ROBERT MUCHAMORE'S

ROBIN HOOD

JET SKIS, SWAMPS & SMUGGLERS

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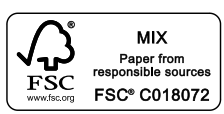

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THE STORY SO FAR . . .

It is a troubled time in Sherwood Forest . . .

Evil gangster **Guy Gisborne** has the declining industrial town of Locksley under his thumb, controlling everything, from petty drug deals to police and judges.
He works in an uneasy alliance with the Sheriff of Nottingham, **Marjorie Kovacevic**.

The ambitious Sheriff likes to portray herself as a successful businesswoman and get-tough politician, who locks up criminals and cracks down on immigration. But deep in Sherwood Forest, Sheriff Marjorie has a private army of guards who deal brutally with anyone who gets in her way.

But good folks are fighting back!

For more than a decade, **Emma** and **Will Scarlock** have fought to protect the thousands of vulnerable people who live in Sherwood Forest. From their base inside an abandoned outlet mall, their team provides shelter, healthcare and food to anyone who needs it.

And a new hero is rising . . .

When **Ardagh Hood** spoke out about corruption in Locksley, Guy Gisborne had him framed by crooked cops and sentenced to three years in prison.

Nobody expected his thirteen-year-old son **Robin Hood** to fight back, but so far Robin has shot Gisborne in the plums with an arrow, staged a daring robbery to raise money for Forest People and helped sabotage a big-game hunt at Sherwood Castle Resort.

Now Robin is in danger!

With Robin's name graffitied on thousands of walls, and videos of his actions watched by millions, Sheriff Marjorie fears Robin could spark a rebellion and destroy her political ambitions.

So she's agreed to help Gisborne hunt Robin down, using a posse of former special forces soldiers.

1. DINO BULLCALF

The rooftop market at the abandoned Sherwood Designer Outlets was a bustling social gathering for the rebels, runaways and refugees who lived in Sherwood Forest. Traders travelled overnight, emerging from dense forest dragging their wares in nylon bags and backpacks as they crossed the mall's weed-strewn car parks.

A bunch of stalls in the centre of the market sold hot food. Harsh sunlight hit Dino Bullcalf's bald head as he strode between them, catching whiffs of shish kebab, curry, baby back ribs and stale cooking fat.

Bullcalf had been a judo champion, an elite Italian army paratrooper and most recently a man with a reputation for finding people who didn't want to be found. But at seventy-six years old his haggard face made it easy to ignore a frame that could run 5K without breaking sweat and bench-press more than most men half his age.

One of Bullcalf's tattooed hands held a cardboard coffee cup. After swallowing the last mouthful he shuffled

into a gap between two stalls and bumped a woman energetically sweeping dropped food under her burrito stand.

'You've come the wrong way, fella!' the woman said cheerfully, as she pointed the old man back to the customer side.

Bullcalf acted doddery and confused. 'So hot today!' he said breathlessly, with a Neapolitan accent that hadn't faded in the forty years since he'd fled Italy. 'I hate litter, but I can't see a bin.'

'Gimme,' the woman said, reaching out to take the cup.

As she turned away and flipped the cup into a bin under her stall, Bullcalf deftly pulled a plastic-wrapped packet from his trouser pocket. The outside had pads of double-sided tape, while the inside contained finely ground aluminium powder and a delicate glass vial filled with green fluid.

Without opening the packet, Bullcalf crushed the vial, enabling the liquid to start mixing with the powder. Then he reached under the burrito stand and felt the contents start to fizz as he stuck the package to the bright red gas cylinder that fuelled the grill.

In a few minutes, the chemical reaction inside the plastic bag would reach a critical temperature, making the aluminium powder explode in a white flash. This would fracture the metal cylinder and ignite the pressurised gas inside. If things went to plan, the resulting bang would

be loud enough to distract the market's heavily armed security guards.

'*Grazie*, my dear!' Bullcalf told the burrito chef once she'd binned his coffee cup.

'No problem,' she answered cheerfully.

Once he was away from the food stalls, Bullcalf dropped the doddery act and walked fast. The other four members of the posse Guy Gisborne had hired to capture Robin Hood were standing near the edge of the mall's flat roof.

Hughes, Denton and Zev were tough-looking blokes who'd done time in the army and knew their stuff. The fourth – and the man Gisborne had put in charge – was Venables. He had buzz-cut red hair, a round freckled face and he irritated Bullcalf every time he opened his mouth.

Venables had convinced Guy Gisborne that he could put together an elite squad to track down Robin Hood. He'd even talked the notoriously tight gangster into paying thirty thousand up front for expenses.

But when Bullcalf asked around he'd discovered that his new boss was all talk. Venables had no experience tracking people down, the military exploits he boasted about were bogus and he was wanted by the police in Capital City for a series of armed robberies targeting wealthy pensioners and charity fundraisers.

'Still alive, grandad?' Venables carped as he slapped Bullcalf on the back and checked the time on his gigantic diver's watch.

'We need to move fast when that cylinder blows,' Bullcalf said curtly. 'Is everyone set?'

'I've tied off the ropes,' Zev answered. 'Denton is gonna whack the nearest security camera when the blast happens, so it'll look like the explosion knocked the camera out.'

'Good thinking,' Bullcalf said appreciatively.

Venables was supposed to be in charge and hated it when the three younger men showed Bullcalf respect.

'Do you need to sit down, old man?' Venables said.

How many times can you make the old-guy joke? Bullcalf thought to himself.

A younger Bullcalf would have ripped Venables's head off. But he'd grown patient with age and Venables was going to get what he deserved soon enough . . .