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ROBERT MUCHAMORE'S

**ROBIN
HOOD**

BANDITS, DIRT BIKES & TRASH

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1

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ROBIN HOOD

THE STORY SO FAR . . .

Once upon a time, **Robin Hood** lived with his dad, **Ardagh**, and half-brother, **Little John**. He was a regular kid, spending his days battling boredom in school and his free time practising archery or hanging with his bestie, **Alan Adale**.

Everything changed when Robin's dad got sent to prison for a crime he didn't commit.

Robin's half-brother discovered that his mum was the super wealthy **Marjorie, Sheriff of Nottingham**, and went to live with her, while Robin shot local gangster **Guy Gisborne** in the nuts, forcing Robin to hide out in Sherwood Forest and join a gang of righteous rebels led by **Emma** and **Will Scarlock**.

With his new rebel pals, Robin blew up cash machines, hacked computers, caused a massive flood, flipped a police car, rescued an old lady from a fire, crashed several motorbikes and became a social media sensation, with footage of his daring robberies getting millions of views.



1. ZANDER THE ZIT

Josie Longshanks and Robin Hood stood just inside the chunky wire fence that separated Sherwood Castle from its disused hunting grounds. Thunder drummed to the south and it was cold enough to see the two thirteen-year-olds' curling breath as they hacked at grass and weeds with machetes, then dumped the cuttings in a wheelie bin.

'How much more?' Josie asked, eyeing ominous clouds as she scooped up an armful of fresh-cut grass.

'Until the bin is full,' Robin said. 'You'd be amazed how much Sheila's chickens eat.'

'Those birds get treated better than us,' Josie complained.

'Until we marinade them in peri-peri sauce and eat them . . .' Robin pointed out.

Josie laughed. 'True, dat.'

Her expression changed to shock as her boot caught a hole hidden by the long grass. Her jeans and the back of her heavy coat got soaked as her bum hit the damp ground.



Josie peeled wet denim away from her skin as Robin gave her a hand up. 'And now my arse is freezing!'

Josie and Robin wound up staring at each other, their noses only centimetres apart. Their plumes of breath merged as Robin admired Josie's dark eyes and the tiny, near-translucent hairs on her cheeks.

They'd been together for a couple of months. It wasn't super serious, but Robin still found having a girlfriend weird. It felt like he was wobbling along the tightrope to adulthood, half excited and half wanting to go back to being a kid.

Robin thought he might get a *thanks for helping me up* kiss, but Josie took him by surprise, whipping her hand up and trying to squish the zit on his chin.

'Bog off!' Robin yelped as he stumbled back, almost catching the hole that had taken Josie down.

'You've got the biggest zit I've ever seen,' Josie teased, playfully grabbing the hood of Robin's winter coat to stop his escape. 'As your girlfriend, I have the right to explode it.'

'Weirdo!' Robin said, as he wriggled free and bounced against the wire fence. 'Why would you want to burst someone else's zit?'

'You're practically growing a second head,' Josie said, then hooked her foot around Robin's ankle, trying to trip him. 'Since you won't let me pop it, I'm going to name it Zander.'

'Zander the Zit,' Robin said, staggering away, smirking and remembering that his favourite thing about Josie was that she was unpredictable and always made him laugh.





As their laughter died off, they heard more thunder and a growing buzz from a quad bike approaching the castle on a track that ran parallel with the opposite side of the fence.

The main road through the forest between Route 24 and the rebels' Sherwood Castle stronghold was barricaded and heavily patrolled by police and Forest Rangers. This meant a safe journey to the castle from the nearby town of Locksley involved a lengthy detour on narrow forest tracks before entering castle grounds from the rear and crossing an abandoned hunting zone.

'That's Marion's Aunt Lucy,' Robin said, as a quad with a huge pink box on the back skimmed by beyond the fence. 'She's made the cake for the naming ceremony.'

Robin liked Lucy, and considered jogging to the gate a few hundred metres away to say hi, but the storm was closing in and Sheila would moan if they didn't return to the chicken sheds with plenty of green stuff.

'I think naming ceremonies are—' Josie began, as Robin resumed slashing at long grass.

Her opinion went unaided as a massive crash sounded nearby. Metal tore, branches cracked, then there were shouts. Three or four voices.

'That's not good,' Robin blurted, dropping his machete and turning to look through the fence.

The trees in the hunting grounds were too dense to see far along the winding track, but a haze of dirt wafted between the bare branches.





'Has to be Lucy's quad,' Josie said, as Robin tossed her a yellow walkie-talkie.

'Use channel F and call security at the back gate,' Robin told her urgently, snatching up his bow.

The fence had been built to keep beasts like tigers and zebras inside hunting grounds where rich idiots once paid to hunt them for 'sport'. Its four metres of heavy gauge mesh were topped with Y-shaped posts that held strands of brutally sharp razor wire.

'You'll get slashed up!' Josie gasped as Robin fearlessly scaled the fence.

But he had a gift for climbing. Josie became less fearful as her boyfriend snaked his muscular shoulders between the strands of razor wire, then tore his trouser leg, before balancing on the taut topmost wire and making a two-footed leap into the nearest tree.

'Josie Longshanks here,' she told the walkie-talkie. 'We just heard a massive crash inside the hunting grounds. Quad bike driven by Lucy Maid. Robin has jumped the fence to investigate. But there was loads of shouting, so I think it's a bandit trap. Over.'

A disbelieving rebel security officer came back through the walkie-talkie. 'Can't be bandits this close to the castle, Josie. But give us your exact location and we'll check it out.'

Robin made noise hurtling down between branches and out of the tree, but moved stealthily once he was on the ground. Just like the security officer Josie spoke





to, Robin hadn't heard of bandits operating this deep inside Sherwood Castle grounds. But as he closed on the crash scene there was no mistaking a young man barking orders and an anguished shout of 'Hands off me!' from Lucy Maid.

Robin kept low as he squelched across the deeply rutted track. There were boot prints and drag marks where the bandits had pulled Lucy into the trees, and Robin made a quick study of her wrecked quad bike.

Its front wheels and steering column had been ripped away from the chassis. The rest of the vehicle had flipped and smashed into a tree stump. As plastic bodywork and rotten wood splintered, they had thrown up clouds of dust and a mushroomy scent that mingled with the smell of petrol leaking from the quad.

Robin saw no blood, so Lucy must have been wearing a decent helmet. But the tree had disintegrated and it was miraculous that she hadn't been knocked out. At the far side of the track a big clump of turf and a holly bush with a length of chain tied to its stump had been ripped out of the ground.

Chain traps were a common bandit tactic: find a tight corner on a forest track, stretch a chain or rope tightly across, and by the time a motorbike or quad rider sees the threat, they have no time to stop.

At the back of the quad, the big pink box had been squashed and its lid had flipped open, but Lucy had packed the cake for a bumpy ride, with three layers



of bubble wrap. The iced lettering on top was legible through the wrapping, and Robin felt upset when he read the message:

Happy Naming Day, Zach William Maid

‘William?’ Robin gasped, practically inhaling his own tongue. ‘What the . . . ?’

But baby Zach’s name wasn’t important while Lucy remained in danger.

He could hear the bandits in the trees less than ten metres away. Lucy was conscious and calm, using a bossy tone as she urged her captors to turn their lives around and join the rebels.

‘Do you want to be part of the solution or part of the problem?’ she challenged them. ‘You’ll be lucky to get thirty bucks for my shabby phone and silver rings. But us rebels need fit young people like you. You’ll get regular food, hot showers and a private suite in the castle hotel.’

Robin crept close enough to see one bandit’s outline. He wasn’t far out of his teens, and Robin winced as he slapped Lucy with the back of his hand and growled nastily.

‘Quit yapping and pull those rings off, you dirty hippy!’ he demanded. ‘Else I’ll chop the fingers that go with ’em.’

‘I haven’t taken this off in years,’ Lucy whimpered, tugging desperately at a silver skull ring. Robin eyed the

crack in her purple safety helmet and the blood coming from a cut on the side of her neck.

It seemed there were three bandits: two stocky, dirt-caked youths and an older woman wrapped in a raggedy bearskin coat who held a shotgun.

Probably their mother, Robin guessed.

Robin reached over one shoulder, expertly hooked four of the arrows sticking out of his backpack between fingers, then swung them over his head. The first arrow notched into his bow, while the other three balanced in his hand, ready to shoot in rapid succession.

One for each bandit, and one for luck, Robin thought. Then realised he should take out the woman with the gun first.