

Lady Godiva

The play is set in the year 1012, the setting for act one and two, is an ante room in the castle of Mercia, home of Sir Leofric and Lady Godiva. Act three is set at the Coventry fair.

The story is based on the story of Lady Godiva's famous ride through Coventry. My research was unable to establish whether this ride actually took place. However, there was indeed, a Lady Godiva and she was well known for her charity work among the peasants; and her campaign to have their unjust taxes reduced or removed.

Less well known, is the fact that, Lady Godiva and her husband Lord Leofric, established the Coventry Cathedral and the monastery there, some time during the eleventh century. Apart from the above mentioned details, all other incidents, characters and events in the play are figments of the playwrights warped imagination.

The piece is meant to be very much, tongue in cheek, stand up comedy. The actors should include the audience as much as possible, most lines can be said directly out to the audience. Little or no set or props are needed, and the costuming may be as simple or as ostentatious as the director requires.



Lady Godiva

By Judith Prior. (c) 1997

CHARACTERS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE.

The Friar	Head of Coventry Abbey.
Lady Godiva	Philanthropic Socialite.
Index	The Page.
Lord Leofric	Husband of Godiva.
Master Simon	Son of Godiva.
Maria	The Governess.
Patience	Lady in Waiting.
Lady Jennifer	Daughter of Godiva.
Grace	The Serving maid.

Cast of Nine. Five female, and Four male roles.

SUGGESTED MUSIC

ACT ONE.

1. Green sleeves.
2. Humoresque.
3. The Sweetheart Tree or Baby Bumble Bee.
4. Champagne Charley,
Or The Night they invented Champagne.
5. Let's do it. or Everybody's Doin' it.

ACT TWO

6. Scarborough Fair.
7. There is a Tavern in the Town
8. While Strolling in the Park one day.
9. Beside the seaside.
10. Knight in Rusty Armour.
11. Hair.

ACT THREE

12. The Ash Grove.
13. Lovely Bunch of Coconuts
14. Underneath the Spreading Chestnut Tree
15. William Tell Overture (Music only)
16. Simon Says.

N.B. *This script is text only. Above music is an indication only of the type of song suitable. Music is of your own choosing and copyright permission should be sought.*

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ACT ONE

Setting. *The interior of a castle. Perhaps a chaise lounge, and a small occasional table with two balloon back chairs.*

SCENE ONE

MUSIC No 1.(*Green Sleeves.*)

(Enter the Friar, in spotlight, singing. Perhaps he has a lute. Pin pot picks up Lady Godiva standing as a statue elsewhere.)

FRIAR. *(Singing to the tune of Green sleeves.)*

LONG AGO, IN A FAR OFF PLACE,
LIVED A LOVELY MAID,
SHE WAS FULL OF GRACE.
SHE MARRIED YOUNG, TO A NOBLEMAN,
THE BEAUTIFUL LADY GODIVA.

SHE BORE TWO CHILDREN, ONE GIRL, ONE BOY
WHICH SHOULD HAVE FILLED
HER HEART WITH JOY.
BUT WAS SHE HAPPY? OH NO, NOT SHE,
THE BEAUTIFUL LADY GODIVA

SADNESS WAS ALL AROUND,
HER LOVELY FACE ALWAYS WORE A FROWN
FOR HER HUSBAND LEO, WAS MEAN AND TIGHT
AND TAXING THE PEASANTS WAS HIS DELIGHT.

THE PEASANTS ALL LO-VED THE LADY FAIR
BUT OF THE MASTER THEY LIVED IN FEAR
WAS HE WORRIED? OH NO, NOT HE.
HE DELIGHTED I-N THEIR MIS-ER-Y.

GODIVA VOWED TO HELP THEM FIGHT
THE UNJUST TAXES THAT WERE THEIR PLIGHT.
BUT TRY AS SHE MAY, SHE COULD NOT MAKE
SIR LEOFRIC ALTER THEIR HOPELESS STATE.

VILLAGERS ARE IN A PITIFUL STATE
GODIVA THINKS IT A GREAT DISGRACE
ALL AT THE CASTLE IS NOT QUITE RIGHT.
AND THAT BRINGS ME TO WHY
I AM HERE TONIGHT.

(Pin spot fades on Lady Godiva. Friar continues.)

FRIAR. *(In spotlight.)* Classic stories of heroes and heroines of old, have long been handed down by word of mouth, from parent to child, around smoky fireplaces where families were wont to gather after their evening meal. Of course television soon put a stop to all that. *(Sigh!)* And so, in today's modern age, where perhaps the only thing passed on orally, is herpes. We endeavour to set the records straight, on what really happened, that fateful day when the beautiful Lady Godiva bared her...soul to save the peasants.

(Spot light fades. Friar exits in darkness, lights up as Lady Godiva comes to life. Enter Patience carrying a letter on a silver plate.)

PATIENCE. A letter for you, Lady Godiva.

GODIVA. *(Taking letter and opening it.)* Thank you Patience. Why, it's from our daughter, Lady Jennifer.

PATIENCE. And how is the Lady Jennifer, my Lady? Well, I trust?

GODIVA. *(Reading letter.)* Oh, no! This is terrible!

PATIENCE. Bad news, my Lady?

GODIVA. Shocking news. Where is my husband, Lord Leofric, he must hear of this at once. Leo! Leofric! Where are you? *(Waving letter about.)* Oh, this is dreadful, whatever are we going to do? Where is that husband of mine? Leofric!

(Enter Leofric and Index, running.)

LEOFRIC. What's the matter? What's happening? Are we under attack? Are the peasants revolting?

PATIENCE. No more revolting than usual, me Lord.

GODIVA. *(Thrusts letter at Leofric.)* Look! A letter from our daughter Jennifer, from boarding school; and it's dreadful news, simply dreadful.

PATIENCE. It came by messenger just now, me Lord.

LEOFRIC. Here, let me see. *(Takes letter and reads.)* Dear Mater and Pater, Last night in the dorm we had such a delightful time. We held a farting competition. Lady Fiona Farleigh-Well-bred won; and I came second.

INDEX. Second place 'eh? Good on her, jolly well done, I should think.

LEOFRIC. *(Displeased.)* Well, I don't think so.

GODIVA. I should hope not! It's terrible! The best finishing school in all of England. All our efforts to make her a Lady, and now this! Whatever shall we do?

LEOFRIC. I'll not stand for my daughter being second best at anything. Index! Send Lady Jennifer a dozen sacks of baked beans immediately.

INDEX. Very good, me Lord. I'll see to it at once.

GODIVA. Oh, don't bother. The letter goes on to say, they were caught by the headmistress; and Jennifer has been expelled. She'll be arriving home on the first available coach.

LEOFRIC. Wonderful! It will be splendid having my little Jenny back home again. To say nothing of the money I'll save, not having to pay for that ridiculous school.

GODIVA. Yes, I suppose that will be important to you, Leofric. Of course, we shall have to engage a governess.

LEOFRIC. A governess! Think of the expense, woman. How are we going to pay for a governess?

GODIVA. The same way we pay for everything else around here. With the exorbitant taxes you so diligently extract from all the peasants.

LEOFRIC. *(Gleefully.)* Yes, That's it! I'll have to raise the taxes again.

GODIVA. *(Shocked.)* But, Leofric, you raised the taxes only last month!

LEOFRIC. Was it that long ago? You know it costs such a lot to run a large castle these days, what with the price of servants and candles and...

GODIVA. Leofric, it wouldn't matter how much money you had, you'd never think it enough. When will you ever consider lowering the taxes for a change?

LEOFRIC. Lowering the taxes? When will I lower the taxes? When the moon turns blue and Hell freezes over.

GODIVA. (*Shocked.*) Leofric! That's no way to speak in my presence. I was merely asking you to think of the peasants for a change.

LEOFRIC. I'm sorry, Godiva. But lowering the taxes is completely out of the question..

GODIVA. And what of a Governess for Jennifer?

LEOFRIC. Alright, alright. A governess, you say. At least that should be cheaper than the ridiculous school fees I was paying.

GODIVA. Don't mention that school again. The embarrassment of it all. Just wait until I set eyes on Jennifer, she shall have a piece of my mind.

LEOFRIC. There, there, dear. It's not the end of the world, a harmless girlish prank, no less.

GODIVA. These children will be the death of me.

LEOFRIC. (*Changes tone to annoyance.*) Speaking of girlish pranks, have you seen our son Simon today?

GODIVA. No. I thought he was going hunting with you?

LEOFRIC. (*Scornfully.*) Simon. Hunting? Now that would be something to see. Unless perhaps, we were hunting butterflies. How I managed to father a son like that is beyond me. (*Sigh.*) Index, fetch Master Simon at once. I wish to tell him the news of his sister.

INDEX. Very good My Lord.

(*Exit Index and Patience.*)

GODIVA. I wish you wouldn't speak of our son in that derogatory manner, Leofric. Especially in front of the servants. Just because Simon is...sensitive, you don't have to put him down all the time.

LEOFRIC. That boy should've been put down at birth.

GODIVA. There you go again. If you just took the time to get to know your son you might find that he...

SIMON. (*Entering, he has a daisy and is pulling off petals as he speaks.*) She loves me. She loves me not. She loves me. She loves me not. She... Oh, hello mother, father.

GODIVA. Hello, Simon. What are you doing dear?

SIMON. Oh, it's nothing really. (*Hides flower behind his back.*)

LEOFRIC. (*Pleased.*) Didn't sound like nothing to me lad. Did I hear you say, "She loves me?"

SIMON. (*Embarrassed.*) Well, yes, you did actually.

LEOFRIC. (*Aside to audience.*) There may be some hope for the boy yet!

GODIVA. (*Suspiciously.*) You're not still pining over the Lady Marion of Sherwood forest are you Simon?

SIMON. (*Sigh!*) Oh, Yes mother, I am. She fills my every waking moment and invades my dreams. The Lady Marion is so beautiful, and so graceful and so...

GODIVA. Hopelessly devoted to that Robin Hood character.

SIMON. (*Sigh!*) I know.

LEOFRIC. Hang on there a minute. This is only the year 1012. Robin hood and Maid Marion don't even appear in history until the next century.

SIMON. (*Horried.*) Oh, No! I'm in the wrong fairy story. (*Stamps foot, drops flower and sulks.*)

GODIVA. (*Comforting Simon.*) There, there, dear.

LEOFRIC. I don't know about the wrong story, but the fairy part may well be true.