

The Marriage of Alan and Alice

A One-act Play for Actors and Singers

“Uncle Bob” Mead

SCENE 1. ALICE’S FATHER AND THE BISHOP

BISHOP

You must realize that you have no alternative.

FATHER

And after I’ve departed this life? How can I know my daughter, my Alice, is cared for?

BISHOP

I will see that Sir Worley provides.

FATHER

But to give all my acres as dowry — the land is all I have to secure her later years.

BISHOP

And going to the marriage, thus it shall.

FATHER

Tudhope land would not make a jot to old Worley Crake’s.

BISHOP

Your land and your freedom will not amount to a jot if certain of your obligations are not met soon, and for this Worley is the only answer. Shall I make arrangements?

FATHER

God, forgive me. [nods]

BISHOP

Good! It shall be a lovely wedding.

SCENE 2. ROBIN AND MARIAN ENTER SINGING “UNDER THE GREENWOOD TREE ...”

ROBIN

Good wife Marian, you again show your wisdom in choosing this way through the wood. This Robin be as free and as happy as outlaw and Sheriff’s bane could.

MARIAN

I think it wise to keep a man happy, and for you that is all my intent.

ROBIN

The Merry Men will be looking for us by the road.

MARIAN

I told Little John we would meet at trail’s end.

ROBIN

Ah, such was your confidence in dissuading me.

MARIAN

Such was my confidence in knowing your fancies. And of those let me further surmise that our dalliances will cause your raving appetite to appear long before we arrive at table.

ROBIN

I fear you made that prediction barely in time. I'm starved. Let's be off.

SCENE 3. THE BISHOP AND SIR WORLEY

BISHOP

So the ceremony will be noon on the morrow at Papplewick Church.

WORLEY

Eh?

BISHOP

Tomorrow at noon.

WORLEY

Tomorrow it's prunes — again?

BISHOP

At NOON. Papplewick Church.

WORLEY

Right. Chapel Pick Perch.

BISHOP

Papplewick CHURCH!

WORLEY

Oh lovely, lovely. Eh, and the parcel of land?

BISHOP

It shall be yours.

WORLEY

Eh? Oh! Tomorrow I'll have her hand — her hand and her land. Oh, lovely, lovely.

BISHOP

Now we must clear the debts of Tudhope. Ahem. And there are other expenses that I incurred.

WORLEY

Oh, lovely, lovely. Your senses are blurred?

BISHOP

I said that there are debts and expenses!

WORLEY

Eh? Oh. How much?

BISHOP

[Taking the entire purse] It's a small token but 'twill serve. Adieu.

WORLEY

A what?

BISHOP

Adieu! Ta ta! Good-bye! [Exit Worley] Lovely, lovely indeed! The old codfish. Oh, I almost forgot. [Reaches into the purse] This one should cover old Tudhope's debts. [Exit laughing]

IF POSSIBLE, A SOMBER MUSICAL INTERLUDE HERE

SCENE 4. ALICE AND ALAN

ALICE

Arrangements are even now being made with the Bishop. I think it may be for the best. You will now be free to make another choice.

ALAN

What has so turned you against me? You are denying me the only choice I care to make. You mustn't see this folly through. [Grabs her] Come away with me tonight.

ALICE

No! Unhand me knave! Why, one could almost believe the stories I've heard. Do you keep careful count of these adventures?

ALAN

Would you were as certain of my virtue as I am of yours, my dearest, my sweet Fennel.

ALICE

Don't call me that. I will not respond to it. My name is Alice. [pause] Alice. The one thing in my life I am permitted to keep. Enough. [skyward] God, I can do no more than this. Father shall have his peace of mind. Good-bye, Alan. [exits]

ALAN JOINS CHORUS IN "ADIEU, SWEET AMARYLLIS"

AT CONCLUSION, ENTER ROBIN AND MARIAN

ROBIN

Good Master Alan-a-Dale, wherefore this sad lament?

ALAN

Oh good Master Robin Hood, please forgive me, for I thought I was quite alone. Alas, I find my sorrow uncontainable e'en in this deep green solitude.

ROBIN

[To Marian] Just a romp on the path, eh, Marian? Pray Alan, relate to us the history of this sad occasion.

ALAN

My heart rends itself for the loss of my Alice. She has been promised to the Miser Crake in an arrangement with her father Master Tudhope. Morley of years is ninety, so my loss is no ones gain.

MARIAN

Is she the girl they call Fennel?

ALAN

That was my appellation for she is a most worthy maid. But Worley has set her against me with tales of my unfaithfulness, thus clearing his own path.

MARIAN

Robin, surely you could intervene.

ROBIN

Nay, our band are concerned with purse strings, not heart-strings.

MARIAN

Robin Fitzooth of Locksley! If you think that money is not the tie which tethers this transaction, you may stand for the fool. [to Alan] When is this foul deed to be done?

ALAN

The Lord Bishop of Hereford is set to marry them tomorrow.

ROBIN

Hereford and Crake! Both friends of the Sheriff. How the image doth change. Here is a blow we can strike for King Richard. Alan, you shall go to the Church, but have longbow within reach. These two cronies have friends higher up. We need to act quick and true if tomorrow we live to sup. [Marian overjoyed]

SCENE 5. THE CHURCH. AN ACOLYTE LIGHTS CANDLES. FRIAR TUCK ENLISTS AND ARRANGES CONGREGANTS INCLUDING A WIDOW, ALAN, AND MARIAN, MERRY MEN AT THE SIDES. CHOIR SINGS AN ANTHEM.

ENTER WEDDING PARTY LED BY BISHOP. ALICE'S FATHER SITS.

BISHOP

Dear brethren, we are gathered here in the sanctity of the Church to see that this loving couple ...

ROBIN

[sings a line from the anthem]

BISHOP

I would that those present keep still, that the ceremony might proceed.

ROBIN

Your holiness, I would offer my minstrelsy if it be the participants will — for my voice is well known in this shire, and on this match I cannot keep still.

BISHOP

Very well, you may stand to the side if it please you, but please mind the order of the service, pardi. Now if any man present find fault with this union, let him forthwith loose his tongue or fore'er ...

ROBIN

[sing raucously inappropriate ditty] Oh he that will an alehouse keep must ...

BISHOP

Now see here! We cannot abide such outbursts. I would ask if there are those in this congregation would aid in the removal of this uncouth man.

ROBIN

Better uncouth than dried old cornflower looking wan. What a groom for the freshest primrose in the land. I ask if there be men present who would, bride willing, right this ceremony and for less than a shilling. [the last phrase pointed at Bishop]

CONGREGATION

[Shouts of agreement] [Worley is seized. Little John grabs the Bishop]

WORLEY

Does this mean she doesn't like me?

ROBIN

Now I call on our good friend Friar Tuck for advice as to the proper way to go forth. We intend that a wedding take place, but it must needs be moral in worth.

TUCK

[Rising] Well, marriage less love's a blaspheme, and earns stopping whate'er the means, but I would ask if Alice were truly loved by one here who suffers and keens.

ALAN

Aye sir. 'Tis I, sir.

TUCK

And does the maid Fennel ascribe? [Alice gives a shy but obvious nod] Then you shall be wed at once. Take places everyone! [Tuck and Alan to the front]

BISHOP

This has gone far enough!

ROBIN

And must go a tad further yet.

BISHOP

The Sheriff will see you in prison.

ROBIN

Please hold with your dour sermonette.

BISHOP

Nought but water and stale crumbs you'll to eat.

ROBIN

Little John, make sure the Bishop's a good seat. [Little John forces the Bishop to a bench and sits on him. One last grumble and the Bishop acknowledges defeat.]

WIDOW WOMAN

[Rises and remains up] Good Friar, I must inform you that, in our custom, a lawful wedding must be warned three times.

TUCK

Thank you, dear widow. We shall presently comply. [while Congregation cowers] ALICE AND ALAN ARE TO BE MARRIED TODAY! ALICE AND ALAN ARE TO BE MARRIED TODAY!

MARIAN

Tuck, was that three times you tolled?

TUCK

Three, even by deaf old Worley's reckoning. Hah! Now can we get on.

ALAN

Oh sir, I must confess, in my possession, no ring to tie up our bond.

ROBIN

Good friends, one last imposition. One item remains in our way. Would one lend a ring to our mission, so two may be thus one this day? [Congregation mumbles in confusion]

WIDOW

Stay! I would they use mine, for it's long since 't' held meaning for me. To unite such a pair as we see now, my departed love could only agree. [passes ring to Robin, on to Alan, and on to Alice]

TUCK

And if there are no further hurdles, then I say that married ye be! [cheers all around. Alan and Alice kiss and are joined by her father]

ROBIN

Oh Merry Band, dear Alan and Fennel, we must away, that when the good Sheriff hears of these doings, we are tucked behind branches and leaves. And those who would live free may join our company! [cheers again. All exit singing rousing song, e.g. Allan-a-Dale]

MARIAN

[To audience] Our moral good friends is a simple one, but not a one to take lightly. We risked some of you to feel put upon, yet sat on but one cleric rightly. Not land, loot, nor leverage a marriage basis make; nor should position lustful youth's liberty bridle. Lovers of like zeal should lead the lives at stake. As to fuddies and duddies — would their own affairs not be idle!

But true or farce our play doth show cause, and for this at the least we beg your applause.