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Scarlet



Synopsis

Posing as one of Robin Hood's thieves to avoid the evil Lord Gisbourne, Scarlet has kept her identity secret from all of Nottinghamshire. Only Big John and Robin Hood know the truth—that the agile thief posing as a whip of a boy is actually a fearless young woman with a secret past. It's getting harder to hide as Gisbourne's camp seeks to find Scarlet and drive Robin Hood out of Nottinghamshire. But Scarlet's instinct for self-preservation is at war with a strong sense of responsibility to the people who took her in when she was on the run, and she finds it's not so easy to turn her back on her band and townspeople. As Gisbourne draws closer to Scarlet and puts innocent lives at risk, she must decide how much the people of Nottinghamshire mean to her, especially John Little, a flirtatious fellow outlaw, and Robin, whose quick smiles and temper have the rare power to unsettle Scarlet. Full of exciting action, secrets, and romance, this imaginative retelling of the classic tale will have readers following every move of Robin Hood and band of thieves.

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Customer Reviews

This is the first time I've read a version of the Robin Hood story where by the end I wanted the sheriff to win. Flimsy characters, hackneyed prose and gaping plot holes mangle what otherwise might have been a decent YA novel. The narrative is in Scarlet's voice but it's pretty hard to tell what that is, exactly. It's vaguely British and vaguely working-class but is rooted in neither Yorkshire nor London, where she claims to be from at different points in the novel. Like the plot, it also shows up when it feels like it and then fades away when it thinks no one is looking. Scarlet's voice is distinct from the other characters only because they all speak like Americans, which is another problem altogether. I don't have a problem with first-person narratives that use bad English, if it's in character, but it doesn't work if the grammar is sometimes bad and sometimes perfect, or if none of the other characters are speaking in dialect. Also, Scarlet showers her narrative with tense changes like Robin Hood scattering gold to the villagers. She jumps from past tense, to past perfect, to present tense and back again; there's so much jumping around in time, I expected to see a TARDIS pop out of Sherwood. Scarlet is whiny, annoying and a consummate Mary Sue. She prattles on about how she's great at stealing and the only proper thief of the bunch, but her thieving skills are on par with an unattended toddler in a toy store. She sees something she wants, waits until the owner is looking the other direction, and grabs it. Wow, mad skillz yo. Scarlet also boasts that she's needed because only she can pick out the good marks. Like she can spot nobles traveling in disguise because they're riding destriers instead of farm horses. Destriers are freaking huge.

4 Stars

SCARLET was an awesome retelling of ROBIN HOOD!! I loved the twist that A.C. Gaughen put on the ROBIN HOOD classic! She spun the original ROBIN HOOD tale, with her own freshly imaginative twist, that brings a whole new world of characters, obstacles and adventure!! I loved that the drama, action, secrets, and adventure always kept coming in this fresh twist of ROBIN HOOD! SCARLET kept me glued to my seat, while having me engaged to the very end!

THE PLOT

The City of Nottingham is under distress since Prince John gave his approval for the Sheriff to take over the Keep, taxing the townspeople for more gold than they could possibly pay. And if payment is unmade, then an alternate form of payment will be paid--in blood...Scarlet, the only girl among Robin Hood's band of thieves, is fierce, loyal, and presumed to be just one of the boys in the band. All while shielding her identity and genre of being the only girl among the boys, in order to keep her respect and the people of Nottingham safe from the Sheriff and his band of evil soldiers. Scarlet, Rob, and their band of thieves, rob anyone with wealth and riches, and fence their score to give to the townspeople in order for them to pay their taxes to the Sheriff to keep them from enduring his wicked wrath. But nowadays, the Sheriff is claiming people regardless of payment or not. But when

the Sheriff brings in a high ranking Thief Taker named Lord Gisbourne to find the thieves and the infamous Robin the Hood, Scarlet and the boys realize their job just got that much harder. Gisbourne is as dirty and deadly as they come, and he's looking for revenge. And for Scarlet, he is a secret she's been running from, a past she rather forget.

Like the description says, Scarlet is an imaginative take on the Robin Hood legend, telling things from the point-of-view of a young girl posing as a boy in their band of thieves. And like all thieves, Scarlet is fleeing her past, a past filled with secrets that should they come to light, could destroy both Robin's group and Nottinghamshire as well. What's Good: From the outset there's lots of showing not telling, slipping in teasers about Scarlet's past and her own innate goodness, and yes- her crush on a certain bandit leader. Throughout the story we're given cookie crumbs about Scar as the story progresses- maintaining the mystery and intrigue of her character. Gaughen does a good job of making you feel the different characters' own desperation of their situation at times, and firmly establishes Scarlet's motivations and perspective on things. What's Bad: Scar's MarySue escapades: she's sure with a knife, got an eye for fat merchants when no else does (the boys can't even tell who to rob properly without her around), skillz enough to tell when a baby's turned in the womb, always knows how to break in and out a prison or a castle, etc. No explanation of how she acquired all these skills though- other than constantly repeating that she's been a thief... for all of three years. Yet Robin's as a seasoned war veteran with over ten years experience can't seem to plan half as well as this girl half his age. The moments of suspense built up in the story crash like a lead balloon. At different points some of their friends and other locals are imprisoned, yet breaking them out is treated like another day's work. "Bob's imprisoned in the castle, you say? No problem; we'll break him out, oh... Tuesday after lunch? Guys? Tuesday it is, then!"

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