majesty" -- but say it he does.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Tornham is burning the midnight oil -- literally. LIGHT from several CANDLES dances eerily around the place -- revealing the walls and floor are now covered with DIAGRAMS of MURDERED BODIES scrawled onto large PARCHMENTS.

Tornham downs a goblet of ALE, rubs his tired brow and goes back to what he was doing -- CLEANING dried blood off ARROWS recovered from the crime scenes...

The door OPENS and Squire Thomas enters --

SQUIRE THOMAS
You sent for me, Sir?

Tornham OPENS A SECRET COMPARTMENT in his work-desk, withdraws a small STRONG-BOX and hands it to Thomas -- who frowns at its heavy weight.

SQUIRE THOMAS
Heavy.
(guessing at the value of
the contents)
Must be close to a thousand crowns
in here.

TORNHAM
Twelve-hundred and fifty. You are
to see to it that the full sum
makes its way to Sir Hubert Walter,
the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The old Squire shoots Tornham a look --

SQUIRE THOMAS
You're forwarding our taxes to the
Church?

TORNHAM
No, Thomas -- I'm trying to make
sure they go towards paying
Richard's ransom, rather than
preparing for John's reign. Sir
Hubert is the only one who can be
trusted.

SQUIRE THOMAS
I see. And if we are caught?

Tornham shoots his old Squire a look of his own --

TORNHAM
Then we shall suffer.

Squire Thomas considers this for a moment --

SQUIRE THOMAS
I'm happy to see you've thought
this through.

-- then heads out with the Strong-box, leaving Tornham alone.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ARCHERY RANGE - DAY

A small grouping of HAY BULLS-EYE TARGET BUTTS set up on the edge of the woods.

AN ARROW goes whistling through the air, THUDDING into the target, just missing the bulls-eye.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL that the SHOOTER is Lady Marian.

MARIAN
Damn. Missed it by a hair.
(smiling)
Your turn.

Next to her is Tornham, a BOW in his hands also. He NOTCHES an arrow, pulls back the bow-string --

MARIAN (CONT'D)
Steady... smooth release... let the
bow do the work...

Tornham lets loose the shaft, the arrow sailing through the air --

-- and MISSING the target butt altogether -- but only by a few inches.

Marian stifles a laugh.

TORNHAM
Dammit.

MARIAN
Well, you're getting closer each
lesson...

TORNHAM
It's been months now.

MARIAN
Maybe I'm just a bad teacher.

Tornham gives her a look, shrugs.

TORNHAM
I guess we can't all be Robin Hood,
can we?

An instant tension between them.

TORNHAM
(embarrassed)
I'm... I'm sorry, I shouldn't have --

MARIAN
No, it's alright, it's --

TORNHAM
I don't sleep anymore.

Marian looks at him, taken a little off-guard.

MARIAN
Really? Why not?

Tornham NOTCHES another arrow into his bow --

TORNHAM
The list keeps growing.

MARIAN
(quietly)
The victims? I'm sorry.

Tornham lets loose his arrow -- another close MISS.

Tornham lowers his bow, frustrated.

TORNHAM
For what? This is all my fault.
All the time I've been here I
haven't made one bit of difference.
My men are so busy beating every
last penny out of the population,
they've had no time to police the
city, conduct a proper
investigation.

MARIAN
I meant I'm sorry for you.

A look between them.

TORNHAM
Thank you.

Marian turns and digs into a SATCHEL she brought to the archery range...

MARIAN

I wanted to give you something.
It was given to me as a gift. It's
quite beautiful and I loved it.
But then I realized... It didn't
really belong to me.

Marian pulls out Tornham's CHESS SET -- the one that was
stolen when his things were hijacked by Robin Hood's men upon
his arrival at Nottingham.

TORNHAM

(stunned)

Where... where did you get this?

Marian averts her eyes.

TORNHAM (CONT'D)

(awkwardly, figuring it
out)

Of course.

(a beat)

How did you know it was mine?

MARIAN

There's no Queen. I've heard the
Saracens detest women of any
authority, so it must have come
from the Crusades. And on the
bottom of the board there are some
Greek letters. I heard you were in
Cyprus, so...

TORNHAM

(smiling)

You're very smart. Maybe you
should have my job.

Marian smiles back at him, picks up her bow, notches another
arrow --

MARIAN

How often do you play?

TORNHAM

As often as I can.

MARIAN

Do you win?

TORNHAM

All the time.

MARIAN
So you're good?

Marian lets loose her arrow -- another near BULLS-EYE.

TORNHAM
Better than I am at archery, at
least.
(a beat)
Locksley... does he play?

MARIAN
(shrugging)
He has no interest in games, books,
things of that sort. He considers
them idle pursuits of those lucky
enough to be blessed with wealth
and nobility at birth.

TORNHAM
That's a little hypocritical, don't
you think? He was a Noble himself.

MARIAN
(defensively)
He's a very complicated man.

TORNHAM
And very handsome. Dashing.
Romantic.

MARIAN
Why, Sheriff, you sound like you're
in love with him.

TORNHAM
So romantic he gives his perpetual
fiancee the lovely gift of another
man's prized possession.

They glare at one another.

MARIAN
(suddenly dark)
The lessons over. We'll meet again
next week...

She begins packing up the bows and arrows, upset --

TORNHAM
Marian, wait --

She hesitates, looks back at him.

TORNHAM (CONT'D)

Now I'm the one who's sorry.
Please accept my apology. I didn't
mean to upset you.

(a beat)

I don't think Locksley is complicated
at all. I think he's very lucky.
But his luck is about to run out.
I'm going to catch him.

Marian narrows her eyes at Tornham --

MARIAN

Oh, really?

TORNHAM

Turns out that despite being a
brigand, Hood attends Mass
regularly -- across the river, at
Fountains Abbey. There's a friar
there named Tuck who ministers to
him and hears his confession every
other Sunday. This Sunday we'll be
waiting.

Marian tries to hide her panic.

MARIAN

How did you learn all this?

TORNHAM

(shrugging)

People talk.

MARIAN

Especially if they are being
tortured.

TORNHAM

More often if they are being given
enough food or coin to survive.

MARIAN

Blood money.

TORNHAM

Charity.

Marian glares at Tornham with contempt... and a hint of
sadness. She turns her back on him and walks away.

Tornham stands there at the archery range, alone.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MANORHOUSE - NIGHT

Quiet. A pale mist swirls through the thick night air. A small CANDLELIGHT suddenly glows from within the walls of the house. The heavy oak doors creak and slowly OPEN...

Marian steps out, the glow coming from a LANTERN held in her hand. She carefully closes the door behind her and cautiously creeps out into the darkness.

FROM THE BUSHES

Someone watches as Lady Marian leaves the grounds of her manor and moves into the WOODS...

It's Tornham.

He carries his own small lantern, one gloved hand cupping it, so as not to let too much light trickle out --

-- but then he decides the risk of being seen is too great and he blows out the flame, plunging himself into blackness as he stealthily FOLLOWS Marian into the shadowy treeline...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SHERWOOD FOREST - NIGHT

Shafts of pale moonlight plunge down from between the flora and fauna. Marian moves through the pitch-black woods almost effortlessly, the small glow from the lantern illuminating her path -- a path she's clearly taken many times before.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. OUTLAW CAMP - NIGHT

Silent, peaceful and dark, the dim embers of a DYING CAMPFIRE mixing with the moonlight to provide the only light.

Marian slowly emerges from the shadowy fauna --

-- when she is suddenly SURROUNDED by a TRIO of HOOD'S SENTRYs who drop out of the trees around her, swords at the ready --

SENTRY #1
Miss Marian --?

SENTRY #2
 (bowing his head
 apologetically)
 Pardon, Miss, the moon is at half-
 size n' no one told us you were
 coming.

MARIAN
 I need to see Robin.

The two Sentry's exchange an uncomfortable look.

SENTRY #1
 Of course, M'lady, I'll rouse him
 right away.

CUT TO:

INT. TREE-TENT - NIGHT

A ramshackle dwelling made of animal skins, leaves and twigs.

Robin Hood lies fast asleep, a half-empty deerskin flask
 lying next to him, ale leaking out.

Also next to him is a barely-clothed WENCH, attractive, but
 SNORING loudly.

Little John sticks his head inside, POKES Robin violently --

LITTLE JOHN
 Rob -- Rob, wake up!

HOOD
 Christ, John...

LITTLE JOHN
 Marian's here.

Robin's sleep-encrusted eyes suddenly FOCUS and he hurriedly
 starts shaking the snoring woman next to him --

WENCH
 (groggy)
 Jaezus, Rob, haven't ya' had
 enough, lad? Fer fuck's sake --

HOOD
 You've got to get out of here, now.

CUT TO:

EXT. TREE-TENT - NIGHT

Robin, half-clothed, pulls himself from inside the camouflaged tent, spots Marian approaching in the distance, led by one of the Sentries with a TORCH.

Robin WAVES to her, begins lowering himself down a rope & vine LADDER at the front of the tree, while --

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE TREE

-- the Wench, still half-naked, climbs down a REAR ESCAPE HATCH, reaches the ground and quickly scurries off into the woods under cover of the glowing moon.

EXT. OUTLAW CAMP - NIGHT

Robin greets Marian with a HUG, stifling a yawn --

HOOD

Heavens, Marian, it's lovely to see you, but my men could have killed you, sneaking into the woods at this time o' night!

MARIAN

I'm sorry, Rob, but I had to warn you. The Sheriff knows about Fountain Abbey. You cannot go this Sunday, you cannot --

SUDDENLY A PIECING FEMALE SCREAM rips through the night air.

The half-naked Wench comes TEARING through the woods --

WENCH

Alarum -- ALARUM!

Merry Men starts WAKING, LEAPING out of the dirt & grass beds, grabbing weapons, what the hell is happening -- ?

Marian shoots the panicked Wench a look, starts to say something to Robin, when --

Tornham steps out of the woods.

TORNHAM

(RE: the Wench)

She's a bit high-strung, that one.

Tornham finds himself instantly surrounded by SWORD-POINTS and drawn BOWS & ARROWS --

Robin glares at Marian in disbelief --

HOOD
 Christ, Marian, do you realize what
 you've done?!! You've led the
Sheriff of goddamned Nottingham TO
OUR CAMPSITE!

Marian just glares past Robin to the half-clad Wench --

MARIAN
 (tight, under her breath)
 Who the hell is she?

Robin shuts his eyes tight -- the entire night has gone to
 shit in minutes.

TORNHAM
 I assure you, I'm here alone and I --

HOOD
 SHUT UP!
 (taking a deep breath,
 then shrugging to his
 men)
 Kill him.

Marian's eyes go wide --

MARIAN
 WAIT!

The Merry Men hesitate --

MARIAN
 (to Robin)
 Shouldn't you at least find out why
 he's here?

HOOD
Are you mad? He's here to arrest
 me, to arrest us all!

TORNHAM
 That's not true, actually.

LITTLE JOHN
 (pressing his sword-point
 into Tornham's THROAT)
 He said shut it.

TORNHAM
 I'm here because --

LITTLE JOHN
SHUT IT!

TORNHAM
-- I need your help!

Little John lets out a SNARL of anger and rears back to STAB
TORNHAM IN THE NECK --

-- but Robin shoots out a hand and stops John in mid-thrust:

HOOD
And why, pray tell, should I help
you?

TORNHAM
Because you would help yourself as
well.
(a beat)
I believe you did not murder those
people. But I'm the only one who
does. Help me... and perhaps I can
change all that.

Robin narrows his eyes at the Sheriff, gets in his face.

HOOD
And why would you care what happens
to me?

Tornham glares back at Hood:

TORNHAM
I don't. But I do care about
finding the truth.

A tense moment between them -- then Robin gestures to his men
and the Sheriff is released.

HOOD
I'll talk with you -- but only
after I see to my Marian. If it's
a choice between clearing my name
of murder and spending a moment
with her, I choose her.

Marian shifts her eyes from the out-of-breath Wench to Robin
Hood --

MARIAN
Not tonight you don't.

-- then turns on her heel and marches off.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTLAW CAMP - CAMPFIRE - NIGHT

Tornham and Robin sit around the fire, edgy and nervous MERRY MEN STANDING GUARD nearby, shooting the Sheriff dirty looks.

Robin stares across the fire to where MARIAN sits in the distance, TENDING TO THE SICK AND WOUNDED in the ranks of his Merry Men.

Tornham unwraps something covered in oil-cloth...

TORNHAM

I've been collecting these since I came to Nottingham. Used a tincture of vinegar and thyme to clean off the blood...

Tornham hands Robin a collection of ARROWHEADS...

HOOD

(defensively)

These aren't mine, I can tell you that.

TORNHAM

There's a symbol that's etched on each one. Can you see it...?

Robin inspects a couple of the arrowheads, narrows his eyes --

CLOSE ON THE ARROWHEADS

Two LETTERS crossed together an ornate "S" and a decorative "P".

HOOD

Well, there's the proof, isn't it? S.P. The killer's initials.

TORNHAM

Yes, well, that would be too easy, wouldn't it? I've checked baptism records for all of Nottingham county. Those initials don't match anyone who could be the killer -- a few children, a few old and infirm villagers. Motive to hate the Royals perhaps but not the ability to murder them.

(MORE)

TORNHAM (cont'd)

These were longbow killings. It takes strength and accuracy to kill someone that way. So, I'm stumped. And since you are the expert archer in these parts, I thought maybe --

HOOD

(cutting him off)
You married, Sheriff?

Tornham watches, confused, as Robin takes a swig of ALE.

TORNHAM

No. 'Fraid not. Guess I haven't met the right woman. Why?

Robin turns his gaze from the arrowheads to Marian, who continues tending to his men...

HOOD

Thought maybe an educated man such as yourself could give me advice, that's all.

TORNHAM

On the fairer sex? You seem to be doing fine where that's concerned.

HOOD

Oh, you mean the girl with the piercing scream? Jenny?

TORNHAM

I believe she said her name was Matilda.

HOOD

(genuinely surprised)
Really? I coulda' swore it was Jenny. Oh, well.

(quietly)

It's hard you know. Living with a bunch of brigands in the woods. The women from all over Nottingham... serfs, townsfolk -- even some noblewomen -- I'm a hero to 'em all. Don't get me wrong -- I love Marian more than life itself but... well... she's a cultured beauty. Sherwood is no place for her.

(a beat)

Do you think she'll forgive me?

Tornham shrugs and shoots Hood a look --

TORNHAM

Why not? After all, you are a
"hero."

Hood smiles, takes another swig of ale and CLAPS Tornham on the back --

HOOD

Thanks for understanding, Sheriff --
man-to-man.

Tornham glares at Hood --

TORNHAM

I was being sarcastic.

Robin glares back at Tornham --

HOOD

I could still kill you, ya' know?
(a beat)
But Marian would not approve. And
that's all I want from her
really... approval.

Robin finishes off his ale, tosses the empty flask across the campsite, goes quiet.

TORNHAM

You're drunk. And this was a waste
of my time.

Tornham rises to his feet and goes to RETRIEVE the arrows --
but Robin pulls them away.

HOOD

(suddenly, bitter)
Think you're so damn smart, don't
you "Sheriff"?

Tornham stops, turns back to Robin.

HOOD (CONT'D)

(fingering the arrowheads)
Sagitarii Pedestri.

TORNHAM

Excuse me?

HOOD

S. P. is Sagitarii Pedestri --

TORNHAM
 (translating)
 "Foot Archer"?

HOOD
 (nodding)
 Good King Henry had the Latin
 scrawled on supplies for the
 infantry archers before his
 invasion of Ireland. To keep track
 of the pennies and the pounds --
 arrows cost money, you know. Your
 boy Prince John led that one.
 (displaying the
 arrowheads)
 These were made for John's men.

TORNHAM
 Are you sure about this?

Robin pins the Sheriff with his eyes, then shrugs.

HOOD
 Maybe. You said it yourself -- I'm
 drunk.

Suddenly a SOUND pierces the night air -- GALLOPING HORSES!

Robin stumbles to his feet just as SIR GUY OF GISBORNE AND AN
 ENTIRE SQUAD OF HIS SOLDIERS ERUPT FROM THE WOODS ON
 HORSEBACK, SURROUNDING THE OUTLAW CAMP!

Merry Men leap for their UNSTRUNG BOWS and ARROWS, but are
 CUT DOWN by the swords of the mounted soldiers --

Robin glares at Tornham across the fire --

HOOD
 Bastard! YOU BETRAYED US!

Robin ATTACKS Tornham, but before the Sherwood bandit can
 reach the startled Sheriff, TWO SOLDIERS CHARGE THEIR HORSES
 between the two men, TRAPPING ROBIN --

GISBORNE
 (yelling to his men)
 Take Hood alive -- anyone else,
 feel free to kill!

Robin turns his attention to evading his captors, ROLLING
 UNDER THEIR HORSES, and clambering into a one of the TREES of
 the campsite --

In the panicked firelight, Marian CHARGES at Tornham --

MARIAN
I trusted you!

Tornham suddenly SEES something, grabs Marian by the wrists and PULLS HER OUT OF THE WAY OF A CHARGING HORSE -- up in the saddle sits Gisborne.

Sir Guy nods down to the Sheriff --

GISBORNE
Many thanks, Sheriff. The plan worked beautifully.

TORNHAM
What plan? How did you find me?

GISBORNE
Your silver-haired Squire alerted me that you were planning to follow Lady Marian to Hood. Well done, Sheriff.

Gisborne rides off, BARKING ORDERS to his men...

Tornham looks back at Marian --

TORNHAM
Marian. Please -- you must believe me, I knew nothing of this.

Marian is about to reply when her attention is drawn to the SCREAMS of Robin being BEATEN AND DRAGGED ACROSS THE CAMPSITE BY GISBORNE'S SOLDIERS --

HOOD
Marian! MARIAN!

Marian tries to race to Robin's side but Tornham holds her back as the outlaw is BOUND and GAGGED by the soldiers --

MARIAN
(SLAPPING at Tornham)
Let go of me, LET GO, I HATE YOU, I HATE YOU!

Tornham just takes it as Marian keeps screaming.

But we can see that he's breaking inside.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ENGLISH COASTLINE - DAWN

A group of PRINCE JOHN'S SERGEANTS serving as LOOK-OUTS are rustling themselves up from sleep, changing SHIFTS, one of them wiping sleep from his eyes. The sleepy Look-Out stumbles over to the side of a cliff overlooking the mist-shrouded ocean and starts PISSING over the edge...

SUDDENLY a BARRAGE OF ARROWS comes whistling out of the distant mist, IMPALING the Look-Out, killing him instantly.

The sleepy Look-Out topples over the side of the cliff and the other Look-Outs suddenly panic and grab for their weapons --

-- but ANOTHER BARRAGE of ARROWS comes sailing out of the mist, and ANOTHER and ANOTHER --

Until all of Prince John's Look-Outs are dead.

A moment of eerie silence -- just the sounds of waves lapping against the coast line.

Then a large SHAPE starts to emerge from the mist...

A SHIP -- and at the fore of the ship is a carved and colorfully-painted FIGUREHEAD -- depicting a FEROCIOUS, ROARING LION...

CUT TO:

EXT. NOTTINGHAM - MORNING

The pale light of the early sun rains down on the city --

HERALD (V.O.)

His Royal Highness Prince John is
proud to announce the capture of
the outlaw -- and Murderer -- Robin
Hood!

EXT. NOTTINGHAM - TOWN SQUARE - MORNING

The CITY HERALD is bellowing the news to a growing CROWD of onlookers --

HERALD (CONT'D)

A banquet in honor of Sir Robert Tornham, the Sheriff of Nottingham, will be held in the royal castle on the morrow's eve -- and a generous serving of mutton and mead shall be distributed to all the loyal subjects of Nottingham in honor of the occasion!

Scattered CHEERS go up amongst the people...

CUT TO:

INT. NOTTINGHAM CASTLE - GREAT HALL - NIGHT

A HUGE PARTY is going, ROYALS DANCING and making merry, EATING and DRINKING like pigs, Prince John and Guy of Gisborne chief amongst the merry-makers.

Tornham is there, also drinking heavily, not in celebration, but in misery. He watches as Prince John holds up an EMPTY GOBLET and Gisborne steps up and FILLS IT from a large JUG OF WINE...

The "spectacle" course is served, LARGE PIES being laid out on the tables, carefully sliced open -- and LIVE BLACKBIRDS INSTANTLY FLYING OUT OF THE SLICED CRUST, flapping up and fluttering around at the top of the high ceiling...

Prince John approaches the Sheriff, a large overflowing goblet of wine in one hand, a huge leg of lamb in the other --

PRINCE JOHN

Nice work, Sheriff. How does the post of Chief Justiciar of the realm sound?

TORNHAM

I am... flattered, Your Highness.

PRINCE JOHN

As well you should be.

(a beat)

Say, where is that fine young Fitzwater wench? I know she was invited.

TORNHAM

Why ask me, Your Highness? The Lady Marian's thoughts and actions are her own.

Prince John tears a piece of meat off his lamp shank and chews, grinning --

PRINCE JOHN

Oh, don't be coy, Sheriff. I've seen the way you look at the woman.

(a sly smile)

The first time is always the best -- particularly when it's against her will. You know, once Hood is executed, your path to her bed will be free of obstruction. And there's no way old Man Fitzwater would turn down a proposal from the kingdom's next Chief Justiciar, eh?

Tornham looks at Prince John, a thousand things running through his head. Then --

TORNHAM

Your Highness, the execution you speak of must be preceded by a trial. Trial by Jury is the only way to establish a clear and honest record. Hood is very popular here in Nottingham. But if he is proven guilty of these murders on the strength of the evidence, no one will mourn his death. If we execute him without benefit of trial we run the risk of creating a martyr for those you spoke of -- the ones waiting to raise the bloody flag of rebellion against you.

Prince John stares at Tornham for a moment -- then shakes his head --

PRINCE JOHN

I see your point, Sheriff -- but trials are notoriously uncertain proceedings. I have no desire to place such a sensitive matter in the hands of a "jury."

Tornham takes a frustrated drink, thinks hard for a moment... and gets an idea.

CUT TO:

INT. NOTTINGHAM CASTLE - DUNGEON - NIGHT

Robin Hood hangs there, CHAINED TO THE WALL, covered in blood and bruises.

He looks up at the sound of his door being UNLOCKED --

Tornham nods to a DUNGEON GUARD, who escorts the Sheriff inside, then SHUTS the door behind him, leaving Robin and Tornham alone together.

HOOD
(with contempt)
Come to gloat?

TORNHAM
Whether you believe it or not, the truth is I had nothing to do with Gisborne's attack. He surprised me the same as you.

Hood scowls at Tornham --

HOOD
"The same"?! Look around, Sheriff -- it's not the same.

TORNHAM
I know... and I'm sorry for that. Which is why I've come.
(a beat)
I've convinced Prince John to give you a Trial.

Hood digests this news... that doesn't sound too bad.

HOOD
(nodding his head, trying to stay positive...)
So I need to find a lawyer, eh? I've heard Stephen Glanvill is quite the advocate. What do you think of him?

TORNHAM
It's not going to be that kind of trial.

HOOD
(frowning his brow)
What do you mean?

TORNHAM

Prince John would only agree to a
Trial by Combat.

Hood narrows his eyes at Tornham --

HOOD

Who with?

Tornham hesitates...

HOOD (CONT'D)

Not Gisborne?

Tornham shrugs.

TORNHAM

He is the Prince's most loyal and
able retainer.

HOOD

Weapons?

TORNHAM

The usual for close-quarters.
Broadsword. Battle Axe. Mace.

Robin just glares at Tornham in disbelief --

HOOD

Oh, that's great. That's just
fucking great...

TORNAHM

Listen, it is a miracle that I was
even able to --

HOOD

(cutting him off)

Gisborne's one of the fiercest,
most bloodthirsty swordsman in all
of England, do you understand that?
I'm an archer -- a bowman. I shoot
arrows.

(defeated)

Christ. It's a death-sentence with
drawn-out agony added for good
measure and popular amusement.

Tornham is silent for a moment. Then --

TORNHAM

Rest as best you can. The Trial is set for the morning. I'll see what I can do about getting you some better food tonight.

Tornham turns, knocks on the dungeon door and waits for the Guard to arrive...

HOOD

Do me one better -- go poison Sir Guy.

Tornham turns and stares back at Robin -- until the Guard arrives, lets the Sheriff out and shuts the door, leaving Robin Hood to his fate...

CUT TO:

INT/EXT. NOTTINGHAM CASTLE - ARMORY - NIGHT

The storeroom for the castle's weapons, sited between the GARRISON BARRACKS and the BLACKSMITH'S SHOP. By LAMP and TORCHLIGHT, Gisborne is testing the sharpness of his SWORD and AXE blades and the balance of the weight of his MACE.

Tornham enters, approaches Sir Guy.

GISBORNE

(eyes still glued to his weapons)
Sheriff. What brings you away from the festivities?

TORNHAM

I'm here to ask a favor.

Gisborne looks up from his weapons, furrows his brow --

GISBORNE

And what could that be?

TORNHAM

Locksley.
(a beat)
Don't kill him tomorrow. It's not required by statute. Put him down and let him yield. He will have been judged guilty by God but the final disposition of his sentence will fall back on the city's court, which will allow me time to gather more evidence.

Gisborne stares at Tornham.

GISBORNE

And what need is there of any more evidence? Do you doubt his guilt?

Tornham hesitates for a moment, then:

TORNHAM

I want to prove the case beyond doubt. The man is a hero to many in this city. Better his guilt be unquestioned.

Gisborne's eyes fall back on his weapons.

GISBORNE

If I defeat him tomorrow it will be beyond dispute that he is guilty, and considering the nature and extent of his bloody crimes I find it difficult to believe even Prince John's enemies would hesitate to see a sentence of death carried out.

Gisborne tightens his grip on the sword he has been SHARPENING.

GISBORNE (CONT'D)

Besides -- John wants that criminal punished. Not just brought to justice -- but brought to blood. And John knows I am the man to do it. Always have been, always will.

Tornham studies Gisborne, then shifts his eyes to where Gisborne's freshly-cleaned SURCOAT sits hanging in preparation for tomorrow's combat. Instead of Gisborne's usual family coat-of-arms, it bears a ROYAL BADGE OF OFFICE: THREE GOLDEN CUPS UPON A BLOOD-RED FIELD.

TORNHAM (CONT'D)

I saw you pouring John the ceremonial first cup of wine tonight. How did you earn the honor of being his Chief Butler?

GISBORNE

Exemplary service in battle -- during the Campaign of eighty-five.

Tornham's eyes narrow.

TORNHAM
John's Irish campaign?

Gisborne smiles at the memory and nods his head --

GISBORNE
And what a campaign it was.
(a beat)
I'll tell you that story some other
time, Sheriff. For now... instead
of riding into battle tomorrow, as
would be my preference as a master
of horse, I'll fight your woodsman
on foot. I won't let him live...
but I'll give him the ghost of a
chance to take my life, instead of
losing his.
(smiling again)
It will make it more interesting.

Tornham stares at Gisborne, trying to figure something out...
Takes one last look at Gisborne's face lit by the flickering
torchlight, turns and walks away...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TORNHAM'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Tornham sits at his desk, inspecting the ARROWHEADS by
candlelight, lost in thought, his mind racing. Squire Thomas
enters --

SQUIRE THOMAS
Perhaps it is not my place, but you
should have been asleep hours ago.
You have to officiate at the trial,
which will be right after daybreak.

TORNHAM
I'm afraid the officiating shall be
left to you, Thomas -- as I shall
be ill from too much debauchery at
tonight's celebration. Be sure and
relay my apologies to the Prince.

Tornham sets aside the arrowheads in frustration --

TORNHAM (CONT'D)
Tell me something, Thomas -- why in
God's name did you tell Gisborne
where I was going? Why?

Squire Thomas sighs, sits down across from Tornham and shrugs his weary shoulders...

SQUIRE THOMAS

You were marching into a den of
outlaws in the middle of the
night -- alone.

(a beat)

I was worried about you.

Tornham locks eyes with the old man... then nods.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CITY OF NOTTINGHAM - DAWN

A CONTINUOUS GRAY DRIZZLE RAINS DOWN as the roosters CROW and church bells TOLL and kettledrums begin to ROLL -- all drawing the populace of the city out of their homes, into the streets and off to the CASTLE COURTYARD...

EXT. NOTTINGHAM CASTLE - COURTYARD - DAWN

WOODEN BARRIERS have been used to CORDON OFF the center of the courtyard, barrel-and-plank BENCHES arranged as temporary BLEACHERS and CASTLE GUARDS posted to maintain order.

CITY FOLK of all ages and classes begin to arrive and find seats, while VENDORS start loudly HAWKING bread, fruit, nuts and -- of course -- mead.

EXT. NOTTINGHAM CASTLE - NORTH TOWER - DAWN

Gisborne walks out of his Tower and LOCKS THE DOOR behind him. He is already dressed in his full suit of CHAINMAIL ARMOR, SWORD, AXE and DAGGER at his sides, SHIELD slung over his back, GREAT HELM cradled in the crook of one arm. Waiting for him are several of his SOLDIERS, who rise to attention and stare suitably impressed at the splendidly lethal looking figure which he cuts.

Gisborne glances at the GROWING CROWD as it OVERFLOWS the benches, smiles to himself and marches off to the center of the courtyard, his Soldiers following in his wake...

...a few moments later, Tornham steps out from behind a nearby stairwell and quickly but cautiously approaches the heavy oak DOOR at the base of the North Tower. It is locked from within.

Tornham casts a quick glance over his shoulder to make sure he's not being watched, then digs into a pocket, pulls out a thin, IRON ROD, inserts it in the KEYHOLE and begins PICKING THE LOCK...

After several long moments of struggle, the Sheriff manages to unbolt the LOCK -- then slowly opens the door and creeps inside...

INT. NORTH TOWER - GISBORNE'S CHAMBERS - DAWN

The Sheriff enters the opulently furnished space -- quite a contrast to his own modest dwellings -- and proceeds to look around.

He searches a CABINET, a rack of ugly-looking EDGED WEAPONS -- nothing. Searches Gisborne's BED, the pockets in GISBORNE'S CLOTHES -- still nothing.

Tornham shivers in the COLD -- then glances over at the FIREPLACE...

Something is wrong.

There are no ashes or wood.

TORNHAM
(to himself)
No need to warm your ass on a cold
morning, Sir Guy...?

Tornham inspects the fireplace. Looks up the CHIMNEY, sweeps his hand inside, pulls it out. Still clean.

TORNHAM (CONT'D)
And no soot.

Tornham pushes his hand against the back WALL of the fireplace, moves his hand from STONE to STONE, pushing, probing -- suddenly one of the stones MOVES INWARD, tripping a mechanism -- there's a CREAKING NOISE and a section of the rear wall OPENS...

Revealing a HIDDEN PASSAGEWAY beyond.

Tornham narrows his eyes, adjusting them to the darkness -- makes out a WOODEN STAIRCASE leading down into the shadows.

The Sheriff looks around, finds a small OIL LAMP next to Gisborne's bed, lights it with a flint and head down into the darkness...

CUT TO:

EXT. NOTTINGHAM CASTLE - COURTYARD - DAY

The place is packed with SPECTATORS ranging from INFANTS to the ELDERLY. SERFS and PEASANTS from nearby farmlands to SHOPKEEPERS, ARTISANS, CRAFTSMEN, TRADESMEN and well-to-do MERCHANTS all share the "general admission" seats, while the NOBLEMEN and NOBLEWOMEN have the "box seats", located along the very front row on all four sides of the wooden barrier, closest to the forthcoming action, blood and gore.

Marian and her Father are among them, Marian looking tense and pale.

TWO impressive looking SEATS have been left conspicuously empty atop a RAISED PLATFORM at one end of the front row.

A signal is given and with a FLOURISH the KETTLEDRUMS go suddenly SILENT.

A HERALD steps forward:

HERALD

All rise for his Grace, Prince
John, by the Grace of God Regent
and Defender of the Realm of
England! LONG LIVE THE PRINCE!

The CROWD replies with a modicum of enthusiasm --

CROWD

LONG LIVE THE PRINCE!

By now Prince John is standing in front of his throne. He notices the empty seat and turns to his CHAMBERLAIN:

PRINCE JOHN

(WHISPERING)

Where is the Queen...?

CHAMBERLAIN

(WHISPERING back)

I haven't seen her for days, Your
Grace.

John scowls -- then turns his attention back to the CROWD, raising a hand and calling for silence:

PRINCE JOHN

Most loyal subjects of Nottingham,
it gives us great pleasure to see
you gathered here today at our
Royal invitation, in order to
partake in that most important
practice of any civilized land. I
speak of course, of the
disposition... of justice.

CUT TO:

INT. TUNNEL

A long, dank space dug through mud and earth. No light
except the small pool thrown from the oil lamp in Tornham's
hand.

The Sheriff follows close to the dripping walls, moving
through the darkness until he encounters another set of
stairs leading upwards...

CUT TO:

EXT. NOTTINGHAM CASTLE - COURTYARD - DAY

Squire Thomas reads from a PARCHMENT as Robin Hood is led out
of the Tower housing the Dungeon and over to one end of the
BARRICADED AREA by a pair of BAILIFFS...

SQUIRE THOMAS

To all sons of Holy Mother Church,
present and future, know that on
this day of the Feast of Saint John
the Baptist, Judicial Trial by
Combat is to be held to determine
the fate of Robin Hood -- formerly
Sir Robin of Locksley, who stands
accused of one dozen murders.

(to Robin Hood)

Defendent, how do you plead?

All eyes fall upon Robin Hood...

HOOD

Not guilty!

The CROWD splits -- erupting in an equal mix of "BOOS" and
CHEERS...

SQUIRE THOMAS

Let it also be known to all present and future that in this judicial duel, the City of Nottingham and Kingdom of England shall be represented by that most worthy and honorable of Prince John's retainers, Sir Guy of Gisborne.

Gisborne marches up to the barricaded area...

Again the CROWD splits -- those who cheered now "booing" and those who "boomed" now cheering...

Squire Thomas NODS to a pair of waiting PRIESTS --

SQUIRE THOMAS (CONT'D)

Fathers, if you please.

One Priest heads for Gisborne, the other for Robin Hood. Gisborne's Priest holds a massive LATIN BIBLE in his hands, while Robin's carries a heavy GILT CROSS. The pair of holy men reach the pair of combatants and Squire Thomas continues:

SQUIRE THOMAS (CONT'D)

Fall to your knees and place your right hand on the holy item provided...

Gisborne and Robin Hood do as instructed.

SQUIRE THOMAS (CONT'D)

Repeat after me: I hereby swear by all that is right, good and holy...

HOOD / GISBORNE

I hereby swear by all that is right, good and holy...

SQUIRE THOMAS

That I enter this Trial by my own free will...

HOOD / GISBORNE

That I enter this Trial by my own free will...

SQUIRE THOMAS

Placing my fate and that of my judicial case...

HOOD / GISBORNE
Placing my fate and that of my
judicial case...

SQUIRE THOMAS
In the hands of God Almighty.

HOOD / GISBORNE
In the hands of God Almighty.

At their opposite ends of the cordoned-off field, Robin Hood and Gisborne put on their HELMETS and DRAW THEIR SWORDS --

SQUIRE THOMAS
(to Prince John)
...Your Grace.

Prince John rises to his feet and calls to the combatants, who are both still on their knees in the muddy ground:

PRINCE JOHN
This Trial is hereby called to
order -- and may God have mercy on
the Guilty after he has been
butchered by the Just.

Without a moment's hesitation Gisborne rises to his feet and MARCHES straight for Robin Hood --

CUT TO:

EXT. NOTTINGHAM - MAIN GATES - DAY

The two Guardsmen who watch over the main entrance to the City are playing a game of dice and snacking on fruit.

Suddenly one of them looks up, notices a LONE RIDER on horseback emerging from the distant treeline of Sherwood and approaching fast...

The two Guardsman exchange a look, shrug -- then one of the Guardsman drops his fruit in slack-jawed shock as he SEES that the horseman is carrying a BANNER --

The Banner of RICHARD THE LIONHEARTED --

CUT TO:

INT. GISBORNE'S SANCTUM

The Sheriff PUSHES up through a HATCH in the floor and enters the deep, shadowy interior of some sort of room.

Suddenly Tornham senses something -- someone watching him from the shadows...

He quickly spins and cast the glow from his lantern on a FACE in the darkness --

Tornham freezes, his blood running cold.

The face is actually a DEATHMASK cast from paraffin wax.

And it is not alone.

A whole ROW of the wax deathmasks line the walls of the secret chamber like hunting trophies.

The FACES of all the "arrow murder" VICTIMS.

TORNHAM
(barely audible)
Jesus Christ...

Tornham staggers backwards, catches himself, leans against the wall trying to regain his senses.

He takes a deep breath and continues to search the room, comes across a SCROLL rolled out on a rotting wood table. He casts the light from his lantern over the scroll --

It is a LIST of NAMES, with some of the names CROSSED out with RED INK.

The names of the MURDER VICTIMS -- a death-list.

And more names -- future victims...?

Tornham steadies a shaking head, sets down his lantern and carefully ROLLS UP the scroll, placing it in his jerkin.

As he turns to leave the way he came he suddenly spots a rotting and mildewed BANNER hanging on the wall with a JEWISH STAR emblazoned across it.

Tornham waves his lantern around again, sees a BOARDED-UP WINDOW.

He begins PUSHING at the wooden boards, SPLINTERING ONE, a hint of DAYLIGHT creeping into the darkness.

Tornham BREAKS another board out of the window, making just enough space for him to poke his head out...

EXT. CONDEMNED SYNAGOGUE - DAY

...and realize he is in the JEWISH QUARTER OF NOTTINGHAM, inside the sanctuary shut down by Royal decree.

INT. GISBORNE'S SANCTUM

Tornham pulls back from the broken slats of the boarded-up window, prepares to head back into the tunnel and back to Nottingham Castle --

He suddenly HEARS something...

HORSES.

Not just one but dozens, MAYBE HUNDREDS, the GALLOPING NOISE starting to blend into one cacophonous ROAR as it closes in...

CUT TO:

EXT. NOTTINGHAM CASTLE - COURTYARD - DAY

Robin and Gisborne remain LOCKED TOGETHER -- until SUDDENLY Robin's sword-arm buckles, the sword slips out of his hand and he crashes backwards into the mud --

A mixture of GASPS and CHEERS from the crowd --

Gisborne STABS down at the prostrate figure of his enemy, but before the tip of the blade hits home, Robin KICKS OUT a foot and TRIPS up Sir Guy and he goes crashing down into the mud next to Hood --

The two empty-handed warriors struggle up to their knees with a shared GROAN, Robin snatching up his sword from the mud --

GISBORNE
(suddenly calling to his
Guards)
BALL-AND-CHAIN!

Gisborne's Squire instantly throws him the requested weapon --

Robin sees his chance and SWINGS his sword at Sir Guy --

Gisborne leaps back, but the edge of Robin's sword catches Sir Guy's surcoat and the chainmail armor beneath, TEARING through the "Golden Cups" insignia and CUTTING A JAGGED SLICE through the chainmail --

They SLAM together, tangling in a violent embrace, POUNDING each other with fists, STABBING elbows into necks, SMASHING forearms against kidneys, DRIVING knees into groins, delivering blow after devastating blow --

The CROWD GOES WILD --

The two battered warriors finally wrestle each other to the ground, slipping and sliding, covering themselves in mud --

Gisborne manages to get Robin in a head-lock and FORCES the outlaw's head towards a DEEP PUDDLE --

Robin struggles with all his strength, but to no avail -- gravity and Gisborne's massive arms combine to keep Robin's head moving inexorably down --

PLUNK!

Gisborne shove's Robin Hood's head into the mud puddle, FACE-FIRST --

Robin FLAILS WILDLY, desperately trying to get a grip on Gisborne's neck or back or arm or leg or anything --

But Gisborne keeps the pressure on.

Robin Hood suddenly stiffens, then goes limp.

Gisborne holds on a moment longer, then finally releases his grip on the lifeless husk of the outlaw, rises to his full, towering height, then raises his arms in VICTORY.

The Nobles goes crazy -- except for Marian who gazes in horror at the sight and begins WEEPING uncontrollably.

Gisborne look up at Prince John and starts to laugh.

SUDDENLY ROBIN HOOD EXPLODES OUT OF THE MUD, HURLS HIMSELF AT GISBORNE, WRAPS HIS ARMS AROUND GISBORNE'S THROAT AND SQUEEZES WITH ALL HIS MIGHT --

The crowd GASPS as Gisborne tries to shake Robin off, BEATING and BATTERING at the desperate outlaw --

But Robin's surprise attack is working, Gisborne starting to CHOKE and HEAVE, unable to breathe and unable to pry Robin Hood's grip from around his windpipe --

SUDDENLY --

GUARD
ATTACK!!! WE'RE UNDER ATTACK!!!

All eyes spin to the RAMPARTS of the CASTLE WALL where a sudden barrage of ARROWS takes out the Guard --

CLOSE ON PRINCE JOHN

The color draining from his face, replaced by fear.

PRINCE JOHN
...Richard?

CHAOS ERUPTS WITHIN THE CASTLE WALLS

As Prince John's SOLDIERS grab up their weapons and race to defend the Castle, Robin Hood being PULLED OFF Guy of Gisborne by a handful of his Guards --

GISBORNE
Throw him back in the dungeon!

-- Robin is DRAGGED AWAY, still fighting, as Gisborne RACES up a set of steps on the CURTAIN WALL to the BATTLEMENTS above up to the Castle PARAPETS and looks out between the crenelations --

GISBORNE'S POV

The ADVANCE ELEMENTS of KING RICHARD'S ARMY -- HUNDREDS OF KNIGHTS, MEN-AT-ARMS AND SERGEANTS ARE CHARGING through the city, CLOSING IN ON THE CASTLE, some on horseback, others on foot, TOWNSPEOPLE diving for cover -- some cowering in fear, others APPLAUDING THE ATTACK, more racing into their shops and houses, locking doors, shuttering windows, struggling to keep the unfolding chaos confined to the streets and muddy wood-planked walkways outside --

VILLAGERS
KING RICHARD IS BACK! GOD BLESS
KING RICHARD!

GISBORNE

Spins away from the sight, begins BARKING ORDERS to Prince John's SOLDIERS in the courtyard below --

GISBORNE
Secure the Gatehouse doors! SECURE
THE GATEHOUSE DOORS!

PRINCE JOHN'S SOLDIERS

Converge on the CASTLE DOORS, desperately trying to SHUT THEM before Richard's Army can get inside --

A few of Richard's men manage to reach the HEAVY OAK DOORS, but are KILLED or BEATEN OFF by Prince John's Soldiers just as the doors are SLAMMED SHUT and BOLTED TIGHT with a HUGE OAK TIMBER --

EXT. NOTTINGHAM - OUTSIDE THE CASTLE WALLS - DAY

Richard's Army has been locked out but his troops don't skip a beat. A CAPTAIN turns to his men and SHOUTS --

CAPTAIN
Find me a battering ram!

The Captain's MEN instantly CONVERGE on a nearby MERCHANT-HOUSE and begin TEARING and HACKING it APART with their AXES, SECURING ROPES round its POSTS and BEAMS, then using horse-power and man-power to DISLodge the heavy pieces of wood --

EXT. NOTTINGHAM CASTLE - COURTYARD - DAY

Everyone scrambles in a panic, Nobles and Commoners alike uncertain of what to do.

Prince John YELLS to his Herald --

PRINCE JOHN
Where is my mother? WHERE IS
ELEANOR?!

Gisborne is SCREAMING to his men --

GISBORNE
Prepare for a breach! Man the
Murder-Holes!

EXT. NOTTINGHAM - OUTSIDE THE CASTLE WALLS - DAY

Richard's Captain and his men have improvised several crude BATTERING RAMS from the posts and beams of the now-wrecked Merchant-house. One of them fastens a CAST-IRON LION'S HEAD around the sharpened point of the ram, giving it even more power --

CAPTAIN
Steady! Aim! ATTACK!!!

Richard's Army begins SLAMMING the makeshift battering ram hard against the oak doors, PUMMELING them over and over again --

EXT. NOTTINGHAM CASTLE - COURTYARD - DAY

CHAOS continues as the DOORS start to CRACK and SPLINTER --

IN THE PANICKING CROWD, Lady Marian grabs up a dropped SWORD, hefts it in her hands. Old Squire Thomas, pushes through the crowd, grabs Marian --

SQUIRE THOMAS

Maid Marian --

MARIAN

Let go of me!

SQUIRE THOMAS

You can't take arms against King Richard!

MARIAN

I'm not, you old idiot -- I'm going to help Robin!

Marian PULLS HERSELF out of Squire Thomas's grasp and CHARGES OFF INTO THE CROWD --

-- then suddenly finds herself FACE-TO-FACE with MADMAN HALEY, the misogynist lunatic who Tornham rescued her from at the Hospital!

MADMAN HALEY

You -- the vile beauty from Saint John's Hospital!?!? No doubt it was their desire for you which set all these men at each others throats!

MARIAN

Master Haley...?

(pointing the sword at him)

Stay back!

(suddenly getting an idea)

Do you want me to tell you what's really going on here...?

The Madman's face fills with curiosity --

CUT TO:

EXT. NOTTINGHAM CASTLE - GATEHOUSE - DAY

The assault continues, John's CROSSBOWMEN starting to rain their deadly bolts down on Richard's men --

THE GATEHOUSE DOORS BUCKLE with a violent spray of SPLINTERS and the Captain and his Men erupt in a VICTORIOUS BATTLE-CRY as they CHARGE through and head for the Courtyard --

-- only to suddenly discover that they just succeeded in breaking through the OUTER DOORS of the GATEHOUSE -- but the INNER DOORS REMAIN SEALED.

Before the Men-At-Arms can bring their battering ram to bear on the Inner Doors, IRON-PLATED SHUTTERS SLIDE AWAY to reveal half-a-dozen MURDER HOLES directly ABOVE THEIR HEADS --

-- and in the next moment the Captain and his Men-At-Arms are DRENCHED IN QUICKLIME -- white calcium oxide that chemically burns hot enough to char wood!

The Men-At-Arms CRY OUT in agony as they are chemically burned alive.

Prince John's men let out a VICTORIOUS CHEER, none cheering more wildly than Gisborne himself...

CUT TO:

INT. DUNGEON CORRIDOR - DAY

Gisborne's Guards quickly TOSS Robin into a CELL, lock the door and turn to race back to the battle. SUDDENLY --

MADMAN HALEY
DIE, WARLOCKS!!!

-- they are AMBUSHED by the Madman Haley, wielding the sword Marian found!

With the element of complete surprise on his side, it takes the Madman only a few moments to SKEWER BOTH GUARDS and leave them bleeding on the floor. Marian steps out behind Haley, searches the Guards and RETRIEVES THE KEY to Robin's cell. Madman Haley looks on in pride as Marian UNLOCKS THE CELL DOOR, setting Robin Hood FREE...

MADMAN HALEY
(to Robin Hood)
Yes! Now rejoin your strumpet love
and take her back with you to
Babylon, so we men of England may
live together again in peace!

Robin Hood isn't sure what to make of the Madman but he is happy to be free. He takes Marian into his arms and gives her a LONG, HEARTFELT KISS --

CUT TO:

EXT. NOTTINGHAM - DAY

King Richard's army licks its wounds and RE-GROUPS for another assault.

The wounded Captain receives MEDICAL ATTENTION while he consults with a MARSHAL, who passes the information to an imposing MAN, late thirties, broad-shouldered, who sits astride a magnificent WHITE STALLION --

The Man and his horse are draped in cloth emblazoned with the face of a FEROCIOUS LION.

The Man is KING RICHARD himself -- and after a moment, we realize that the General is actually TRANSLATING the Captain's words from ENGLISH into FRENCH:

CAPTAIN

...our scouts have circled the entire curtain wall and there is no weak spot to be found.

The Marshal TRANSLATES for Richard, who nods his head grimly --

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

We can attempt another escalade, but they have the tactical advantage now and we may lose more men than it will be worth. Until we can construct siege engines our best strategy is to wait them out -- hope they run out of food and water before we do.

The Marshal TRANSLATES again, when suddenly another VOICE speaks up, also in FRENCH:

TORNHAM (O.S.)

<<Your Majesty...>>

All eyes turn to see the Sheriff, on bended knee before the King --

TORNHAM (CONT'D)

(FRENCH w/ENGLISH subtitles)

<<...there may be a better strategy.>>

Richard SMILES at Tornham, bids him to RISE to his feet --

KING RICHARD

<<Do I know you...?>>

TORNHAM

<<I'm Robert Tornham, your Sheriff
of Nottingham -- the one who
successfully defended Cyprus for
you, Your Majesty.>>

(a beat)

<<You once let me read some of your
poetry.>>

CUT TO:

EXT. NOTTINGHAM CASTLE - COURTYARD - DAY

Prince John's men are MANNING the walls, RUSHING in every
direction, READYING themselves for another attack...

In the midst of it all is a nervous and troubled Prince John
and a calm and slightly annoyed Gisborne --

PRINCE JOHN

Anything?

GISBORNE

No, Your Grace.

PRINCE JOHN

She's the Queen of bloody England,
not a fucking ghost! Where in
God's name is my MOTHER?!!!

(grabbing Gisborne by the
shirt)

She could be lying wounded in a
ditch somewhere, injured during the
attack, or --

GISBORNE

If Queen Eleanor is here, we shall
find her for you.

PRINCE JOHN

What is that supposed to mean? "If
she's here" -- where the hell else
would she be? Do you think she would
abandon me in my hour of greatest
need? IS THAT WHAT YOU THINK?

Gisborne avoids John's gaze.

CUT TO:

INT. TUNNEL

The shadowy mudhole leading from Gisborne's chambers inside Nottingham Castle to his hidden sanctorum in the Jewish Quarter of the city.

Only now it's FILLED with men -- KING RICHARD'S ARMY, advancing in single file, armed with TORCHES, being led by Tornham...

CUT TO:

EXT. NOTTINGHAM CASTLE - NORTH TOWER - DAY

A few of Prince John's Soldiers are re-loading their CROSSBOWS while others sharpen their SWORDS...

Suddenly the DOORS of the North Tower BURST OPEN, KING RICHARD'S ARMY POURING FORTH from inside, instantly KILLING the surprised Soldiers and CHARGING out into NOTTINGHAM CASTLE!

CAPTAIN

For the rightful ruler of England --
RICHARD THE LIONHEARTED -- ATTACK!!!

Richard's Army SPILLS FROM THE GUTS OF THE TOWER, viciously cutting down Prince John's men where they stand!

EXT. NOTTINGHAM CASTLE - COURTYARD - DAY

Gisborne and Prince John HEAR the SCREAMS and SOUNDS of BATTLE coming from within the Castle walls --

PRINCE JOHN

This is impossible...

-- then they SEE RICHARD'S ARMY as it begins streaming into the courtyard from within, LAYING WASTE to John's men, taking them totally off-guard!

Gisborne SPOTS Tornham amidst the chaos -- fighting ALONGSIDE Richard's Men, helping to DEFEAT Prince John's soldiers --

GISBORNE

Son of a bitch...

PRINCE JOHN

WHERE ARE THEY COMING FROM?!

Gisborne shoves past the panicked John and LEAPS into the fray, CLEAVING SKULLS right and left with his sword to reach the Sheriff --

But the Sheriff is doing the same thing, his sword drawn and flailing through the battle, trying to reach Gisborne --

CLANGG!!!!

THEIR SWORDS VIOLENTLY CROSS, both men glaring at each other with hate --

GISBORNE

Traitor!

TORNHAM

Prince John is the traitor -- and you are the murderer.

(a beat)

I found your little hiding place, Sir Guy. I found your arrows, you sick monster.

Gisborne's eyes go wide for a second, then he takes a vicious SWIPE at Tornham's head with his sword --

Tornham manages to DUCK just in time, but Guy rears back to strike again --

-- but he is KNOCKED BACKWARDS by a GALLOPING HORSE as one of Prince John's men attempts to FLEE the battle!

Gisborne SPINS to SEE that Richard's men are UNLOCKING the GATE to the castle, MORE and MORE of Richard's Army now POURING INTO THE COURTYARD!

Gisborne suddenly TAKES OFF RUNNING through the chaos --

Tornham LEAPS to his feet, SPOTS what Gisborne is heading for --

Gisborne reaches a man on HORSEBACK, violently TEARS the man from his horse and JUMPS on top of it, begins GALLOPING his way through the battle, trying desperately to reach the main gates and freedom --

ROBIN HOOD

Suddenly appears across the courtyard, grabs up a BOW & ARROW, AIMS for GISBORNE!

GISBORNE

SEES Robin aiming for him, suddenly JERKS his horse around, GRABS into the crowd of SCREAMING, FIGHTING and CHEERING people and comes up with LADY MARIAN!

TORNHAM

SEES this from across the melee, YELLS --

TORNHAM

MARIAN!!!

Sir Guy uses the struggling Marian as a HUMAN SHIELD, so that Hood doesn't have a clear shot, and powers his horse towards the gate --

Hood RACES after Gisborne, but is cut off by the FIGHTING --

Suddenly someone BLOCKS Gisborne's path --

It's old Squire Thomas, brandishing a spear --

Gisborne lets out a HOWL of FURY, ducks Squire Thomas's SPEAR THRUST and TRAMPLES THE OLD MAN WITH HIS FRENZIED HORSE, then CHARGES through the Gatehouse and out of the castle...

Tornham FIGHTS his way through the chaos and reaches Thomas's side --

TORNHAM

Thomas! My god, Thomas, what were you thinking?

SQUIRE THOMAS

(weakly)

I tried to stop him... I tried...

TORNHAM

(fighting back tears)

Look what he's done to you, Thomas.
Look what he's done.

Thomas pulls Tornham close, WHISPERS in his ear --

SQUIRE THOMAS

I'm sorry, Robert... I wanted to make for being... over-protective.
It seems you will have to look after yourself from now on.

Squire Thomas dies.

Tornham lets out a SCREAM of RAGE, GRABS a nearby riderless HORSE, climbs on and GALLOPS AFTER GISBORNE...

CUT TO:

EXT. NOTTINGHAM - MAIN GATES - DAY

Sir Guy's horse gallops out of the city, heading for the TREELINE in the distance, Lady Marian FIGHTING Gisborne the whole way --

MARIAN

Unhand me, you bastard! UNHAND ME!

CUT TO:

SHERIFF TORNHAM

Galloping his horse out of the city gates, in hot pursuit of Gisborne...

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF NOTTINGHAM - DAY

Tornham gallops on down the ROAD, approaching the edge of SHERWOOD FOREST. He suddenly SPIES Marian's body lying splayed out, face-down and motionless in the muddy road.

Tornham's face fills with panic. He draws his horse to a stop, leaps down, races to her side and gently rolls her over...

Her features are splattered with blood and dirt. She looks lifeless...

TORNHAM

Marian...?

...until her eyes flutter open. She stares up at the Sheriff and manages a slight smile --

MARIAN

(weakly)

Not who I was expecting as my rescuer -- but you'll do.

TORNHAM

Are you all right? Did he hurt you, did he -- ?

Marian silences him with a finger to his lips.

MARIAN

He threw me off his horse. But I'll live.

(a beat)

He rode into Sherwood.

They lock eyes for a long moment.

Then Tornham tenderly wipes blood and mud from Marian's face and KISSES her.

She does nothing at first -- then she returns the kiss, tears starting to form in her eyes.

Tornham pulls away from her, steeling himself for what is to come.

TORNHAM

(hard)
Take the horse. Go back to
Locksley.

Tornham rises from Marian's side and heads for the trees.

Marian watches him go. For a moment it looks like she is about to call for him to stop and come back to her -- but the moment passes and she says nothing.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROYAL HUNTING LODGE - DAY

The King's Forester STANDS GUARD at the entrance to the rustic structure.

GISBORNE SUDDENLY BURSTS FROM THE TREES ON HORSEBACK AND STRIKES DOWN THE GUARD WITH A SLASH FROM HIS SWORD!

Gisborne jumps down off of his horse, GRABS the Forester's BATTLE-AXE and uses it to CLEAVE OFF THE LOCK on the door to the lodge.

He KICKS OPEN the door, stares inside at the array of HUNTING BOWS and ARROWS lining the walls...

He suddenly hears a FAMILIAR VOICE crying from somewhere else in the forest --

TORNHAM (O.S.)

GISBORNE!

CUT TO:

TORNHAM

Sword out, pushing his way through the sun-dappled trees and bushes, grim determination carved into his features --

Suddenly he HEARS --

GISBORNE (O.S.)
Just like the Royal Hunting Party,
eh, Sheriff?

Tornham narrows his eyes, grips his sword --

A razor-sharp ARROW SUDDENLY comes WHIZZING AT HIM FROM OUT OF THE TREES, just missing his head, imbedding in a tree behind him!

Tornham cringes in pain, feels BLOOD on his EAR where the arrow NICKED him.

Tornham CHARGES his way into a tangle of heavy branches, DIVES to the ground, barely EVADING ANOTHER ARROW which sails just over his head!

GISBORNE (O.S.)
How does it feel being the Stag,
Tornham? Maybe I'll skin your
corpse, cook it up and eat it when
this is all over. God knows I did
worse in Ireland.

Tornham SEES something through the trees, CATCHES a GLIMPSE of GISBORNE'S HORSE between shards of thick foliage, ducks down and tries to quietly outflank him...

Tornham cautiously makes his way through the brush, sweat starting to stain his brow, more blood leaking from his clipped ear...

He tightens his grip on his sword as he CATCHES ANOTHER GLIMPSE of Gisborne's Horse through the trees, close now...

Tornham steadies himself, then LEAPS OUT OF THE BRUSH, ATTACKING GISBORNE FROM BEHIND with a ferocious WAR CRY --

But the horse is riderless.

Gisborne is gone.

Tornham hesitates for a moment --

Then one of GISBORNE'S ARROWS comes tearing through the air, IMPALING Tornham in the leg.

Tornham SCREAMS in agony and goes down.

GISBORNE (O.S.)
Remember when I told you I knew
nothing about the longbow, Sheriff?
I lied.

Tornham whips up his sword JUST IN TIME TO BLOCK ANOTHER ARROW from Gisborne, the arrow RICOCHETING OFF the blade with a spray of SPARKS.

Tornham frantically pulls himself to his feet and desperately CRASHES through the trees, LIMPING, trying to escape, ARROWS tearing through the air around him --

Tornham keeps running for all he's worth -- then catches a GLIMPSE of a Stag -- perhaps the very same one from the Royal Hunt all those months ago. The noble animal silently watches him...

For one bare moment their eyes meet -- and the terror in Tornham's eyes shows he is now the one being hunted.

ANOTHER ARROW imbeds itself into Tornham's SHOULDER and he SCREAMS again, losing his grip on his sword.

He tries to reclaim his blade but ANOTHER ARROW splits the ground, just missing his fingers, cutting him off from the sword.

Tornham, blood leaking from his shoulder and his leg, turns and painfully continues to RACE across the ground of the forest, weaponless --

EXT. ROYAL HUNTING LODGE - DAY

Tornham burst out of the trees, SEES the hunting lodge and charges towards it --

-- then TRIPS and stumbles over the brush-covered CORPSE of the King's Forester.

Tornham quickly pulls himself to his feet and lunges into the wooden structure --

INT. ROYAL HUNTING LODGE - DAY

Tornham wipes sweat and blood from his brow, SEES the HUNTING BOWS and ARROWS, grabs up the first longbow and handful of arrows he can find --

EXT. SHERWOOD FOREST - DAY

GISBORNE continues to stalk his prey, arrow notched in his bow --

GISBORNE
 (YELLING into the woods)
 You know, Sheriff -- the Irish
 dubbed John "The Red-Handed"...

CUT TO:

TORNHAM

Bleeding badly, Gisborne's arrows still protruding from his leg and shoulder, leaning up against a tree and NOTCHING his own ARROW with a trembling hand --

 GISBORNE (O.S.)
 ...but the truth is, he wasn't
 willing to get his hands red
enough. I'm the one who did all
 his killing for him.

Tornham SEES Gisborne through the brush, takes aim and FIRES!

GISBORNE

Looks up in surprise as Tornham's ARROW sails at him -- then MISSES, thudding harmlessly into a tree.

 GISBORNE
 (smiling)
 Close, Sheriff -- but not close
 enough.

Gisborne whips up his bow and notches an arrow at lightning-fast speed, SHOOTING BACK at where Tornham's arrow came!

TORNHAM

Leaps out of the way, narrowly escaping being impaled by Sir Guy's return shot -- then RACES back into the foliage, NOTCHING ANOTHER ARROW as he goes...

BOTH MEN BEGIN STALKING EACH OTHER

Firing ARROW after ARROW, barely missing one another, one hunting the other, both trying desperately for a kill --

A DUEL OF ARROWS

erupts between the archers -- Gisborne the ace, trained on the battlefield... and Tornham the amateur, trained by Robin Hood's lover, Lady Marian --

TORNHAM

pops up from behind a tree, gets Gisborne in his sights --

GISBORNE

SEES Tornham, whips up his bow & arrow and lets fly before Tornham can let fly --

GISBORNE'S ARROW

RIPS through Tornham's BOW, SHATTERING it to pieces, SPLINTERS flying into his face, cutting into his flesh!

Tornham drops the remains of the bow and flees for his life, CHARGING back through the underbrush, weak from loss of blood, desperate --

Gisborne LAUGHS and gives chase --

EXT. OAK CAVE - DAY

It's the ENTRANCE to the FOREST CAVE formed from thick, downed OAK TREES -- where the boar was killed on the Royal Hunting Party months ago.

Tornham emerges from the brush, SEES the cave and drags himself INSIDE the cocoon of fallen oak, trying to catch his breath --

Tornham stares at Gisborne's arrow protruding from his shoulder -- then tears a piece of WOOD BARK from one of the fallen oaks, puts it between his teeth and bites down hard.

He reaches back and BREAKS OFF the feathered END of the arrow -- then grips the SHAFT of the arrow just above the bloodied arrowhead, fights back a cry of agony and PULLS, slowly and agonizingly yanking the rest of the arrow FROM HIS SHOULDER.

Sir Guys VOICE again, this time getting closer...

GISBORNE (O.S.)

I learned a lot about myself in Ireland, Sheriff -- and I put that knowledge to good use for Prince John. But then we had to come home -- to a land at peace. John had no interest in going on Crusade, so I needed another outlet for my talents.

Tornham reaches down to the other arrow -- the one jutting out of his leg -- BREAKS OFF the feathered end and slowly PULLS THAT ONE OUT as well.

A SHADOW suddenly fall over the entrance to the oak cave --

Tornham focuses his pain-blurred vision and SEES Guy of Gisborne standing over him, bow slung over his shoulder, sword in hand.

Gisborne GRINS -- the deeply-satisfied grin of a man who has been waiting for a reward for some time and is finally about to receive it:

GISBORNE

Your head will make a fine trophy,
Robert Tornham.

Gisborne raises his sword with two-hands, prepares to LOP OFF TORNHAM'S HEAD --

But Tornham suddenly grips the arrow that he pulled out of his own shoulder and STABS IT INTO GISBORNE'S LEG WITH HIS BARE HANDS!

Gisborne HOWLS in agony, falls to one knee in front of Tornham --

Tornham grips the other arrow -- the one that he pulled out of his own leg -- and STABS IT INTO GISBORNE'S CHEST!

Gisborne gurgles up blood.

He hesitates... still clutching his sword... still trying to bring one last blow down on the Sheriff --

Then Gisborne collapses in a crumpled heap next to Tornham...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. STREETS OF NOTTINGHAM - DAY

The battle is over.

The BANNER of RICHARD THE LIONHEARTED flies over the City, flapping in the late afternoon breeze.

Villagers and Nobles alike CHEER as King Richard rides through the town astride his horse, waving to his people, part of a ROYAL VICTORY PARADE.

And at his side, regal and relaxed as ever, rides his mother, QUEEN ELEANOR.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. NOTTINGHAM CASTLE - GREAT HALL - DAY

Empty -- except for Prince John.

He holds a SMALL DAGGER in his hand, examining it, letting the blade hover over his heart.

He STABS it down -- and starts to CUT --

CUT TO:

EXT. NOTTINGHAM CASTLE - COURTYARD - DAY

King Richard trots his great warhorse right to the FRONT STEPS of the GREAT HALL -- then urges the stallion to proceed on UP THE STONE STEPS...

The KNIGHTS and MEN-AT-ARMS of his escort DISMOUNT, DRAW THEIR WEAPONS and follow him up the steps, as does his mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine, showing impressive agility for a woman of her age --

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON PRINCE JOHN

as tears start to well up in his eyes and streak down his face --

INT. NOTTINGHAM CASTLE - GREAT HALL - DAY

The massive oak doors SWING OPEN and King Richard marches in, SURROUNDED by Knights and Men-At-Arms serving as bodyguards. Suddenly they all freeze in their iron boots, their eyes glued to something at the far end of the Hall...

KING RICHARD
(FRENCH w/English
subtitles)
<<Leave us -- all of you.>>

The Knights and Men-At-Arms turn and exit, only Queen Eleanor remaining...

KING RICHARD (CONT'D)
<<Shut the doors, Mother.>>

Eleanor does as her son instructs. As she does, the sound of PAINFUL SOBBING carries from the far end of the Hall...

Prince John lies doubled-over, head buried in his knees, dressed only in his underclothes, his fine ROYAL GARMENTS of silk, satin and fur CUT TO SHREDS in a pile beside him.

Richard stares down at John for a moment -- then speaks to him in FRENCH w/ENGLISH SUBTITLES:

KING RICHARD
 <<Don't be afraid, little brother.
 You are young and have been the
 victim of bad advice. Your
 counselors shall pay for this.>>
 (growing impatient)
 <<Now get up and put some clothes
 on.>>

John leaps to his feet, throws himself into Richard's arms and hugs him tight --

PRINCE JOHN
 Forgive me, Richard. Forgive me...

Richard stands there for a moment... then hugs him back.

Eleanor watches, a contented smile gracing her lined but lovely face...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TORNHAM'S BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT

Pale MOONLIGHT trickles in through the shadows. A FIREPLACE burns, warming the cold stone of the room.

Tornham lies in bed, unconscious, his wounds BANDAGED.

A FEMALE HAND in a NOBLEWOMAN'S GLOVE reaches out and touches Tornham's forehead.

Tornham's EYES flutter open.

He focuses on the hand...

TORNHAM
 (barely audible)
 Marian...?

But the gloved hand belongs to Eleanor of Aquitaine.

QUEEN ELEANOR
 Sorry to disappoint you.

Tornham narrows his eyes at the Queen -- then slowly, painfully, pulls himself into a sitting position in the bed.

TORNHAM
 Forgive me, your Highness.

QUEEN ELEANOR

No apologies necessary, Sheriff.
You have been overcome by your
wounds for several days. That's
more than enough excuse for
anything you might have said to
offend my Royal sensibilities.

Tornham notices that Eleanor is holding a DAGGER in her
gloved hand -- the one Prince John cut off his royal garments
with.

TORNHAM

So... who is our King?

QUEEN ELEANOR

Richard rules England once more.
No small thanks to you.

Tornham notices a few FLIES beginning to buzz around the
dagger.

TORNHAM

And what of Gisborne?

QUEEN ELEANOR

Sir Guy is dead. The people say
that the brave and unjustly accused
outlaw Robin Hood took his
vengeance on the murderer -- Sir
Guy -- putting two arrows into
him... and also wounding Prince
John's tyrannical tax collecting
lackey, the Sheriff of Nottingham.

(a dry smile)

That is after brave Sir Robin
discovered Gisborne's hidden
sanctum of horrors and helped the
rightful King, Richard, regain his
Castle.

Tornham smiles with bitter amusement.

TORNHAM

He seems to have done it all, this
Robin of Locksley.

QUEEN ELEANOR

Yes. He's quite the hero.

(a beat)

People need heroes, Sir Robert.

(MORE)

QUEEN ELEANOR (cont'd)

Men like yourself, steeped in law and arithmetic, help a kingdom to function properly but the kingdom itself would not exist without men like my Richard -- and your Robin of Locksley. They are the sort who will make men proud to be English -- the way Charlemagne and Roland made them proud to be French.

Eleanor takes out the DEATH-LIST that Tornham found in Gisborne's sanctum. She strolls over to the fireplace, tosses the Death-List into the flames and watches the parchment BURN...

TORNHAM

(quietly)

What did the victims all have in common, Your Highness? Were they all supporters of Richard?

Eleanor raises an eyebrow at Tornham, clearly impressed.

TORNHAM (CONT'D)

Gisborne was just following orders, wasn't he? Doing Prince John's bidding.

QUEEN ELEANOR

Do not mourn for Gisborne. The man was a beast.

TORNHAM

Who is worse, Your Highness? A mad dog -- or the master who knowingly sets that dog to prey on innocent victims?

QUEEN ELEANOR

My little boy's actions were regrettable, yes. But he is of Royal blood -- and his mistakes, no matter how bad, must not be allowed to taint the throne. And as for who is "innocent" -- I suggest you leave that to God.

Eleanor studies the wounded Sheriff for a moment -- then steps to his bedside and leans in close, the dagger still clutched in her hand --

QUEEN ELEANOR (CONT'D)

(a tight WHISPER)

You know, Sir Guy didn't die in the woods, Sheriff. He was still alive when the both of you were found. He was brought back to the Royal Physicians... but they were powerless to do anything except watch him... expire.

The Sheriff stares as MORE FLIES land on the dagger -- a slight BLOODSTAIN visible on the blade as it catches a sliver of moonlight.

TORNHAM

And what is my fate to be, Your Highness?

Eleanor studies the Sheriff for a moment... then gently KISSES his forehead and rises.

QUEEN ELEANOR

As you well know, the people have nothing left to tax and times are very hard -- even for the Nobility. The only way Richard will be able to raise funds sufficient for his needs will be to auction off every key government post in the kingdom -- including that of "Sheriff of Nottingham." I'm afraid you are not wealthy enough to keep your job.

TORNHAM

After all this, Richard is leaving England again?

The Queen shrugs --

QUEEN ELEANOR

What did you expect? That he would sit on his throne and reign over a kingdom at peace? Please. My Richard belongs in France -- where troubadours sing and passion rules. Not here in your land of bailiffs and "legal precedent."

Tornham looks away from the Queen, stares into the fireplace...

QUEEN ELEANOR

Don't worry. For your services to your King -- and your future discretion -- you shall have a post in Richard's army when he sails back to France to reconquer the lands he lost while in prison.

Eleanor finally puts away the dagger, looks down at the bandaged Tornham... and smiles benevolently:

QUEEN ELEANOR (CONT'D)

It's the least we can do.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. EDGE OF SHERWOOD FOREST - DAY

A beautiful, sunny morning. Tornham stands by his horse, his wounds still bandaged, but clean. Robin Hood walks up to him, resplendent in NOBLE FINERY...

HOOD

Sheriff.

TORNHAM

Lord Locksley.

Robin Hood can't help but smile --

HOOD

I must admit, I like the sound of that.

TORNHAM

As does all of Nottingham.

HOOD

But not you, eh?

TORNHAM

(simply)

You were not the Arrow Killer. Since King Richard saw fit to pardon your many other offenses and restore your lands and titles, it is not my place to dissent.

HOOD

But it could be your place to remain Sheriff of Nottingham. There's no doubt you're the best man for the job. And during my...

(MORE)

HOOD (cont'd)
 less lawful period... I managed to
 accumulate enough funds for you to
 put a hefty bid in for it.

(shrugging)
 I would simply be repaying a debt.

Tornham considers for a moment -- then shakes his head.

TORNHAM
 That's... very generous of you.
 But I could not purchase the post
 of chief officer of the law with
 stolen money.

Robin Hood LAUGHS out loud --

HOOD
 Can't say I didn't try.

Tornham smiles tightly:

TORNHAM
 Tell me, Robin -- after living so
 long as a wild outlaw in the
 forest... will you be content inside
 the walls of your manorhouse?

Robin Hood grins --

HOOD
 If it's a manorhouse fit for a
 king... why not?

TORNHAM
 Why not indeed.

Tornham turns, mounts his horse, turns back to Robin --

TORNHAM (CONT'D)
 May you spend many happy hours in
 the woods, all of them hunting --
 and none of them breaking the law.

Tornham starts his horse off, but Robin Hood blocks his path:

HOOD
 And what about you, Robert of Tornham --
 master of law and order? Where shall
 you go and what shall you do?

TORNHAM
 I'm not sure. The King has offered me
 a post -- but I don't know if I want
 to be part of another invading army.

HOOD

Well... whether you are hacking
your way through France with King
Richard... or teaching law to
spoiled students at Oxford... you
will always be the Sheriff of
Nottingham to me.

Tornham himself can't help but smile a little at that one.
He reaches out and offers his hand --

TORNHAM

I'll take that as a compliment.

Robin Hood takes it in his own and the two men shake.

HOOD

Now, if you'll forgive me, I have a
wedding to attend.

Robin Hood turns and strides away...

Tornham watches as Robin Hood REJOINS A VERY LARGE AND VERY
JOYFUL WEDDING PARTY decorated with GARLANDS OF FLOWERS...

Robin Hood takes his place as the GROOM.

...and of course the BRIDE is Marian.

CLOSE ON TORNHAM

Up in his saddle, taking one last look, his mind filling with
thoughts of what might have been.

CLOSE ON MARIAN

Catching Tornham's eye and casting a glance back at him.

Their eyes are locked together for what seems like an eternity --

Then Marian finally TURNS AWAY, her attention going back to
the Wedding Party and her future husband, Robin of Locksley.

Robert Tornham, the Sheriff of Nottingham, turns his horse
around and starts riding away, never to return...

Except in folktale, myth... and legend.

THE END