

SYNOPSIS

OPENING GATE SCENE

The Sheriff, Prince John, and Guy of Gisborne (or Princess Joan) arrive at the gate and announce that King Richard has been killed in France so everyone's taxes are going to go up to pay for John's coronation. Everyone will be required to show up at the chessboard to pay them today at noon. There is a great deal of booing and someone shouts that they've already paid their taxes and they have nothing else to give. The Sheriff mockingly reminds them that failure to pay their taxes will result in the seizure of their property, and if that doesn't cover the taxes, the forfeiture of their lives. Again, the peasants protest. Prince John and the Sheriff suggest they keep their bellyaching to themselves, and that if they have any concerns, they come to the chessboard and have them addressed then. They make a quick exit. Robin removes his cloak with a flourish and addresses the remaining crowd. He reassures them that John is lying, and that he's had word that Richard is headed home to England and will soon relieve their suffering. Until then, he and his band of Merry Men will make sure that any taxes the Sheriff manages to take, find their way back to the pockets of their rightful owners. In demonstration, he throws coins (chocolate coins?) to the crowd. Robin will also let the crowd know that he has a *special* surprise in store for the Sheriff at the chessboard. The peasants cheer! Robin again reassures everyone not to worry and encourages Alan A Dale to play a song for the crowd to start the day of faire off right. The song is played and the Merry Men disappear back into the crowd. The gates open.

FIRST BOARD

Procession includes the nobles from the black side, the guards, and the peasants. Prince John, the Sheriff and the guards arrive at the Chessboard and begin demanding that the peasants pay their taxes. Some of the peasants try to ask questions, but they are summarily shut down. The Merry Men, disguised in bad drag as serving women, graciously receive Prince John, having set up the stage to make it easier to collect the taxes. They offer a chair, food, drink, a comfortable blanket to keep warm... Once Prince John is settled in, the Merry Men spring their trap, tightening the blanket like a rope as Robin Hood throws off his disguise and puts a dagger to the throat of the prince. The Sheriff and the guards stand down at the obvious threat.

Prince John makes Robin an offer. Robin will stay and play an "honorable" game of chess, and if he wins, the prince will forgive the taxes of everyone present, if Robin loses the Prince will go free unharmed. Robin, ever the daring hero (and not having an escape plan), accepts and the two sides set up for chess. During the board, the black side guards maneuver into position, on and off the chessboard, to spring their own trap on Robin. When it looks as though the white side will win, the Sheriff commands the guards to attack and a melee ensues. The guards manage to surround the Merry Men and are delighted to have Robin held at sword/crossbow point. Robin isn't willing to give up however. The Sheriff asks if he's willing to die for his cause, because he won't be able to fight his way out of this. Robin replies that he's faced worse odds, and yes, he and his men are willing to die for their cause. The Sheriff nods and agrees... then signals to the guards who turn their weapons on the audience, and asks "Are you willing to let all these nice people watching die for it as well?" At this point, Robin and the Merry Men surrender. The Sheriff has them locked away in the castle and announces that there will be a grand execution for all to witness at 2PM.

SECOND BOARD

Opening Option A:

Board Two begins with Sir Guy of Gisborne announcing that he has paid a huge ransom (we can use the large chest; this would be a great visual gag) to Prince John for the right to determine the fate of the Merry Men. Maid Marian approaches Sir Guy (as he knew she would), imploring him to free Robin Hood and the Merry Men from the dungeons. Sir Guy, never one to pass up a chance at Marian, agrees, on the condition that she will wed him. Marian cleverly points out that it would be far more honorable for him to win her hand and suggests they play chess. Should she be successful, he will free Robin and the Merry Men, but if she should lose, then she will wed Sir Guy.

Opening Option B:

Princess Joan is ecstatic—upon hearing that the Sheriff captured Robin, she has convinced her dear brother John to give her Robin's hand in marriage! She has her dowry ready to go (again, the chest can be used here as a great visual gag). She can't contain her joy that she's finally going to get a chance to wed the dreamy outlaw who stole her heart even as he was stealing her brother's favorite robe and the crown that their mother had given him. Her dreams of marriage are interrupted by Marian arriving with her retainers and the other concerned citizens of Hoggetowne in tow, asking Princess Joan for Robin to be freed. Joan staunchly refuses—after all, if Robin were free, how would he ever get a chance at marrying her when he'd be on the run the

entire time? Marian—swallowing a biting comment—tells her that if she truly loved Robin, she'd set him free. This baffles the Princess who retorts with “No, if you love someone, you lock them up and never let them get away! Also, which is Robin's better leg? I need to pick the right one to hobble...” Seeing no other choice, Marian challenges Princess Joan to a game of chess: whoever wins gets Robin. Princess Joan agrees.

END OF BOARD FOR EITHER OPTION

Marian begins to assemble the peasants who escaped the Sheriff's ambush on her side of the chessboard when Sir Guy/Princess Joan overrides her and informs her that peasants are only good enough to act as pawns. Therefore, only Maid Marian, her handmaiden, and the knight Mad Mardigan remain as capitol pieces while the peasants are stuck in the first row. With Marian now sorely handicapped, Sir Guy/Princess Joan trots out his/her knights and the Sheriff's guards to fill the black side of the chessboard. As the game begins, it's very clear that the Black Side has the upper hand; it is filled with trained fighters and killers. Marian quickly puts her plan in action— the peasants need only distract the Black Side long enough for their fellow rebels to free the Merry Men. As the prize of Marian/Robin's hand draws ever closer, the Hen Knights are freeing the Merry Men one by one and having them take the place of the tower guards. Sir Guy/Princess Joan manages to get Marian into check and challenges her to a final duel. Marian accepts. While she distracts the Black Side, Mad Mardigan scales the side of the tower with the Merry Men screening him from the guards. Upon reaching the top, he calls out that the fight is over, even as Marian puts Sir Guy/Princess Joan on point. Mad Mardigan frees the prisoner and reveals... a guardsman in Robin's hat and cloak. The Sheriff appears from the opposite tower with a captive Robin Hood, taunting “I'm sorry to say, but it seems your princess was in another tower...” Robin replies with: “Not a princess and it's another castle—not another tower. You're really awful at this, aren't you?” The Sheriff silences Robin with good old fashioned violence, and informs everyone that the execution/wedding of the outlaw Robin Hood will take place at 4 o'clock on the board.

THIRD BOARD

Prince John is all smiles, after all, there's about to be an execution or a marriage (dependent on which version of board 2 is run), and in either case it means Robin is out of the game. Nothing could possibly ruin his day. Suddenly, King Richard's voice rings out, and Richard appears, flanked by his knights and looking very disapproving. Prince John throws an absolute hissy fit. Meanwhile the Sheriff rushes to point out that King Richard is clearly an impostor—for the real Richard is dead. Richard, unamused, approaches the Sheriff from behind and waits until the Sheriff notices him to growl out a threat. The Sheriff retreats, and Richard takes the stage next to John. Richard is demanding that Robin Hood be freed and John stop this foolishness when John finds a part of his spine and (petulantly) shouts, “No!” He goes on to indicate that this is his kingdom now, he's already made plans for his coronation, and for Richard to suddenly appear back from the dead and demand the crown is the equivalent of a usurpation of God's Will. Richard—very obviously annoyed—relents and turns John's last phrase against him: the two shall have a trial by battle chess (everyone groans and one of the peasants shouts 'Not again!') to determine the rightful King of England.

John agrees, nominating himself as the leader for the Black Side where the Sheriff will sit in his place. After all—without Robin to lead the Merry Men, however will they win? Richard, the Sheriff, and Princess Joan/Sir Guy give John a look as Richard flatly announces that it will be he that leads the white side. John immediately tries to find some other game they could play—even offering for Richard to duel the Sheriff. Richard flatly declines and the sides are taken with Richard standing in as the White Side King while John remains on the stage. John is given a sword by one of his nobles that he threateningly holds toward Robin as he reminds his brother that if the outlaws try anything funny, he'll take it out on Robin. With that threat looming, chess begins.

The Black Side almost immediately falls to cheating—though John studiously ignores it. Every time it is brought up, John threatens Robin a bit more and demands that Richard quit questioning the tactics of these stalwart Englishmen. Without much recourse, the White Side fights as best they can. During one of the final moments when the cheating of the Black Side leads to the abuse of one of his townspeople, King Richard can no longer stand this and demands that they finish the fight as two kings: man-to-man. John cowers and whines, drawing Richard closer, before surprising him with an attack—driving Richard back. Just as Richard begins to gain the upper hand, the Sheriff and Princess Joan/Sir Guy take the field—forcing Richard into a 3v1 which he is sorely losing. The Merry Men storm the stage and free Robin—giving him his sword and letting him jump into the fight. Robin and Richard together begin to win out against the three. Sir Guy/Princess Joan is the first to be dispatched. Robin defeats the Sheriff next, leaving Richard to defeat Prince John. Once all three have been defeated, Richard exiles them from England on pain of death, and absolves Robin and the Merry Men of their criminal status.