

Rob Roy

by Walter Scott

(Adapted book. Upper-Intermediate level)

Chapter 1. Exiled from London

Dear Will, do you remember me? I am Frank Osbaldistone and I want to narrate the adventurous story of my early life.

It was the year 1714 and I was about twenty. My father ordered me to come back from Bordeaux, France, where I worked and to return to London. My father was the founder of the business house Osbaldistone & Tresham, with offices in Crane Alley, London. He was a tall man, full of energy, with dark, penetrating eyes. He had a fiery spirit, full of initiative and acute powers of analysis. He never used a word in vain, and he never got really angry, but when he was displeased, he spoke in a brusque manner.

My father wanted me to become his successor in the family business, but I preferred to study literature and write poems. He tried everything to convince me to change my mind and eventually threatened, "I have a brother in Northumberland and he too has children, Frank. I will ask one of your cousins to take your place in the business, if you do not obey me."

Showing little respect for his wishes, I replied, "You can do as you please - the business is yours! I will never sell my liberty for gold!"

As I was very obstinate, in the end my father decided to send me to his brother at Osbaldistone Hall in the north of England.

The following morning I took the road to York, mounted on a good horse and with sixty guineas in my pocket. I was sad, but I did not want to go back to London. I wanted to show my father that I was adult enough to decide for myself and that I was truly convinced of my decision.

The journey was monotonous, but sometimes I had the opportunity to speak to different travellers - parsons, farmers, officers. We spoke of many different matters - taxes, markets, wars and outlaws. One man that I met, a Mr Morris, was particularly afraid of outlaws. He had a heavy portmanteau which he never abandoned for a moment. He never mentioned his destination, he trusted nobody and he was afraid of me, too.

In those days travellers used to break their journey on Sundays. They rested their horses and had dinner together at the local inn, where the innkeeper offered them a meal. On this particular Sunday I stopped at Darlington, at the "Black Bear", with my new companion, the strange Mr Morris. A Scotsman, Mr Campbell, joined us for dinner. It was the first time I had met a Scotsman and I looked at him with curiosity because I had many prejudices against the inhabitants of Scotland. When I was a child my nurse told me terrible stories about them, of blood and revenge. I considered the Scottish people dishonest, avaricious and hostile to Englishmen.

Mr Campbell was a tall, athletic man who spoke to other people with superiority.

Strangely, my timorous companion Mr Morris asked if he could travel north with him, but Mr Campbell refused. "Your companion talks too much," he said. "It is unsafe to say where you are going in these troubled times."

Chapter 2. The Osbaldistones

The following morning, I left the company to go westward where my uncle lived in Osbaldistone Hall. The landscape was romantic and picturesque and appealed to my love of nature. I went past rivers and little solitary valleys until I arrived at Osbaldistone Hall. The house was in a glen between two mountains, surrounded by a large wood of oaks.

I was on a hill above Osbaldistone Hall when I heard the sound of dogs and horses - it was a fox hunt. I saw some men, dressed in green and red uniforms, riding after the fox and I thought: 'Here are my cousins.'

Suddenly I had a vision - a beautiful young lady appeared in front of me. Her face was uncommonly fine and animated by the hunt. She had long, black hair down to her shoulders. She was wearing riding clothes, like a man, and rode a splendid black horse.

Just then the sound of a horn announced the end of the chase. A young man came triumphantly towards us. He was carrying the fox's tail in his hand. The young woman spoke to him, then she turned to me and said, "Excuse me, did you meet a young man on the road, a Mr Osbaldistone?"

"I am Francis Osbaldistone," I answered.

"Ah... I'm pleased to meet you, Mr Osbaldistone. This young man is Thorncliff Osbaldistone, your cousin, and I am Diana Vernon," she continued.

Diana accompanied me to Osbaldistone Hall, where my uncle, Sir Hildebrand Osbaldistone, welcomed me. He was a man of about sixty, dressed in hunting clothes. Once he had been a soldier and a knight under King James II. After the king's deposition, he retired to his lands in the countryside where he was lord.

"These are your cousins, Francis," he told me. "Percie, Thornie, John, Dick, Wilfred and Rashleigh. The girl you met earlier is Die Vernon, Diana, my dead wife's niece. She lives here too. Now, shall we have dinner together?"

My cousins were all tall, well-built and good-humoured, with the exception of Rashleigh. He was different from the others - short, thin, lame, and his expression was cruel. However, these disadvantages were partly compensated for by his very soft, sweet voice and his great ability in putting words together.

Diana Vernon was sitting next to me at dinner and gave me some information about my cousins. "Rashleigh," she said, "wanted to become a priest in the Roman Catholic Church, but his deformity prevented him from entering the seminary." She also revealed that my father had chosen Rashleigh to take my place in his company.

After dinner my cousins started to drink and laugh immoderately. As my foreign education had given me a dislike for intemperance, I preferred to be alone and decided to go for a walk in the garden. On one of the little paths I met a gardener. He touched his Scottish bonnet with an air of respect. "Good evening, my Lord!" he said.

"I am Andrew Fairservice. For twenty-four years I have served the Osbaldistones." He was very talkative. He told me that he was a Presbyterian and when he heard that I was an English dissenter, he took out a tobacco box and offered me a little. I asked him about Die Vernon. "Oh, the young mistress? The lassie Vernon?" he answered. "She is a Catholic and, what is worse, she is a Jacobite!"

Chapter 3. Accused of Robbery!

I went to bed that night, thinking about the strange Osbaldistone family, my father, Rashleigh and Die Vernon. When I woke up, I heard the horn announcing that the fox hunt was beginning again. In the courtyard, where men, dogs and horses were in full preparation, I met Die Vernon. We left with the rest of the hunting party, but after a few miles we were alone. Die guided me to the top of a hill, and stopped her horse under some trees. She indicated some mountains on the far horizon. She said that they were in Scotland and that if necessary my horse could take me there in two hours.

I was surprised. I had no desire to go to Scotland.

"What should I do in Scotland?" I asked.

"Provide for your safety..." she replied.

"Didn't you travel here with a man, a Mr Morris?" the girl asked me then.

"Well... yes. I travelled with a strange little man who was always worried about his portmanteau," I answered, slowly.

"Someone stole that bag, Frank!" explained Die.

"You do not think I am a thief!" I replied, angrily.

"Mr Morris is an agent for the London government," she continued.

"He was carrying important documents and money for the English soldiers in the north. You are accused of robbery and of treason, Frank Osbaldistone!"

"So, I am a traitor, too!" I exclaimed angrily.

She saw I was angry and tried to console me. "Around here many important people are in favour of James II and against the Hanoverians," she said. "Your crime is considered the crime of a gentleman - and a king's man."

"But I want to refute this terrible accusation! Who is examining my case?" I demanded.

"Judge Inglewood. He told my uncle to show you the road to Scotland," replied Die.

"Then I must see him and tell him the truth!"

Diana insisted on accompanying me. When we arrived, we were surprised to meet Rashleigh coming out of Judge Inglewood's house.

The Judge was having lunch when we entered. Another man was with him at the table - it was Mr Morris, my timorous travelling companion. He said that one of the robbers had mentioned the name of Osbaldistone.

"But that is not a good reason to accuse me!" I replied.

At that moment, the servant announced the arrival of another gentleman and I was surprised to see Mr Campbell, the other man I had met on my journey north. He

explained to Judge Inglewood that he had been with Mr Morris when the bandits attacked him.

"Why didn't you help Mr Morris, then?" asked the Judge.

"Mr Morris is strong enough to defend himself," he replied coldly. "I am a man of peace. I do not want to have trouble with the Law. But of one thing I am sure - Mr Osbaldistone was not one of the bandits who stole the bag."

At that point, Mr Morris retracted his accusations against me and the Judge declared I was innocent. Soon after, Mr Morris left the house with Campbell.

Die Vernon and I rode back to Osbaldistone Hall. The girl started to tell me something of her life. She had many troubles, she said.

I tried to learn more but she replied mysteriously, "I cannot reveal my secrets."

At Osbaldistone Hall, Die ordered dinner for us in the library. The ancient, dark library was full of books, very untidy and neglected. On one wall was a portrait of Die's grandfather, Lord Vernon, with the Vernon motto above it. He had been loyal to the Kings of the Stuart dynasty, she said, and had shared the misfortunes of Charles I. The Vernon family, once important, was now ruined.

During our meal, Rashleigh entered.

"I must thank you for calling Mr Campbell. His defence saved me," I said. I was curious and wanted to learn more about the connection between Rashleigh and Campbell, so we continued to talk until Diana went to bed.

Chapter 4. New Troubles

The following day was Sunday, a dull day at Osbaldistone Hall. We all attended the formal religious service in the morning and, when it was over, Sir Hildebrand congratulated me.

"Ha ha! So you did not go to prison after all, my lad! You were lucky this time - but do not tempt Fate again!"

His words embarrassed and irritated me.

"On my honour, sir!" I replied. "I am innocent. I was not involved in that detestable crime!"

I was saved from more embarrassment by the arrival of Rashleigh. He was leaving soon for London and wanted to know more about my father, his relations with me and about the business. I, however, was more curious to find out about Die Vernon. "We were close friends once and I was her tutor," he said. "Then my studies took me far from her. She must now decide between life in a convent or a convenient marriage. She is engaged to Thorncliff, my brother. But I am convinced that I am better qualified for her."

These words hurt me and that evening, when I met Die, I was cold and rude to her. At dinner I drank too much and so I talked too much, quarrelled and laughed immoderately. Rapidly I lost all control. It seemed to me that Rashleigh was making insinuations about my feelings for Die, and, furious with him, I slapped his face.

My cousins took me by force to my room and locked the door. I slept badly and the next morning I knew I must apologise for my behaviour. My cousins

accepted my excuses - only Rashleigh showed his resentment. I also apologized to Diana for my courtesy to her. She insisted on knowing what had provoked my bad humour and, embarrassed, I told her. She answered that I had to be careful when speaking to Rashleigh. I decided then that I had to inform my father about my cousin's true character and wrote him a letter.

It was after this that I realized how much Miss Vernon and the secrets around her occupied my thoughts - I was falling in love! Rashleigh left the Hall for London and after his departure I started to help Die with her studies. I discovered that while she had had an extremely good education, she was totally ignorant of real life beyond the Hall and knew nothing of accepted feminine behaviour.

One day Andrew Fairservice, the gardener, informed me that news of the robbery incriminating me was circulating in London. I was anxious and decided to send another letter to my father to explain and rode into town to post it. At the post office I found a letter from Owen, my father's clerk, waiting for me. He said that he was worried because he had had no recent news from me. He did not mention my previous message concerning Rashleigh, and so I became suspicious. "Does someone intercept my letters at Osbaldestone Hall?" I wondered.

That evening, when I was in the garden, I saw a light at the library window. This was not unusual because Diana often read there alone, but I was surprised when I observed the shadows of two people inside. After that I became jealous and started to watch Miss Vernon's looks and actions. I was desperate to know who visited her in the library. The next time I saw the light there again, I ran into the library but I found Diana alone. However, there was a man's glove on the table. Diana refused to give me any explanation. With an air of authority she told me I should spend my time in a better way, instead of spying on her. Then she gave me a letter which had arrived for me.

"Gracious heaven!" I cried. "My folly and disobedience have ruined my father! This letter says that Rashleigh has gone to Scotland. During my father's absence in Holland, Rashleigh left London taking documents and large sums of money from the company. Mr Owen is now in Scotland too, in Glasgow, trying to discover where Rashleigh is hiding."

I decided I had to go to Scotland immediately to help my father's clerk. Before I left, Diana gave me a sealed packet without an address, and ordered me to open it only in an emergency.

Chapter 5. Reunion with a Friend

I asked Andrew Fairservice to accompany me into Scotland because I did not know the country. We met at three in the morning because we didn't want to wake the Osbaldestone family. On a Saturday evening, after a long ride, we arrived in Glasgow, the principal town in the west of Scotland.

The next morning all the bells of the city announced the sanctity of the day, Sunday. I wanted to start looking for Owen immediately, but Andrew said, "You cannot do anything until the church service is over."

So I decided to go to the cathedral of Glasgow, a solid and massive example of Gothic architecture. While all the people were silent and listening to the sermon, a voice from behind me whispered distinctly in my ear: "You are in danger in this city! Meet me tonight at the Brigg at twelve precisely."

I turned round, but there was no one there.

I spent the rest of the day at the inn reflecting on what I should do. In the end I decided to go to the appointment on the bridge.

I waited on the bridge in the dark. I was very apprehensive. What was going to happen. Then the clock struck midnight, and suddenly a stranger appeared near me and said, "Mr Osbaldistone, follow me!"

I hesitated and replied, "Can't you give me your information here?"

"You must receive it from your eyes, not from my tongue," he said. "You must follow me, or remain in ignorance." So I obeyed and was surprised when the man led me to... Glasgow prison!

The prison guard, a Highlander called Dougal, seemed happy to see my companion. He took us upstairs to a cell where a prisoner was sitting dejected in the corner: it was Mr Owen! He recognized me and exclaimed, "What! You are here too? Oh! Mr Frank, your company is ruined and now you are in a Scottish prison! God help us!"

I assured him that I was not a prisoner and asked him to explain what had happened. What was he doing in Glasgow prison? He told me that my father had two correspondents for his business in Scotland, the house of MacVittie-MacFin & Co. and the Bailie, Mr Nicol Jarvie. They transacted a great deal of business for the London firm and Owen had gone to see them when he arrived in the city.

"I immediately contacted MacVittie and MacFin," said Owen. "They had always professed themselves obliged and devoted to Mr Osbaldistone, so I openly revealed the present difficulties of the house caused by the absence of your father and the disappearance of Rashleigh. I asked for counsel and financial assistance regarding the next payments, but when they discovered they had large credits with Osbaldistone & Tresham, they refused to help me. They had me arrested and sent to prison as a debtor instead!"

Just then we were interrupted by a loud knocking on the prison door. A few minutes later, Bailie Jarvie himself came in and spoke to Owen, asking to see his papers.

He examined them with great attention, then said, "You owe money to several people in Glasgow. But you cannot pay your debts if you are in prison. I will act as your guarantor and they will let you go free."

Bailie Jarvie took the lamp and scrutinized the other people in the room.

"Ah! Eh! Oh! My conscience! It's impossible and yet... no! You robber, you devil that you are! Can this be you, Robin?" exclaimed the Bailie.

"That is so," was my guide's laconic answer.

Mr Jarvie also wanted to know who I was and then asked me, "Young man, how will you find the five thousand pounds to pay your father's bills in three days?"

I didn't know what to say, then suddenly I remembered Diana's packet. I opened the seal and a letter dropped onto the floor at Mr Jarvie's feet. After examining the name on the envelope, he gave it to Robin. I realized then that my mysterious guide was in fact Mr Campbell himself! I recognized his deep voice, his severe face, and his Scottish accent.

Mr Campbell read the letter, then instructed Owen to remain in Glasgow. He told me Bailie Jarvie and I should go to his Highland home in the glens.

The next day I went to the Bailie's home for lunch and found Owen there. The honest man was depressed after his stay in the prison but Mr Jarvie's kind and friendly interest in my father's affairs consoled him. I asked the Bailie to tell me something about Robert Campbell. "He is a distant cousin of mine. Many people have been cruel to him. He is a Highland cattle merchant that wears the tartan when he is in the hills and trousers when he is in Glasgow!" explained the magistrate. Then he started to examine some business documents with Owen. As I could not help them, Mr Jarvie suggested going out for a walk. I could return later for lunch.

Chapter 6. An Unexpected Encounter

After Mr Jarvie's house, I directed my steps to the college grounds. While I was walking, my attention was attracted by three men who appeared at the end of the garden. I looked again and recognized Rashleigh with Mr Morris and Mr MacVittie! I did not want to be seen, so I hid behind some trees and came out only when the men separated.

I followed Rashleigh and took his arm to stop him. I was determined to demand reparation for the wrongs done to my father.

"I am glad to meet you at last!" were my first words.

"Oh, I am easily found by my friends and more easily still by my enemies," replied Rashleigh coolly. "Which of the two are you, Mr Francis?"

"I will be an enemy, if you do not immediately render justice to your benefactor, my father," I said.

"Why should I justify my actions to a young gentleman who has no inclination for business matters? Go, young man, and amuse yourself in the world of your poetical imagination!" replied my cousin insolently.

"This is no answer for the wrongs done to my father! You must come with me to the magistrate and give me full satisfaction!" I exclaimed, angrily.

"You insulted me once before, remember!" hissed Rashleigh. "Your insolence merits personal punishment. Now, follow me to a place where we cannot be interrupted!"

I followed him, watching him attentively because I knew that he was treacherous. In fact I had no time to take off my cloak and take out my sword before he was on me. He attacked me without warning and I only saved my life by springing back. Rashleigh fought furiously. After the first impulse of passion, I reflected that Rashleigh was my cousin, the son of my uncle, and decided to try and disarm him only. But I soon realized that I had met my match - the combat seemed destined to

have a tragic end. I slipped, Rashleigh's sword passed through my waistcoat, grazed my ribs and ran through my coat behind. I thought that I was fatally wounded and assaulted my opponent, ready now to kill him. At that moment a man stepped between us and separated us, exclaiming, "What? The sons of two brothers doing this! I will break your heads if you continue!"

I looked up in surprise. The speaker was Mr Campbell.

"Are you hurt, lad?" he asked me. Then, turning to Rashleigh: "Do you think men will trust their lives and fortunes to one who goes around quarrelling like a drunk man?"

After a few more quiet words he sent Rashleigh away and again invited me to be prudent and to stay at home. Then he disappeared and left me to reflect upon the singular events of the morning.

I tried to adjust my dress and to hide the blood which was flowing down my right side. On the way to Mr Jarvie's house I stopped at a little shop, an apothecary's, where a lively, elderly man treated my wound and laughed at the excuse which I gave him for it.

"Ah! Young blood! Young blood!" he repeated.

"What made you so late?" asked Mr Jarvie when I returned. I made my apologies but did not tell him what had happened. Soon we were seated at table where the Bailie entertained me with great hospitality and good humour.

Chapter 7. The Journey Begins

We ended the meal with some brandy-punch.

"The limes," Mr Jarvie assured us proudly, "come from my little farm overseas. I made the liquor myself!" This led to a conversation between Mr Owen and our host about the possibility, which the government had recently given to Scottish towns, to trade with the British colonies in America and the West Indies. I was silent and, when the Bailie questioned me, I related the events of the morning and anxiously asked him, "What should I do to help my father and satisfy my own honour?"

"I think that Robin will help you, if he can. He is a good-hearted man," replied the Bailie.

"Can I consider Mr Campbell an honest man?" I continued. "Can I go to the appointment in the glens safely, and believe in a man who fears justice?"

Mr Jarvie explained that in the Highlands there was no law and no magistrates. The country was savage and poor, and people often became bandits. Robin Campbell, once an honest and active man of noble lineage, became an outlaw, known as Rob Roy, when his creditors took everything he had. Here Mr Jarvie's face became very sad.

"Rob was away on business," he said, "and when he came home, he found desolation where he had left plenty; he looked east, west, south, north and he saw no hope, no shelter!"

The Bailies voice showed his affection and sympathy for Campbell's misfortunes.

"Robin put on his bonnet, took his big sword and collected a band of blue bonnets. He and his men started to protect the lands and cattle of the southern farmers from robbers, in exchange for money."

"Oh, a very singular contract of insurance! The robbers who threaten the southern farmers are those same Highlanders!" exclaimed Owen at this point.

This form of blackmail was against the law, and Rob risked capture and death if he was found in Glasgow.

"He is a sort of Robin Hood!" concluded the Bailie. "I am convinced that he robbed Morris with the help of Rashleigh to accelerate the Jacobite rebellion against King George. He was certainly an agent between our Highland chiefs and the gentlemen in the north of England."

The conversation went on, and gradually we came to the opinion that I should leave at once for the glens and meet Rob Roy there.

The next morning at five o'clock we started our journey. Mr Owen remained in Glasgow and Andrew came with us. We travelled all day, going north-east from Glasgow - first across a marshy barren land, then through a wild and desolate area with dark blue mountains visible in the distance. I began to appreciate Mr Jarvie. He had an observant mind and he knew the ancient history of the area. He was a good Scotsman that loved the traditions of his land, but he also understood the importance of the union with England for the future prosperity of his town and country.

We had lunch at noon at a most miserable alehouse, and then continued our journey quickly because we wanted to reach the clachan of Aberfoil before night fell. During the last three miles Mr Jarvie began to give Andrew his instructions. "Keep your tongue in your mouth, and don't say a word, good or bad, to anyone in the clachan!" he told him sharply. "And... remember, no blasting about your master's name - or mine!"

"I have many things of more importance to speak about!" was Andrew's indignant reply.

Chapter 8. In the Highlands

At last we arrived at the inn at Aberfoil. There was a willow-branch across the half-opened door, blocking our entrance. Mr Jarvie told me that this meant there were some Highland chiefs inside who did not want to be disturbed. After some discussion with the landlady we were allowed to enter.

Inside the inn was a large, bare room full of smoke, with a big fire blazing merrily in the centre. Three men were sitting at an old, scratched oak table near the fire. Two looked like Highlanders, judging by their clothes. The third was in the Lowlands dress and looked like a soldier. Another Highlander, all covered up by a plaid, was sleeping on the floor. It seemed that they did not pay any attention to us but when I ordered some food, one of them said to me in very good English,

"You think you are at home here, I see!"

His tone was offensive and a dispute started. In a few moments we were fighting - three against three I thought, but then I noticed that Andrew had vanished.

The Bailie started well but he was corpulent and soon exhausted his energy. He was almost at die mercy of his antagonist, when suddenly the sleeping Highlander jumped up from his place on the floor and, placing himself between the two men, exclaimed, "This is Bailie Jarvie! I will defend him!"

At these words, with the cry "Hold your hands, hold your hands!", the fight stopped and we all sat down together and drank in friendship.

Supper was nearly ready so I went to look for Andrew. The landlady offered to guide me to the stable with a light and, when we were outside, she gave me a piece of paper. It was a message from Robin Campbell. He said that he could not come to the meeting, and advised me not to mix with the people at the inn because they were dangerous.

After looking for him everywhere finally discovered Andrew in the stable, hiding in a corner.

He was frightened and continued repeating: "I am an honest lad, sir! I am! I am!"

I requested an explanation and eventually he told me that he thought I was putting myself in extreme danger. "Take care of yourself, sir! Don't go near Rob Roy!" he said with sincere alarm.

We went back into the inn and found that Bailie Jarvie was now quarrelling with the tall Highlander. Then we heard the measured steps of soldiers, some orders were shouted outside, and an officer wearing a red coat came into the room. He looked severe. He addressed the three men. "I am Captain Thornton. You are, I suppose, the Major and the Highland gentlemen I had to meet in this place?" They nodded in agreement. Then, pointing to us, he continued, "Are these gentlemen with your group? I have orders to arrest an old person and a young one - as traitors!"

He looked hard at Mr Jarvie and me. "You two! What are your names?"

Mr Jarvie told him and when the officer heard the name Osbaldistone he ordered his soldiers to disarm and search me. They found the note from Mr Campbell, and decided that we had to be Rob Roy's spies. The officer decided to send us to the garrison with an escort.

We spent the rest of the night at the inn. I did not sleep well. I heard the soldiers going out many times on patrol, but apparently they did not find out the information the English officer wanted because he became more nervous each time they returned!

Chapter 9. A Memorable Woman

Early the next morning some soldiers ran into the inn. They were dragging a Highlander triumphantly. I immediately recognized him - it was the prison guardian, Dougal, the very man who had defended Mr Jarvie! The Bailie recognized him too and exclaimed, "Mercy on us! They have taken that poor creature, Dougal! Captain, I will give you money for his liberty!"

The officer, however, paid no attention to the Bailie's request. Instead he started to question Dougal. He forced the Highlander to admit, with great reluctance

and after many contradictions, that he knew Rob Roy MacGregor Campbell and that he had seen him only an hour before.

"And now, my friend," said the officer, "you will please tell me how many men your master has with him at present." Dougal looked away and replied slowly that he did not know. "Look at me, you Highland dog!" the officer threatened showing him a rope. "I'll hang you from the nearest tree if you do not take us to Rob Roy's hiding place!"

The soldiers got ready to move and we left the inn. I was glad to be outside in the refreshing fragrance of the morning air. I liked the woods around me, the mountain lake in the distance, the romantic solitude of the place where a man alone seemed to be in a state of inferiority. At one point the road we were following suddenly emerged from the forest and started to follow the shore of the lake. It gradually became narrow and steep, the ideal place for an ambush.

Suddenly a woman appeared on the summit of a rock above us.

"Stop!" she cried in a commanding tone. "What are you doing in MacGregor's country?"

She was an imposing woman of about fifty. Her face, once beautiful, was expressive but now full of lines. She wore a plaid wrapped around her body, as Highland soldiers do, and a man's bonnet with a feather. She was also carrying a sword in her hand, and had a pair of pistols in her belt.

"We are looking for Rob Roy MacGregor Campbell!" replied the officer. "Let us pass! We don't want to fight against a woman, we offer you civil treatment!"

"Ah!" shouted the woman. "I know your civil treatment! You have left me and mine no house and no bed, no cattle and no clothes! And now you come for our lives!"

"That's Helen Campbell, Rob's wife!" whispered the Bailie to me. Suddenly the officer gave the order for the soldiers to charge. Guns flashed from various parts of the pass and three red-coats were killed. The captain prepared a second attack against the Highlanders, and Dougal, no longer under escort, escaped from his captors and began to ascend the mountainside with incredible agility.

I followed his example while the fire and the grenades exploded and hissed behind me, and I continued climbing until I was out of breath. Then I stopped and looked down. I saw the Bailie hanging in mid-air from the branch of a thorn tree. Andrew was on the top of a rock, exposed to all dangers, and was crying for mercy alternately in Gaelic and English. In spite of the danger the scene was very comical!

After a few minutes the guns stopped. Some of the soldiers were lying lifeless on the ground, the rest were in the hands of the Highlanders. I realized then for sure that Dougal was not a traitor. He had given false information to the officer to guide the soldiers into the ambush because he wanted to protect Mr Campbell, alias Robert MacGregor, alias Rob Roy!

Chapter 10. Captured!

The Bailie and Andrew were soon freed from their uncomfortable position, and I joined them. Dougal came to our help, and took us to Rob Roy's wife. Helen MacGregor Campbell had not personally taken part in the fight, but her aspect was menacing: her hands and arms were naked, her face and sword were stained with blood, her hair was in a disorderly state, her eyes were inflamed by the triumph of victory. She looked like a biblical heroine.

"I am very happy to have this joyful opportunity," said the Bailie.

"Do you remember me, Mrs MacGregor Campbell. I am your cousin, Nicol Jarvie, son of Deacon Jarvie."

He explained the connection between their two families, and talked of the times when Rob Roy had still been an honest cattle merchant. We were interrupted by the melancholy sound of bagpipes.

Rob Roy's two sons arrived and I looked at them with interest.

The two boys were young - hardly twenty. The elder, Hamish, or James in English, was tall, fair and handsome, with blue eyes and a profusion of blond hair under his blue bonnet. The younger, Robert, or Oig in the language of the Highlanders, had dark hair and a dark complexion. He was a stout, strong boy, a real Highlander.

They brought bad news, however - their father had been captured and was now a prisoner of the English troops! But Helen MacGregor did not weep at their news. Instead she shouted at them furiously:

"Your father taken? A prisoner? And you, you are still alive! Better that you had died protecting him!"

Rob Roy's sons stood in front of their mother and listened to her reproaching words silently. Their faces showed pain and shame.

She asked what had happened and Hamish told her how his father had fallen into a trap. He spoke in a low tone of voice and he spoke in English, probably because he did not want his followers to understand, but I was very near them and I could hear his story.

A man had brought Rob Roy a message from a person whose name I could not hear. Rob Roy had left with three men but only one of them had come back.

"The man that brought the message is our hostage now," Hamish continued. "We can try to exchange him for our father." Helen asked to see him and they brought forward a man half dead with terror. Imagine my great surprise-when I recognized him - he was my old acquaintance, Mr Morris.

He fell on the ground before Helen MacGregor and implored her to spare his life.

"I was totally ignorant of any design on the person of Rob Roy, a man I honour and love. I was sent by Rashleigh with a message for MacGregor, but I did not know of the plot against him." But the woman was not moved by his words.

"Life is a heavy burden for me, for you it is enjoyment. This enjoyment must end. You shall die, miserable dog!" she said, and gave a brief command to her attendants.

Two Highlanders came and dragged Morris to a cliff over the lake. He struggled and shouted while they tied a rock around his neck and took off some of his clothes. His cries were terrible, I still remember them. He looked at me and begged for my help, and I tried to speak on his behalf, but my words were vain.

They threw him into the cold, deep water.

We were horrified. Bailie Jarvie protested, "That was a cruel, unnecessary murder!" he declared.

Helen MacGregor pretended not to hear, but turned to me and asked, "Are you Rashleigh Osbaldistone? I heard Morris call you Osbaldistone."

"No, my name is Francis Osbaldistone," I replied.

"Do you know this Rashleigh? is he a relative of yours?" she continued. I answered that I knew him.

"Then you will go to the garrison with a message," she told me.

"If they don't free Rob Roy MacGregor in twelve hours, we will send back all our prisoners cut into pieces."

A few minutes later I left for the garrison. The commanding officer read the letter I gave him and gave me his reply: "Rob Roy must die."

He showed no interest whatsoever in the prisoners' lives and ordered the cavalry troops to prepare to leave, escorting Rob Roy and the English prisoner - that is to say, me.

Chapter 11. Where Is Rob Roy?

We travelled surrounded by armed soldiers. Rob Roy was on a horse tied with a horse-belt to a very big, strong Scotsman called Ewan. When we were near the river, Rob Roy whispered to Ewan, "It is sad to see a Scotsman who considers an English captain's orders more important than a friend's life."

In the middle of the river I heard a splash and immediately understood - Rob Roy's words had convinced Ewan to free him and give him the chance to live. He had jumped off the horse into the water! The captain also heard the sound and guessed what had happened.

"You dogs!" he cried. "Where is the prisoner? Go and look for him! I promise a hundred guineas as a reward!" There was great confusion. Some soldiers tried to follow the fugitive into the water, but the force of the current carried them away. Others, who were more cautious, galloped along the riverbanks, shooting and shouting.

Escape for Rob Roy was not difficult - he was an expert swimmer. At first he was confused under the water but then he freed himself from his plaid, swam away under the surface and was soon out of view.

The soldiers saw the plaid in the water and tried to catch it but they soon gave up. In many places the river was inaccessible because of the thick vegetation and besides, it was getting dark, so it was not easy to see anything in the water.

Most of them believed that Rob would not be able to survive the current and the freezing water. At last the sound of a trumpet announced the retreat.

Up to that moment, I had been a spectator - like someone watching a hunting scene at Osbaldistone Hall. But suddenly I heard a voice call out "Where is the Englishman. He gave Rob Roy the knife to cut the belt. We must kill him!"

And I realized then the danger of my situation. I jumped from my horse and ran into a wood where the darkness of the night protected my escape. I decided I had to try somehow to return to Aberfoil.

Eventually I found my way back to the road. While I was walking, lost in my thoughts, a horseman approached me and asked me if the road was safe. I replied that it was not and then noticed his companion. Both of them were wrapped in travelling cloaks and the hood of the man's cloak hid his face, but his companion was not wearing a hood, only a small hat, and in the dark her figure seemed familiar. She addressed me in a familiar voice, saying my name. My blood froze in surprise: it was Diana Vernon's voice! But the man with her prevented any further conversation saying in a commanding tone, "Give him his property!"

Diana gave me a small case and said, "Rashleigh had to abandon your father's papers. Here they are. Now, we must part forever. Farewell, dear Frank." Then she galloped away with the unknown man.

I was deeply sad, but I continued on my way. After a while another voice addressed me.

"Good night, Mr Osbaldistone."

There was no doubt: it was Rob Roy. He had escaped his enemies and had acquired a musket and other Highland weapons since his escape at the river.

I welcomed him, and he asked me about the events of the preceding day. I told him about the ambush at the lake and the meeting with Diana Vernon. I was jealous and wanted to know the name of the man accompanying her. Did he know? Rob called him "His Excellency", but he was so vague that I continued to ask myself, is he Diana's husband?"

Suddenly three Highlanders appeared in front of us on the road and commanded us to stop. Rob said the word Gregaragh, his name in Gaelic, and they cheered us. They were relieved to see that their chief was safe. We arrived at Aberfoil together where we met Jarvie, who was waiting for us.

The following day Rob Roy MacGregor accompanied us to Loch Lomond, where we could take a boat to Glasgow.

As we rode he told me, "We Highlanders are rude and ignorant, we are also violent and passionate, but we are not cruel. We are a persecuted generation. We do not want to go against the laws of the country, but people do not permit us to live in peace - so, we must fight."

He then explained that Rashleigh had been obliged to give back my father's papers. He had gone to Stirling and informed the authorities that the Highlanders were preparing a rebellion against King George.

While he was speaking, Helen and his two sons arrived. "You are welcome," she said, looking at me and at the Bailie. "Excuse my previous rudeness. We live in bad times!" and she gave me a ring. It was one of Dianas rings - a farewell present, Helen said.

A boat was waiting for us. We parted from Rob Roy with many manifestations of affection while the bagpipes sounded their melancholy notes. He remained watching us for some time, standing on a rock at the side of the loch with his long gun, his tartan and the single feather in his cap. Then he vanished.

Chapter 12. The Tables Are Turned

That same night we reached Glasgow. I returned to my inn, where Andrew himself came to open the door.

Owen appeared behind him with another man - it was my father!

"My dear, dear son!" he said, embracing me.

We were overjoyed to see one another. He told me that he had come to Scotland to capture Rashleigh and to put his affairs in order. My father asked Bailie Jarvie to be his firm's correspondent in Glasgow and we decided to return to London.

On the morning of our departure, Andrew Fairservice came to my room like a mad man, jumping up and down with excitement and told me that the long-awaited rebellion of the Highlanders in favour of the Old Pretender, King James, was beginning. Rob Roy and his men were on their way to Glasgow!

In the troubled times that followed my Osbaldistone cousins fought for the Jacobite cause and, one after the other, all perished. My uncle, Sir Hildebrand, passed away in a Hanoverian prison. They say he died of sorrow.

After his death I learned from Judge Inglewood that Sir Hildebrand had left all his property to me in the event of his sons' deaths.

He had cancelled Rashleigh from his will because of his support of the Hanoverians, whom my uncle hated. I was now the heir to Osbaldistone Hall - I had inherited everything! The judge also revealed to me that the man they called "His Excellency" was really Diana's father, Sir Frederick Vernon. He had lived in secret at Osbaldistone Hall for many years and only Sir Hildebrand, Diana and Rashleigh knew his secret. I was shocked to hear this information but at the same time I was pleased. The strange man Diana often met in the library was her father, not her husband - she wasn't married after all!

The next morning I set out for Osbaldistone Hall with Andrew. When we arrived, the house had a very different aspect from the last time I had seen it. It was silent and solitary, the doors and windows were closed, the grass in the courtyards was long, the gardens neglected - a sharp contrast to the lively, bustling atmosphere of some months ago. Andrew knocked at every door of the building and finally my uncle's ancient major-domo, appeared. He seemed very agitated and, when I asked him to light a fire in the library, he was reluctant. I soon understood why! As I waited there, I heard a deep sigh behind me and turned to see Diana Vernon standing there with her father. "We beg you to help us, Mr Osbaldistone," Sir Frederick said. "To give us refuge. I am a convinced Catholic, I took part in the rebellion in favour of King James, but I was obliged to flee."

I am hiding here at Osbaldistone Hall with my daughter, waiting for a boat to take us to the Continent."

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I invited them to remain for as long as they needed but I was very agitated. That night there was a violent knocking at the gate - there were soldiers outside. They demanded to enter.

They had orders to arrest Sir Vernon on a charge of treason.

Diana appeared beside me. She whispered "Danger is familiar to us, Frank. Don't be afraid. We will escape into the garden and then into the wood. Dear, dear Frank, farewell!" I heard Andrew shouting. With the soldiers there was a magistrate with a legal mandate accompanied by - Rashleigh! They went at once to the library but it was already empty - Diana and her father had fled. They ran into the gardens and caught the fugitives at the gate. It seemed all was lost but then, as the escort party was leaving with their prisoners, they found a barricade at the Hall gates.

A group of Highlanders barred the way with their cattle. Rashleigh's men were trying to drive the cattle away, when suddenly the leader of the Highlanders cried "Claymore!" It was an ambush prepared by Rob Roy! There was a desperate fight. The soldiers fled and Rashleigh was badly wounded.

"Ask pardon for your treason in the name of God, King James and our old friendship," cried Rob Roy, his sword at Rashleigh's throat.

"Never!" replied Rashleigh, firmly.

"Then, traitor, die for your treason!" cried Rob and passed his sword through his enemy's body. He was still breathing when we brought him to the Hall. His last words were for me: "The pangs of death do not alter my feelings towards you, Frank Osbaldestone - I hate you with an immense hatred!"

And then he died.

Diana and her father escaped and took the boat to France. I returned to London to work in my fathers company. After some time, my anxiety to learn the fate of Miss Vernon became acute and I embarked for France. There, after many adventures, I found her and married her. We have lived happily together since that day.

- THE END -

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