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THE GISBORNES OF NOTTINGHAM

BOOKS 1 - 3

By Ani Bolton

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Author's Note

The Gisbornes of Nottingham series began life as fanfiction, inspired by the BBC television series *Robin Hood*.^{*} Although the Robin in this series was suitably swaggering and heroic, inexplicably I was drawn to his enemy, Sir Guy of Gisborne, a role inhabited by the actor Richard Armitage. Though the legend of Robin Hood and Maid Marian is canon, the chemistry between Armitage and Lucy Griffiths, the actress playing Maid Marian, was off the charts. I began rooting for the “wrong” couple. From there it was only natural that I would retell the story to suit my own taste.

It is not necessary to have watched *Robin Hood* to enjoy *The Gisbornes of Nottingham*, however.^{**} One need only have a basic understanding of the folktale of Robin Hood, and be willing to wonder what The Gisbornes of Nottingham trilogy: Books 1 - 3 would happen The Gisbornes of Nottingham trilogy: Books 1 - 3 if feisty Maid Marian needed to tame the brooding Sir Guy of Gisborne...

^{*}And, uh, maybe a couple other fandoms.

^{**}The Shire of Darkshire was wholly made up by Elizabeth Gaskell; I use it here with impunity.

BOOK 1

LADY MARIAN OF GISBORNE

CHAPTER ONE

Numb. Lady Marian of Knighton was numb to the core of her being despite the flames being thrown by the torches along the wall of Nottingham cathedral, despite the ermine-trimmed velvet gown she wore, which hid her sensible riding boots.

The archbishop of Nottingham had pronounced her body and all her possessions to be chattel—in short, a wife—to a man she abhorred above all else. With a few words, she'd become Lady Marian of Gisborne. And Robin hadn't lifted a finger to stop it, despite his fierce words of love for her, despite his raging hatred for Sir Guy of Gisborne. Now she was the wife of Robin Hood's most implacable enemy.

A feeling of The Gisbornes of Nottingham trilogy: Books 1 - 3 helpless rage against all men, even her idealistic father, rose in her. As a gently-born woman, she'd been raised with the expectation that she'd marry to secure wealth or make an advantageous alliance for her family's sake. And that meant marrying Robin of Loxley. Loxley lands marched next to the Knightons'. The Loxley and Knighton families were both respected loyalists to King Richard. Marian had grown up with Robin, and as children they had roamed the forests of Nottingham together. Loving Robin was familiar, and safe.

But the political upheavals of the last few years had changed everything. King Richard had decided to fight in the Holy Land, taking vassals loyal to him, including Robin, leaving his kingdom under the thrall of his venal brother Prince John. Greed and lawlessness had followed. Upon Robin's return, he'd been branded an outlaw by the corrupt Sheriff of Nottingham, and his lands given to the Sheriff's brutal henchman, Sir Guy of Gisborne.

A world turned upside down, it seemed. A precarious situation for The Gisbornes of Nottingham trilogy: Books 1 - 3 those of noble blood had become unending misery for the serfs and the lower orders. People did what they had to do to survive. Including marrying their daughters to rogues.

"Marian?"

She lifted her eyes to her husband.

Sir Guy was staring down at her from his great height. He was slim as a dagger; pale skin, sable hair. Blue eyes of piercing ice flicked over her face. Clad in black as was his custom, he looked like the Devil incarnate.

She shuddered. He didn't bother to hide his exultation. Why should he? He'd gotten everything he wanted: Loxley, wealth, power. Her.

She vowed right then and there. Guy of Gisborne might have her body, but he would never have her love. That was always and forever reserved for Robin.

Gisborne gazed down at his wife's face and read The Gisbornes of Nottingham trilogy: Books 1 - 3 her loathing for him as if it were writ on parchment and tacked on the village post. He felt the hurt and, well-used to such pains, brushed it aside. He would never have her regard or her heart, but no matter. He was the only man in Nottinghamshire who could match her, despite her foolish passion for Loxley. The Gisbornes of Nottingham trilogy: Books 1 - 3

Since he'd arrived in Nottingham and got to work clearing out the infestation of lawlessness gripping the shire, he'd had many occasions to cross paths with Lady Marian, called Fair Maid Marian by the common folk. Usually it was in the course of her pleading mercy for some worthless wretch bent on mischief. Or trying to ease the rate of taxation upon Nottinghamshire's overburdened folk, a problem easily solved if the King would stop waging the unending and utterly useless war in the Holy Land his brother Prince John was obliged to fund.

But those moments when she was not trying to interfere in justice, he'd seen the way she'd watch him under her lashes when she thought he wasn't looking. Lingered. Taking his measure as a man. He stirred her. Of that he was sure.

And that would be enough for now.

Her hand lightly touched his wrist as he led her from the altar, their union blessed by the archbishop of Nottingham himself and The Gisbornes of Nottingham trilogy: Books 1 - 3 witnessed by the greatest men of the shire. The multitude of Nottinghamshire's gently-born folk had tightly packed the pews to see the spectacle and afterward feast until their sides split. Even that pig of a Sheriff had attended. Gisborne read him easily too. The Sherriff's mercurial wit had been tickled at the sight of his chief vassal, a landless knight whom he'd raised from nothing, wedded to the most eligible maiden in the kingdom. It spited Loxley, too. Double good.

Gisborne nodded to his lordship as they passed by his seat in the front row. The Sheriff nodded back, not bothering to hide a grin. It galled that Gisborne had to pay obeisance to such a man, but Gisborne also knew the virtue of biding his time, waiting for the opportune moment. A landless knight had no choice in such times as these, when the very laws of God and man The Gisbornes of Nottingham trilogy: Books 1 - 3 had been cast aside and only the strong would survive. Gisborne was nothing if not a survivor.

A few steps later, he and Marian reached the stone steps leading outside the church. A throng of peasants and landless serfs had gathered. Marian was a great favorite among the poor. If The Gisbornes of Nottingham trilogy: Books 1 - 3 he had been such a man, he'd be a little touched by their display, showering her with hawthorn blossoms, wishing her happiness. He noticed no one called good wishes to him.

His eyes swept the crowd. He'd had to station men at the gates to ensure that Loxley and his ragged band of followers didn't disrupt the wedding.

Marian searched the throng too, though she The Gisbornes of Nottingham trilogy: Books 1 - 3 tried to hide it.

He couldn't resist. "Looking for someone?"

"No. Why should I be?" She lifted her chin defiantly.

The Gisbornes of Nottingham trilogy: Books 1 - 3

Good for her. "I thought you'd be expecting Loxley to make an appearance."

"I see that *you* have."

He nodded. "I'm a careful man, Marian. I try to plan accordingly. But apparently I needn't have bothered today."

"No. You needn't have bothered," she replied in a hollow voice.

A stab of pity pricked him, but The Gisbornes of Nottingham trilogy: Books 1 - 3 he dismissed it. The last person he wanted to think about The Gisbornes of Nottingham trilogy: Books 1 - 3 today was Loxley, and as Jesus ruled over man from Heaven, he'd make sure the outlaw would be far from his wife's thoughts on their wedding night.

"Come, my lady," he said, tugging her down the steps toward the horses. "We have things to do."

"What things?" she said, surprised at his urgency.

"My new featherbed is ready to be put to the test. The maidservants have killed a hundred geese for your comfort."

"But the feast... The Gisbornes of Nottingham trilogy: Books 1 - 3 "

"Can wait."

"Sir Guy—"

He silenced her The Gisbornes of Nottingham trilogy: Books 1 - 3 with a finger placed over her lips.

A flame leaped in her eyes before The Gisbornes of Nottingham trilogy: Books 1 - 3 she smothered it.

He felt an answering heat kindle in his. Whatever their differences, they The Gisbornes of Nottingham trilogy: Books 1 - 3 were matched in passion. He hoped the seams had been sewn tight on the featherbed ticking. It was about to get quite a workout.

The Gisbornes Of Nottingham Trilogy Books 1 3

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