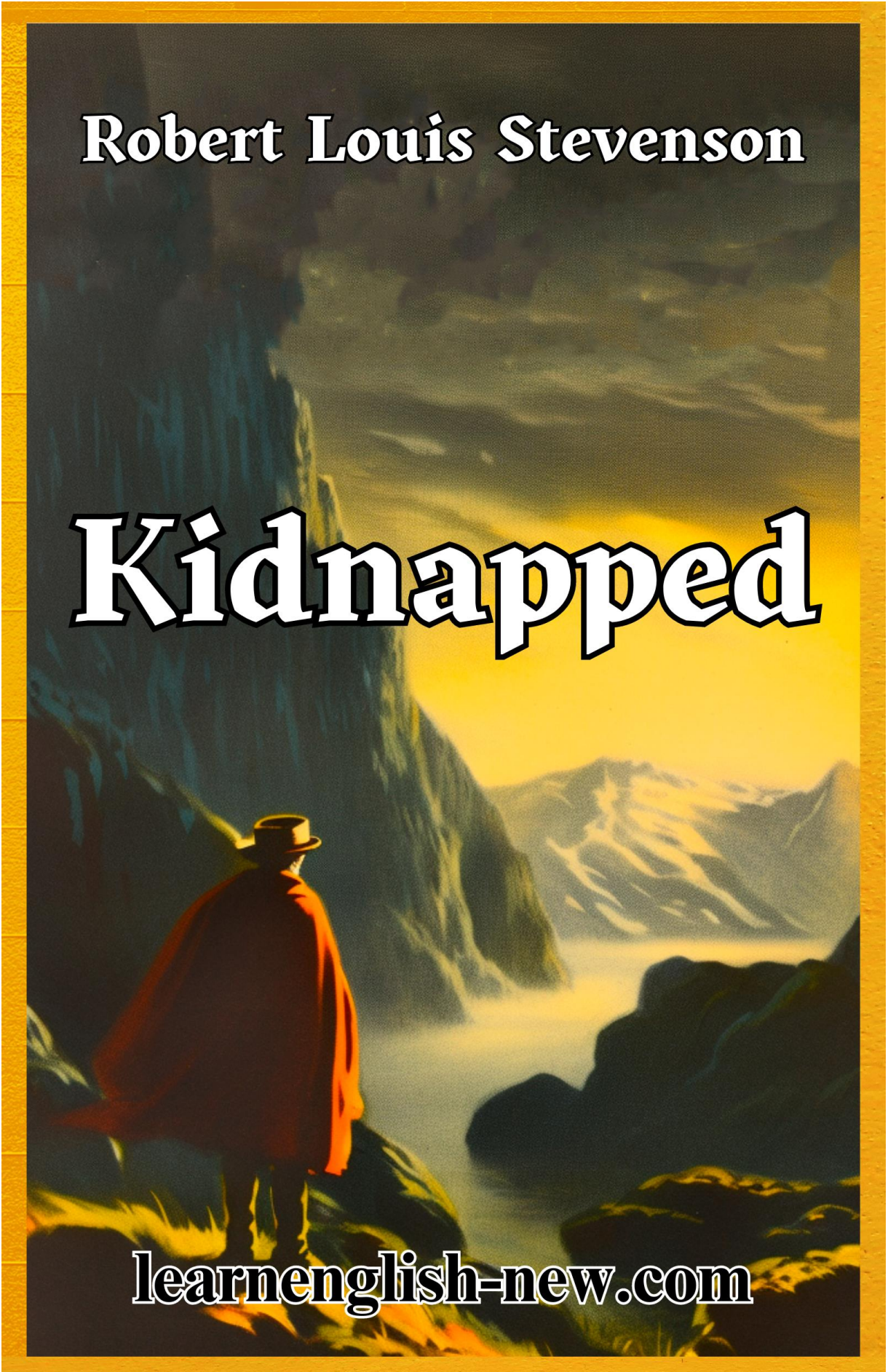


Robert Louis Stevenson

Kidnapped

learnenglish-new.com



Learn English Through Story

Kidnapped

By Robert Louis Stevenson

Level 2

Hope you have enjoyed the reading!

Come back to <https://learnenglish-new.com/> to find more fascinating and exciting stories!

<https://learnenglish-new.com/>

Contents

About the Author

Introduction

Chapter One: The House of Shaws

Chapter Two: Uncle Ebenezer

Chapter Three: Kidnapped

Chapter Four: The Fight

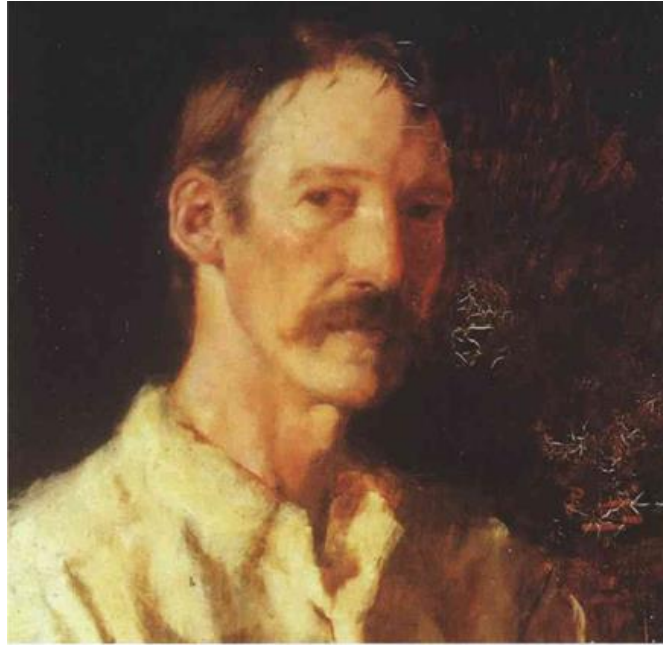
Chapter Five: The Ship Goes Down

Chapter Six: The Murder of the Red Fox

Chapter Seven: The Long Journey Home

Chapter Eight: The Return to Edinburgh

About the Author



Robert Louis Stevenson was born on 13 November 1850 in Edinburgh, Scotland. His full name was Robert Lewis (he later changed this to 'Louis') Balfour Stevenson. The name Balfour, the same as our hero David in *Kidnapped*, comes from his mother's side of the family. His mother, Margaret Isabella Balfour, came from a family of lawyers and church ministers. His father, Thomas Stevenson, came from a family of engineers; they built lighthouses around the coast of Scotland.

Stevenson had an interesting life. At the age of seventeen, he started studying engineering at Edinburgh University. He later chose to study law instead. But Stevenson never worked as a lawyer because he decided that he wanted to be a writer.

After university, Stevenson went to France to be with other young artists of the time, both writers and painters. His first books were travel books. He met his future wife, Fanny, in France. He was 25 and she was 36. Fanny was an independent, 'modern' American woman: she was separated from her husband and had two children. Two years after meeting Stevenson, Fanny got a divorce and in 1880 she and Stevenson got married. They spent their honeymoon at an abandoned silver mine in California. Stevenson wrote about it in *The Silverado Squatters*, published in 1883.

After his travel writings, Stevenson began writing short stories. Some people think that his collections of short stories are the first real short story. He published a collection of four short stories entitled *Nezv Arabian Nights* in 1882.

Stevenson's novel *Treasure Island* was published in 1883 and brought him great success. This famous adventure story was followed by the equally successful *The Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, published in 1886. It tells the story

of a man with two personalities, one good, the other bad. Stevenson said that he got the idea for this story from a dream.

He then went on to write other successful books, including the collection of poetry *A Child's Garden of Verses* (1885) and the novels *Kidnapped* (1886) and *The Black Arrow* (1888). *Kidnapped* is important not just as an adventure story, but also as a novel which tells us about the history of Scotland in the eighteenth century.

In 1888, Stevenson decided to sail around the Pacific Ocean with his family, living on different islands for short periods of time. In 1889, he and his family arrived at the port of Apia in the Samoan islands.

They decided to build a house and stay there.

Stevenson died in 1894 and was buried at the top of Mount Vaea above his home on Samoa. His own short poem, 'Requiem', was written on his tomb: 'Under the wide and starry sky, dig the grave and let me lie...!'

Chapter One

The House of Shaws

My name is David Balfour and my story begins one morning in June 1751. This was the day I left my father's house in Essendean for the last time. My friend Mr Campbell was waiting for me.



‘I’ll go with you to the river,’ said Mr Campbell. We walked together down the road without speaking.

After a while, Mr Campbell asked, ‘Are you sorry to leave Essendean?’

‘I don’t know, sir,’ I replied, ‘because I don’t know where I’m going or what will happen to me. I’ve been very happy in Essendean, but I’ve never been anywhere else. My mother and father are dead now, and I’m going to find my future.’

Mr Campbell told me that my father had given him a letter before he died. He said that it was my inheritance.

‘Here’s the letter,’ said Mr Campbell, giving it to me. ‘Your father told me to give you the letter and send you to the House of Shaws, near Edinburgh. It’s where your father came from and he wants you to return there.’

The letter was addressed to ‘Mr Ebenezer Balfour, House of Shaws’. Under the address was written, ‘This letter will be brought by my son David Balfour.’

I was surprised because I knew nothing about the House of Shaws. I was only seventeen years old and I felt scared about the new part of my life that was about to begin.

Mr Campbell said goodbye. I looked at Essendean for the last time, then I turned and walked towards Edinburgh and my future.

On the morning of the second day, I came to the top of a hill. Below me, I saw the city of Edinburgh and the sea. There were ships on the sea. I saw a group of English soldiers — the ‘Redcoats’ — marching along the road.

When I was closer to Edinburgh, I asked people for directions to the House of Shaws. Everyone seemed surprised when I asked about this house. At first I thought it was because I looked very poor. But after a while I thought that there was something strange about the House of Shaws. I began to worry. Before, I imagined a big house with rich relatives. Now it seemed that this was not true.

‘What is waiting for me at the House of Shaws?’ I thought. There was only one way to find out.

I walked on. Soon, I saw a large house standing alone in the bottom of the next valley. It was the House of Shaws. It was not how I imagined. The house was very old and in bad condition. There was no gate at the entrance, no path to the front door and no smoke came from the chimneys. It looked empty.

It was dark when I arrived at the house and there were no lights on. I knocked once on the big wooden door. I waited but nothing happened. I knocked again. Nothing happened but I heard someone inside, so I became angry. I started kicking the door and shouting for Mr Balfour.

I heard a sound above me. I looked up and there was a man with a big gun looking out of the upstairs window.

‘It’s loaded,’ he said.

‘I have a letter,’ I said, ‘for Mr Ebenezer Balfour.’

‘Who are you?’ the man asked, still holding the gun.

‘I’m David Balfour,’ I replied.

After a long pause, the man spoke again, but more quietly.

‘Is your father dead?’ he asked. ‘He must be dead. That’s why you’re here. I’ll let you in.’

The door opened and I went into the house.

‘Let me see the letter,’ the man said. I told him the letter was for Mr Balfour, not for him.

‘I am Mr Balfour,’ he said. ‘I’m your father’s brother, your uncle’.

I looked at him in surprise — I did not know that my father had a brother.

He showed me to a room to sleep in. Then he pushed me inside and locked the door behind me. I wanted to cry. I was tired from my long walk. I lay down and soon fell asleep.



Chapter Two

Uncle Ebenezer



The next morning I knocked at the door and shouted until my uncle let me out. We sat at the table and my uncle gave me some breakfast. He did not say much or even look me in the eye. Now and again he asked me a question.

‘Where’s your mother?’ he said. I told him that she was also dead.

‘She was a beautiful girl,’ he said.

The day went on like this. He asked me a question now and again, after long silences. But when I tried to ask him about the letter and my inheritance, he said nothing.

I wanted to ask my uncle about my father. ‘Who was the eldest brother?’ I asked. He jumped up.

‘Why do you ask that?’ he said, suddenly taking hold of my jacket.

‘What do you mean?’ I asked him calmly. ‘Let go of my jacket,’ I said.

He let me go. ‘Don’t ask me about your father,’ he said. ‘That’s why I became angry.’

I began to think my uncle was mad and maybe dangerous.

Later on that night, my uncle gave me some money — thirty-seven gold coins! This was a lot of money.

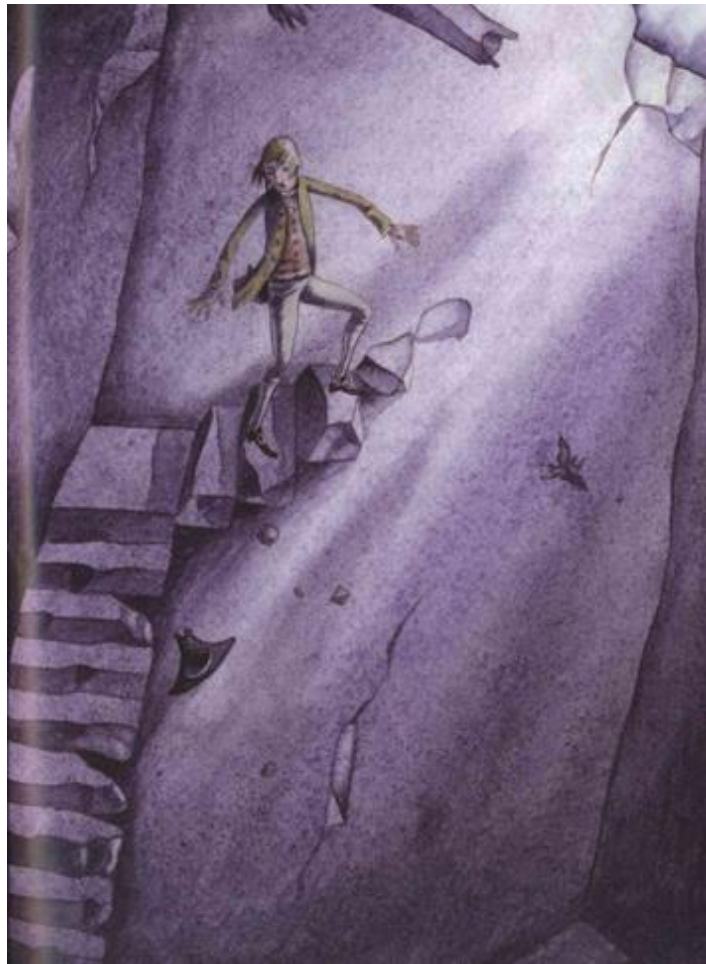
‘Why are you giving me this money?’ I asked. ‘What do you want in return?’

‘Nothing much,’ he replied. ‘But I’m getting old, and I need someone to help me around the house.’

Then he gave me a key. He said it was for a tower at the other end of the house. ‘Go up the stairs in the tower, find some papers and bring them to me,’ he said.

I unlocked the door to the tower. There was no light inside, and it was very dark. Very slowly, I went up the stairs in the darkness. As I went higher and higher, I began to feel the wind on my legs. The stairs seemed to move under my feet. Suddenly, there was a flash of lightening. The sudden light saved my life. I saw in the flash of light that the stairs were old and falling apart. I was going to fall! Why did my uncle send me here? Was he trying to kill me?

I was scared, but also very angry. I carefully climbed back down the stairs, using the flashes of lightening to find my way. Then I went back into the kitchen. My uncle was sitting with his back to me and did not hear me come in. I put my hands down heavily on his shoulders. This shocked my uncle (he was an old man) and he fell down to the floor. I left him there and looked for a weapon. My uncle was a danger to me and I wanted to know why. I found an old dagger. I sat with it and waited.



When he opened his eyes, I began to ask questions.

‘Why don’t you want to talk about my father? Why did you give me the money? And most importantly, why did you try to kill me?’

The old man looked very weak and tired.

‘I’ll answer your questions in the morning,’ he said. I locked him in a room and waited for morning.

The next morning we had breakfast. While we were eating I watched my uncle carefully. I was waiting for him to answer my questions but he said nothing. Suddenly there was a knock at the door. I opened it and saw a young boy in sailor’s uniform.

‘I have a letter for Mr Balfour from Captain Hoseason,’ the boy said. He showed me the letter. ‘I’m very hungry,’ he added, hopefully.

I let him in and he finished my breakfast. My uncle read the letter, then gave it to me. Here is what it said:

The Hawes Inn, at the Queen’s Ferry

Sir,

If you have any more orders for overseas, you must tell me today. The wind is blowing in the right direction for the ship to leave today. You must also pay your lawyer, Mr Rankeillor, if you don't want to lose more money.

Yours sincerely, Elias Hoseason.

My uncle told me that he was doing some business with Hoseason, the captain of a ship called the *Covenant*.

‘Let’s go and see him,’ he said. ‘And then afterwards we could visit Mr Rankeillor, the lawyer. He knew your father.’

I thought about this and decided to go. I wanted to meet this lawyer — maybe he could answer my questions. ‘And with lots of people around, my uncle can’t try to kill me again,’ I thought. I also wanted to see the sea.

‘Let’s go,’ I said.

On the way there I talked to the young sailor — his name was Ransome. My uncle did not speak at all. Ransome told me about the ship, the captain and the rest of the sailors. He said that Captain Hoseason was violent and was not a very good sailor. Ransome said that a man called Mr Shuan really knew how to sail the ship.

We came to the top of a hill. From there, Ransome showed me the *Covenant* out at sea. There was also a small boat that took people out to the ship. We walked down the hill and went into the Hawes Inn.

It was very warm inside. After a while, I decided to go outside to get some fresh air. When I left my uncle was talking to Captain Hoseason. Outside, I talked to the owner of the Hawes Inn and he told me a very interesting story. The story was that Ebenezer killed my father, Alexander, because he wanted the House of Shaws.

‘So Alexander was the eldest son?’ I asked.

‘Of course he was,’ said the owner. ‘That’s why Ebenezer killed him.’

So my father was the eldest son! I could not believe my luck. Two days ago, I was a poor boy with nothing, and now I had a house and some land. I was lost in these thoughts when Captain Hoseason appeared.

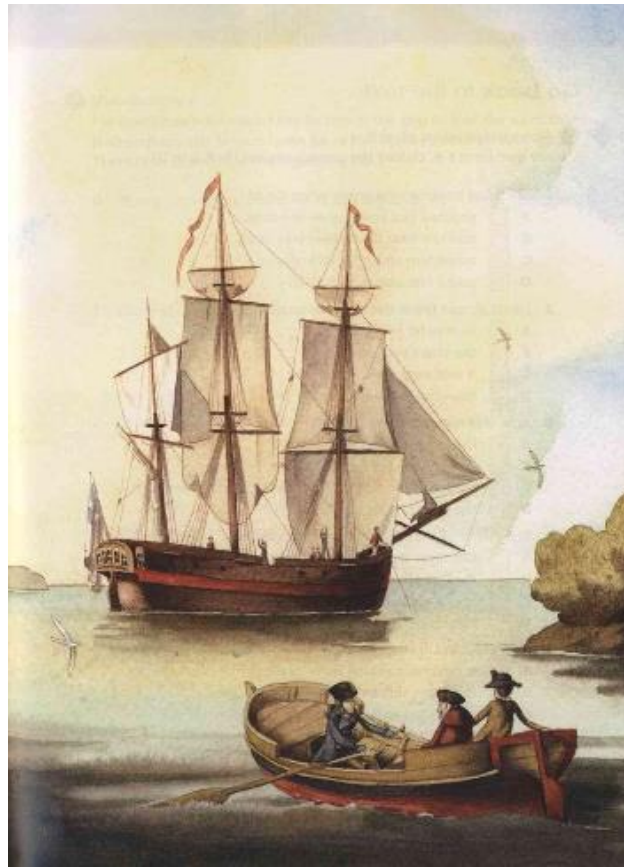
‘Do you want to see the inside of my ship?’ he asked. I was very curious to see inside the *Covenant* and I went with Captain Hoseason.

‘So, David, what can I bring back for you?’ said Captain Hoseason. ‘A friend of Mr Balfour’s is my friend as well.’

He, my uncle and I climbed into the small boat and went across the water towards the *Covenant*. By the time we arrived at the ship, I thought that Captain Hoseason was a good friend. When we were next to it, I was surprised at how big it was. I was not really listening to what the captain was saying. Hoseason said that I must go on to his ship first. A rope was sent down for me. I was pulled into the air and put down on the deck of the larger ship. Then the captain came up.

‘But where’s my uncle?’ I asked suddenly. I ran to the side of the ship. There was the smaller boat with my uncle still in it; he was going back to the land.

‘Help! Come back!’ I shouted. My uncle turned to look at me. His cruel face was the last thing I saw. Someone’s strong hands held me from behind, and I was hit on the head by something hard. Then everything went black.



Chapter Three

Kidnapped



When I woke up it was dark. My hands and feet were tied together with rope and I was in great pain. I was very confused. I knew that I was somewhere inside the ship. It was going up and down with the movement of the waves. I felt seasick.

I fell asleep again, but not long afterwards a small man woke me and held a light up to my face. I was very ill. My head hurt, I did not want to eat and I had a fever. The small man came back with the captain.

‘You must do something,’ I heard the man say. ‘He’ll die if you leave him in here.’ Then the man, Mr Riach, cut the ropes and carried me upstairs. He put me at the front of the ship with the rest of the crew. Then everything went black again.

I stayed here for many days and slowly got better. Ransome told me that the ship was going to America. At this time, white men were still sold as slaves in America. I was certain that this was my uncle’s plan for me; he paid Captain Hoseason to sell me as a slave in America!

Ransome then told me about the other men. Mr Riach was a good man except when he was sober. Mr Shuan, the man that really knew how to sail the ship, was only dangerous when he was drunk. He often hit Ransome when he was drunk.

One night, when Mr Shuan was drunk, he killed Ransome. Captain Hoseason told me I had to do Ransome’s job. I now had to stay in a different part of the ship, with Mr Shuan. In this part of the ship they kept all the food, drink and weapons.

Later on, we all sat at a table. There was a bottle of brandy in front of Mr Shuan. He put out his hand to take the bottle but Mr Riach stopped him.

'You've already killed a boy because you were drunk!' he cried. 'Now stop!' and he threw the bottle of brandy into the sea. Mr Shuan jumped up. He looked like he was going to kill for the second time that night, but Captain Hoseason stopped him.

'Enough!' he said. 'Do you know what you've done?' he asked Shuan. 'You've murdered Ransome!' Mr Shaun seemed to understand. He sat down, covering his face with his hands.

'Well, he gave me food on a dirty plate,' he said quietly.

The captain led Shuan to his bed.

'Go to sleep,' he said.

Mr Shuan lay down on the bed and started to cry. Now I was Mr Shuan's servant. But! was happy to work because it stopped me from thinking too much about my situation.

A week went by. The weather was not good for sailing and we were not getting very far. I thought we were halfway across the Atlantic but this was not true. We were still sailing south around the west coast of Scotland.

One night it was very foggy. At about ten o'clock, I was serving dinner to Mr Riach and the captain. We heard a loud noise as the ship hit something. The two men jumped up and went to look.

'We've hit a boat in the fog!' someone said.

The other boat sank to the bottom of the sea with all the crew except one man. This man was brought onto the *Covenant*.

He was a small man. He wore good quality clothes and he had two guns and a sword. He and the captain looked at each other. The man told us that his name was Alan Breck Stewart. He was from Scotland — a Jacobite. He fought against the English a few years before. The English won but their soldiers, the Redcoats, were still looking for Jacobite fighters. Alan Breck was trying to get to France and escape them. He asked Captain Hoseason to take him there.

'France?' said the captain. 'No, I can't do that. But I can take you back to Scotland — for some money, of course.'

The captain sent me away to get some food for Alan Breck. When I came back, he was counting out some money on the table. The captain looked excited.

'Give me half of those coins and I'll take you to Scotland!' he said.

Alan Breck put his money away.

‘I can’t,’ he said. ‘The money is not mine, it’s for my chief. I can’t give much of it away but I’ll give you sixty coins if you take me back to Scotland. Take it or leave it.’

‘Or I could give you to the Redcoats...’ said the captain.

‘That isn’t a good idea. Those soldiers want this money, too. They have to give it to King George. If you give me to the Redcoats, they won’t let you keep any of this money.’

‘Well, sixty coins it is. Let’s shake hands.’

The captain left.

I cut some meat for Alan Breck and put it in front of him.

‘So, you’re a Jacobite?’ I asked.

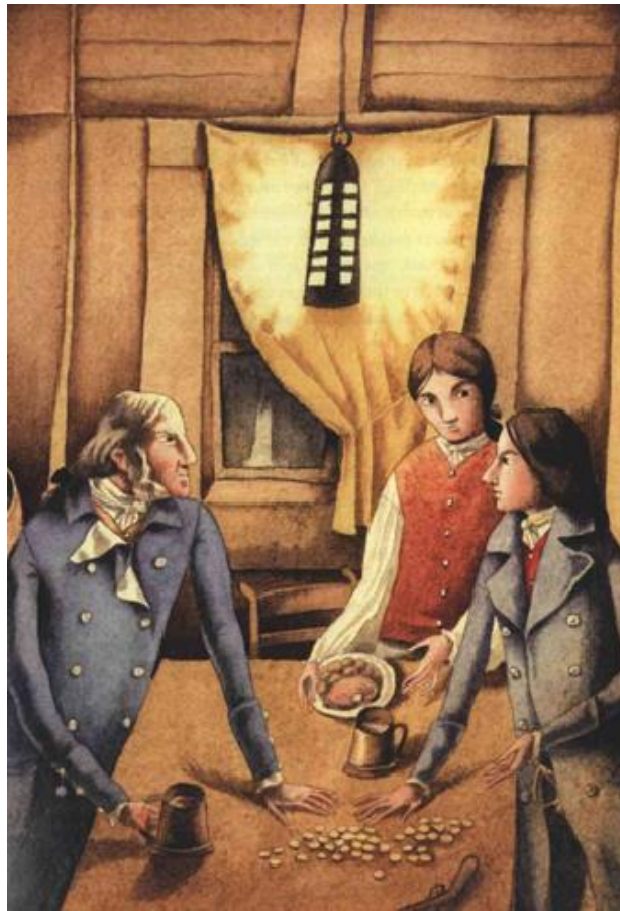
‘Yes,’ he said. ‘And you? I imagine you support King George?’

‘Not one or the other,’ I said, because I did not want to make him angry.

‘There’s no more brandy,’ he said. ‘I want a drink for my sixty coins.’

I went to get the key to the brandy cupboard from the captain.

It was still foggy outside. I saw the captain talking to Mr Riach and I heard what they were saying. They were planning to kill Alan Breck so that they could take the rest of his money.



When I heard this, I felt scared and angry. I did not want to be on a ship with such dishonest, violent men. My first thought was to run away but I decided not to. I stepped forward.

‘Captain,’ I said, ‘the man wants some brandy and the bottle is empty. Can I have the key to get some more?’

The men were surprised to hear my voice and turned around quickly.

‘That’s the answer!’ said Hoseason to Mr Riach. ‘David can get the guns. He knows where they are.’

Then he turned to me and said, ‘Listen David, that man is a danger to the ship and we must do something about it. The problem is this, David: all our weapons are locked in the room he is in now. If I go in and take the guns, he’ll know something is wrong. But if you go in and take a gun or two, he won’t notice. If you do this you can have some of the money too. I’ll remember this when we arrive in America.’

I agreed to help them, but really I did not know what to do. They were thieves and murderers and I did not trust them. But then what chance did one man, Alan Breck, and one boy, me, have against a whole crew?

Chapter Four

The Fight



I walked back into the room where Alan was eating and I made a decision.

‘Do you want to be killed?’ I asked him.

He jumped up quickly.

‘They’ve murdered a boy already and now they want to kill you,’ I said.

‘Will you help me?’ he asked.

‘I will,’ I said.

Now we looked around to see how to defend ourselves. There were two doors into the room and one small window. We closed one of the doors and left the other one open. He took out his sword and gave me all the guns.

‘Now listen to me,’ he said. ‘How many men are there?’

‘Fifteen,’ I said.

‘Well, there’s nothing we can do about that. I’ll watch this door, where the main fight will be. You must use the guns and watch the other door.’ I told him I was not a very good shot.

‘If they try to open the door you must shoot,’ he said. ‘Now, what else do you have to watch?’

‘The window, sir,’ I said. ‘But how can I watch both at the same time? When I’m looking at one of them, my back is towards the other.’

‘That’s true,’ said Alan. ‘But don’t you have any ears?’

‘Of course!’ I said. ‘I must listen for the sound of breaking glass!’

‘Exactly,’ said Alan.

Meanwhile, the captain was still waiting for me to return with the guns. Finally he came to the door.

Alan stopped him with his sword.

‘What’s this?’ said Hoseason. ‘I save your life and you show me a sword?’

‘I know what you’re planning,’ said Alan. ‘Now get your men together; I want to start this fight as soon as possible.’ The captain looked at me.

‘I’ll remember this, David,’ he said.

We waited and listened. We heard voices and the metal sound of swords. Then silence. I wanted the fight to begin. The waiting was making me nervous.’

Then suddenly it started. There was the sound of feet and people shouting. I heard Alan shout and someone cry out because he was hurt. I looked over and saw Alan killing Mr Shuan with his sword.

‘Watch your window!’ he shouted. I looked and saw five men running towards the other door. They were trying to break it down. I shot at them with my gun and hit one of them. The others looked confused. I shot at them again over their heads and then a third time. The men ran away.

Somebody pulled Mr Shuan’s body out of the room. Then Alan and I were left alone.

‘It’s not over yet,’ he said. ‘They’ll be back.’

I reloaded my three guns. Then we listened and waited again.

We heard a sound, and a group of men ran at the door. At the same time, the glass of the window broke and a man came through it. I pushed the gun in his back but I was too scared to shoot. He turned around and put his hands around my neck. My courage came back. I shot him.

A second man was coming in through the window. I shot him in the leg and he fell on top of the other man. I stood looking at them but then I heard Alan shout for help. I turned and saw him fighting with a man. Many more men were coming in through the door with their swords in the air. ‘We’re dead,’ I thought.

But Alan ran at them all with his sword. With every step, a man fell. Suddenly they were all gone and Alan was running after them. He came back but the men continued running away.

In the room there were three dead men on the floor and another man lay dying near the door. Alan and I stood together.



‘We’ve won,’ he said calmly.

I sat down. It was hard to breathe. I thought about the two men I killed. Suddenly, I started to cry like a child.

‘You’re tired, David. I’ll watch and you can sleep,’ he said. ‘You’ve done well.’

I slept for three hours, then it was Alan’s turn to sleep. I knew that there was nobody sailing the ship — it was moving gently with the wind. I heard the sound of the birds and I knew we must be near land. I looked out of the window and saw the hills of the Isle of Skye on the right, and behind us, the Isle of Rhum.



Chapter Five Ship Goes Down



Alan and I ate breakfast at about six o'clock in the morning. I did not feel very hungry; the floor was still covered in broken glass and a lot of blood. But in other ways our situation was good. All the food and drink was in our room. Mr Riach and the captain were in the other room further along the ship.

Alan cut one of the silver buttons from his coat and gave it to me as a gift.

'My father gave them to me,' he said. 'Take one to remind you of last night. Anywhere you go and show that button, my friends will help you.'

- Not long after, Mr Riach and the captain came to talk to us. They looked very tired. 'You've destroyed my ship,' said the captain. 'There aren't any men to sail it. We'll have to go back to Glasgow. But this coast is very dangerous for ships. You've killed the only man who knew how to sail it.'

'I've often sailed up and down this coast,' said Alan. 'I'll still give you sixty coins if you take me to Loch Linnhe.'

The captain agreed to this. They also agreed to exchange some brandy for two buckets of water. The captain and Mr Riach were happy and we cleaned up our room.

When we hit Alan's boat, we were sailing through the Little Minch. At dawn, after the fight, we were near the Isle of Canna. The quickest way to Loch Linnhe was through the Sound of Mull. But the captain had no map of this part of the sea and he was afraid of damaging his ship in this small channel of water. So we decided to sail down the west coast of Mull, around the south and up into the Loch.

This was a very pleasant time on the *Covenant*. The sun was shining, the wind was good and the mountains on the islands were very beautiful. Alan and I listened to each other's stories during this time.

But when I spoke about my friend Mr Campbell, Alan said that he hated everyone with the name of Campbell.

'But he is a good man,' I said. 'Why do you hate all Campbells?' I asked him.

Alan told me that the Campbells had killed people from his family, the Stewarts. They then took their land from them, too. Alan then had to join the English Army to make some money. I was very surprised at this because Alan's Scottish family history was so important to him.

'But then I deserted,' he said. 'And now if the Redcoats find me, they'll kill me.'

'So you're a Jacobite, *and* a deserter from the English Army? Why are you back in Scotland? Surely it's too dangerous?' I asked.

'I miss my friends and my country,' he replied. 'But I also take money from the people in Scotland to their chief, Ardshiel. Ardshiel now lives in France but he wants to return to Scotland. He wants to win back his land for his followers. Ardshiel's half-brother, James, gets the money from the people and I take it to Ardshiel in France.'

'So the Highlanders pay twice to use their land?' I asked. 'Once to King George of England and once to Ardshiel?'

'That's right,' said Alan. 'When the Highlanders lost to the English at Culloden, Ardshiel had to run away and hide. The English took away all his power and his land. They also took away the weapons from the Highlanders. A Campbell called the Red Fox works for King George — he gives the king the rent from Ardshiel's land. But the people still love their chief and continue to give him money — the English can't stop that. But when the Red Fox heard about the money they were paying to Ardshiel, he became angry.'

'And then what happened?' I asked.

'Well, David,' he said, 'the Red Fox wants Ardshiel to die. So he made all the Stewarts leave their homes. Now, I'll find the Red Fox and kill him!'

Alan was very angry now, so I decided to talk about something different.

'How did you escape the Redcoats? They are all over Scotland.'

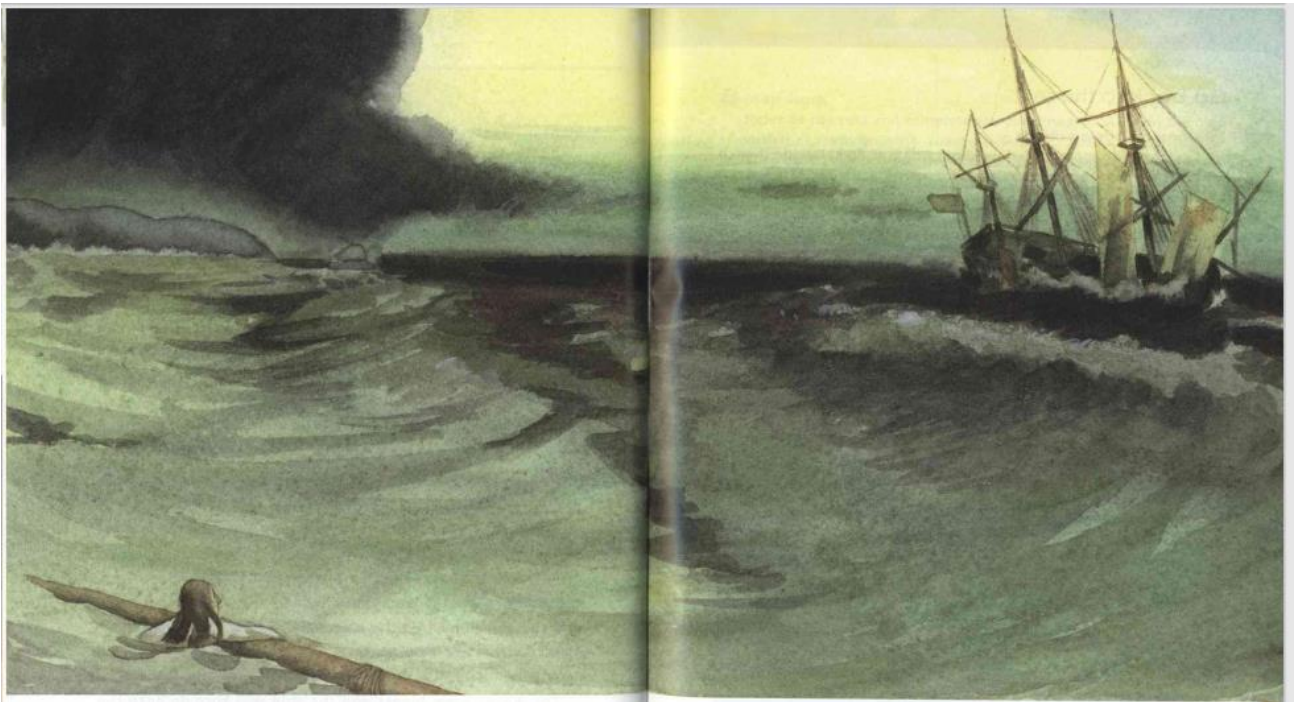
'It's easier than you think,' he said. 'If you know the countryside well like I do, you can hide from the soldiers. And there are always friends to help you.'

It was late at night but because it was summer it was still quite light. The captain came in, looking very worried. He wanted Alan to sail the ship. We went outside and looked at the sea. On one side of the ship we saw something that looked like a fountain.

‘What’s that?’ asked the Captain. Alan told him it was the sea hitting some rocks. Then we saw more fountains. There were rocks under the water everywhere. It was very dangerous to sail the ship without a map to show us where the rocks were. Alan thought that there were fewer rocks closer to the land.

For a while we sailed close to the Isle of Mull and we were safe. But as we came around the coast of Mull, the wind stopped and the waves pushed the ship towards the coast. The next minute, the ship hit the rocks with a loud CRUNCH! We all fell down on the deck.

The waves grew bigger and the ship was thrown onto the rocks again and again. Some of the men were trying to put a small boat into the sea. It was very difficult because the sea was so rough. Waves kept breaking over us and the ship was sinking. Suddenly one of the men cried out; a huge wave hit the *Covenant* and we were all thrown into the sea.



- My head went under the water and I started to sink. I came up but immediately I was pulled down again. I cannot remember how many times I sank and came up. The waves and the wind were very strong and it was difficult to breathe.

After a while, I found a piece of wood. I held onto it until I was in calm water. I looked around me and saw some land, not too far away. By now I was very cold. I knew I must swim to the land or die. It was very hard but after an hour I was finally on land. I lay on the beach in the moonlight. I was tired but alive.

Chapter Six

The Murder of the Red Fox



There was nothing on the land: no houses, no lights — just land. I was tired but happy to be alive. I did not know if any of the others survived.

When morning came, I climbed to the top of a hill and looked out at the sea. There was nothing on the sea: no ship, not even the smaller boat. I looked around me and I saw that I was on a small island. Nobody lived there. It was separated from the mainland by the sea and there was no way of getting there. 'I'm completely alone,' I thought.

I had nothing except a little money and Alan's silver button. I did not know much about the sea and how to survive. But I was hungry, cold, thirsty and tired. I needed to find food.

I ate shellfish from the rocks. It sometimes made me ill but it was food. I was starting to lose hope when one day I saw a small boat with two fishermen. I shouted and waved to them but they sailed on, saying something in Gaelic and laughing. I lay down on the ground and cried. 'I'm going to die on this island,' I thought.

But the next day, the sun was shining, the shellfish did not make me ill and I began to hope again. I climbed onto a rock and looked out to sea. There was the same small boat coming towards the island! I ran down to the beach.

'Help! Please stop!' I shouted. As the boat came closer, I saw that it was the same two fishermen as before but with another man. The boat stopped and the man started shouting to me and waving. I only understood one or two words. I heard the word 'tide'.

Suddenly, I understood. ‘Do you mean that when the tide is low...?’ I did not finish my sentence.

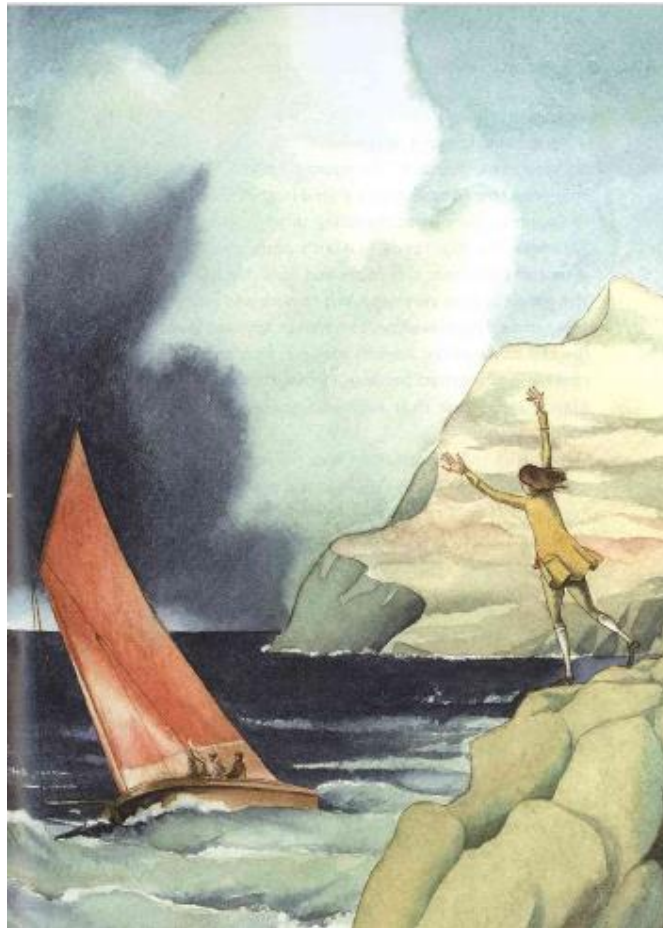
‘Yes, yes,’ shouted the man. ‘Tide.’

I turned and ran to the other side of the island. I heard them laughing behind me. I saw that when the tide was low, the island was attached to the mainland. It was only an island when the tide was high.

‘I’ve been here all this time when I can walk to the mainland twice a day!’

When I arrived on the mainland, I asked an old man for information about Alan and the other men.

- ‘You must be the boy with the silver button!’ he said.



‘Yes, I am,’ I replied, surprised.

‘Well then,’ he said. ‘You must go to Torosay, and take the boat from there to meet your friend in Appin.’

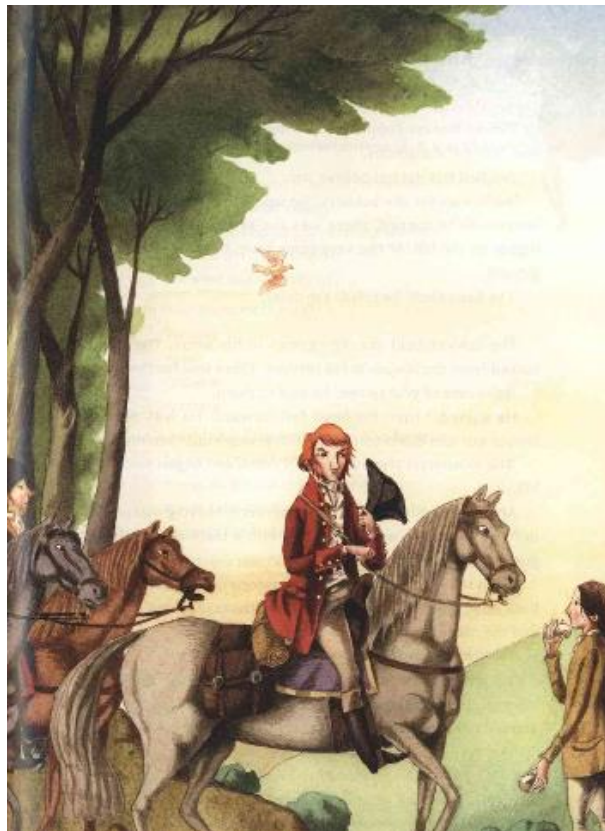
So, once again, I was travelling through an unknown country. This was the Highlands — Alan’s country. There were high mountains on either side of me and dark clouds in the sky above. The people looked very poor. But they helped me on my journey. After some days travelling, I arrived in Appin to meet Alan. I saw the red coats of the English soldiers, moving across the north coast. I was worried because I knew they were dangerous for Alan. I also knew that Alan was somewhere on that coast, waiting for me.

I started to have doubts. Was I doing the right thing? Why was I looking for Alan — he was a dangerous man to be with. Perhaps I should return to the south and leave Alan. As I sat thinking, I heard the sound of men and horses coming through the wood. Soon, four men with their horses appeared. The first man had red hair and looked important — I knew immediately that he was the Red Fox. From their clothes, the others looked like a lawyer, an army officer and a servant. When I saw these men, I made my decision.

‘I must find Alan,’ I thought.

When the Red Fox was close, I asked him the way to Aucharn, a nearby village.

‘Who are you?’ he replied. ‘And why are you so far from your home country?’ He knew from my voice that I was not from this part of Scotland.



‘I’m an honest supporter of King George of England,’ I told him. ‘I’m not dangerous.’

The Red Fox did not believe me.

‘We’ll wait for the soldiers,’ he said. He turned to look at the lawyer. As he turned, there was the sound of a gunshot from higher up the hill. At the very same time, the Red Fox fell to the ground.

‘I’ve been shot!’ he cried. ‘I’m dying!’

The lawyer held the dying man in his arms. The Red Fox looked from the lawyer to his servant. There was fear in his eyes.

‘Take care of yourselves,’ he said to them.

He sighed, then his head fell forward. He was dead. The lawyer put him down on the road. This woke me from my shock.

‘The murderer! The murderer!’ I cried, and began to climb the hill.

After a few minutes I saw the murderer moving away, not far in front of me. He was a big man, with a black coat and a large gun.

‘I can see him!’ I shouted. The murderer began to run. I looked back down the hill. The soldiers were there now and the lawyer and the officer were telling me to go back.

‘No!’ I shouted. ‘You come up here!’

‘I’ll give you ten pounds if you catch that boy!’ shouted the lawyer. ‘He’s working with the murderer! He stopped us and started talking while the murderer killed the Red Fox!’

Chapter Seven

The Long Journey Home



I was confused. Things were changing so quickly, I did not know what to think. The soldiers began to climb the hill after me.

‘Come in here among these trees,’ said a voice nearby.

I did what the voice said and heard gunshots going through the air past the trees. Just inside the trees was Alan Breck. He said nothing except, ‘Run!’ He started running across the mountain, and I followed him.

After a while, we stopped running.

‘This is serious,’ Alan said. ‘Do as I do — for your life.’

At the same speed, we ran back across the mountain, but a little higher. Finally we stopped behind some trees. We were breathing quickly.

Alan moved first. He went to the edge of the wood and looked around carefully. Then he came back.

‘Are you alright, David?’ he asked.

I said nothing and did not even look at him. A man was murdered in front of me — the man that Alan hated. And here was Alan, hiding in the trees, running from the soldiers. Was Alan the murderer? Or did he order someone else to kill the Red Fox? My only friend in this strange country was guilty of killing another man. I did not want to look at him. I wanted to be on my own, not hiding here with a murderer.

‘Are you still tired?’ asked Alan.

‘No,’ I said, ‘but you and I must go different ways, Alan. I liked you very much, but I don’t like the things that you do. They are not my ways and they are not God’s ways. I must leave you.’

Alan thought for a moment. ‘Do you think that I killed the Red Fox, David?’ he asked me.

‘Well, I know how much you hated him...’

‘If I want to kill a man, I will not do it in my own country,’ said Alan. ‘We don’t have much time. We have to run away from here. If we’re caught, I’ll be in trouble because I’m a deserter. And you’ll be in trouble because you were involved in the murder of the Red Fox,’ he said.

‘But I’m innocent!’ I said. ‘I’m not afraid of the law in my own country!’

‘This is not your country!’ said Alan. ‘Listen, David. The dead man is a Campbell. If they catch you, the Campbells will want somebody to die for this murder. And that “somebody” could be you! This is the Campbell law here.’

This scared me.

‘You people from the Lowlands don’t understand. We’re in the Highlands, David. When I say run, trust me and run. It’s difficult to run and hide here, but it’s even more difficult to be in a Redcoat prison.’

‘I’ll take my chances with you, Alan,’ I said.

‘It’ll be hard,’ warned Alan, ‘but your only other choice is death.’

We shook hands. ‘Now, let’s see where the Redcoats are now,’ he said. We started walking.

Night came. It was a cloudy night so it was very dark. Sometimes we walked, sometimes we ran. We travelled on and on until I was tired and weak. At dawn we stopped. Alan found a safe place high up between two rocks. I slept.

I was woken by Alan's hand over my mouth.

'Sssh!' he said. 'You were making too much noise in your sleep!'

'Well, what's wrong?' I asked.

He went to the edge of the rock and called me over. 'Look!' he said quietly.

It was now the middle of the day and very hot. From the rock, we looked down into a valley. A river ran through it. About half a mile up the river were a group of Redcoats. I looked around. There were more Redcoats everywhere I looked.

'I was afraid of this, David,' said Alan. 'They began to arrive about two hours ago, but you were asleep. If they stay down in the valley we'll be alright, but if they come up here they'll see us. We'll stay here until it gets dark and then we'll try to get past them.'



All that day, we lay in the hot sun. But we had no water so, finally, Alan decided we had to move. We jumped down from the rock and waited in the shade. The sun also made the soldiers tired; many were sleeping. We started to leave the rocks.

We moved slowly but by the evening we were some distance away from the Redcoats. Later on we found some fresh water and washed and drank from it. We felt safe and decided to stop and eat.

And so we travelled like this for several days, always looking out for Redcoats, always moving south. I wanted to get to Edinburgh, and Alan needed to get to France.

We became very tired and hungry. We did not speak much because we were so tired. I was getting ill, but I knew we had to keep going. But soon I felt very ill and I could not continue. I had to ask Alan for help. My legs simply could not carry me any further. I had a fever and my stomach hurt.

Alan promised to find a house for me to rest. Luckily, the family at the first house we found knew Alan well by name. They saw that I was ill and called a doctor. I was young and strong and I slowly began to get better. I stayed in bed for only a week. During this time, Alan did not leave me. It was very dangerous for Alan to stay

there — the Redcoats might see him, but still he came to see me every night and hid in the woods during the day. After a month we were ready to continue our journey south towards Edinburgh.

Chapter Eight

The Return to Edinburgh

I was now stronger and felt excited about my return to Edinburgh.

The only problem was that we had very little money. We needed to move quickly. We arrived at the river Forth. We then had to decide how to get across it to Edinburgh. There were still a lot of soldiers there to get past. Luckily, Alan found a boat to take us across the water to Queensferry, near Edinburgh.

Morning came and now I had to find Mr Rankeillor, the lawyer. I needed to speak to him about my father and my inheritance. I also wanted to tell him about my Uncle Ebenezer's plan to kidnap me on the *Covenant* and send me to America. Alan was going to wait until sunset to meet with me again.

'If everything goes well with Mr Rankeillor, I can give you the money to help you get to France,' I told Alan.

Soon I was in Queensferry, looking for Mr Rankeillor's house. Only now, I began to have doubts. 'Will I find the house? Will Mr Rankeillor believe me? Perhaps he won't want to help me. What will I do then?'

I walked up and down and finally stopped in front of a very nice house. The door opened and a man came out. 'Can you tell me which house is Mr Rankeillor's?' I asked.

'Well,' said the man, 'it's the house I've just come out of. I am Mr Rankeillor.'

'Well, sir,' I said. 'Can I speak with you?'

'But I don't know your name or your face,' said Mr Rankeillor. 'Who are you?'

'My name is David Balfour, sir,' I said.

'David Balfour?' he said, sounding surprised.

We went inside the house.

'How can I help you?' he asked.

'I am the son of Alexander Balfour. Mr Ebenezer Balfour is my uncle. I believe that the House of Shaws is my inheritance,' I said.

And so we talked. He told me about events in Edinburgh and all the lies that my uncle told about me. I told him everything that happened to me. When I said Alan's name, he stopped me.

'It's probably a good idea to call your friend "Mr Thomson". It's for his own safety,' he added.

Mr Rankeillor gave me some clean clothes. Then we talked again. He told me the story of my father and Uncle Ebenezer: the two brothers fell in love with the same woman. After a lot of fighting, the lady rejected both of them. After more arguing, they made a decision. They decided that one brother could have the lady, and the other brother could have the house.

‘It was a bad decision for everyone,’ said Mr Rankeillor. ‘Your mother and father lived and died poor, and your Uncle Ebenezer was hated by everyone. He became selfish and dangerous, as you have seen for yourself.’

‘And so,’ I asked, ‘what is my position now?’

‘Well, the law says that the house is yours,’ replied the lawyer, ‘but I think your uncle will fight you for it. Listen, your uncle paid Captain Hoseason to kidnap you, right? We need to show that your uncle was responsible. If we can do this, he’ll have to give you the house.’

At this point, I began to think of a plan. I told Mr Rankeillor.

‘But do I have to meet your friend Mr Thomson?’ he said.

‘I think so, sir,’ I said.

He asked me many questions, but I saw that he liked my plan. In the end, he agreed to it.

At around sunset, we left the house. We met Alan and walked down to the House of Shaws. Alan knocked on the door. Mr Rankeillor and I hid nearby. My uncle came to the door.

‘Who are you and what do you want?’ he said.

‘Who I am is not important,’ said Alan. ‘I have to talk to you about David.’

Alan told my uncle that he had locked me up in a room. ‘The law says that this is David’s house. But I can help you. I know that you have money. You must either pay me to kill David or pay me to keep him away from you. You choose.’



‘How much do I have to pay?’ asked my uncle.

‘How much did you pay Hoseason?’ Alan asked. ‘He’s my partner, you know, so don’t lie to me.’

‘Well, I don’t care what Hoseason told you, but I gave him twenty pounds. That’s the truth. But he was going to sell the boy in America as a slave to get more money for him,’ said my uncle.

Mr Rankeillor stepped forward.

‘Thank you, Mr Thomson,’ he said. ‘That will do nicely. Mr Balfour, you have admitted to the kidnapping of your nephew, David Balfour. Shall we go inside? I think we need to discuss a few things.’

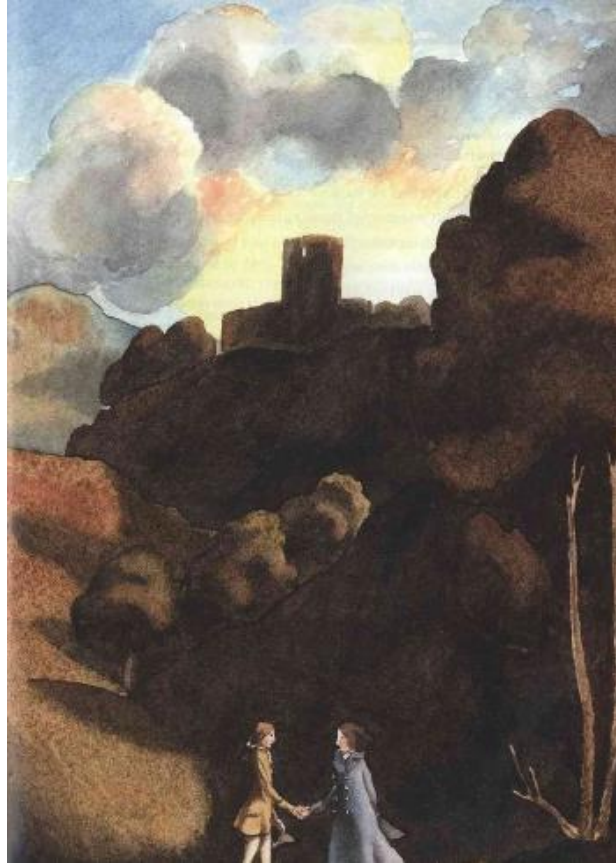
And so finally my uncle had to give me my inheritance: the House of Shaws.

Now it was time for Alan to continue his journey. We both felt very sad. He was a very good friend to me and we went through so much together. As we walked along, we did not speak.

I gave him the few coins I had with me so that he could get something to eat on his journey. He held out his hand.

‘Well, goodbye,’ he said.

‘Goodbye,’ I said. I held his hand tightly, let go and walked away. My adventures with Alan were over and a new life was about to begin.



— THE END —

Hope you have enjoyed the reading! Come back to <https://learnenglish-new.com/> to find more fascinating and exciting stories!

<https://learnenglish-new.com/>