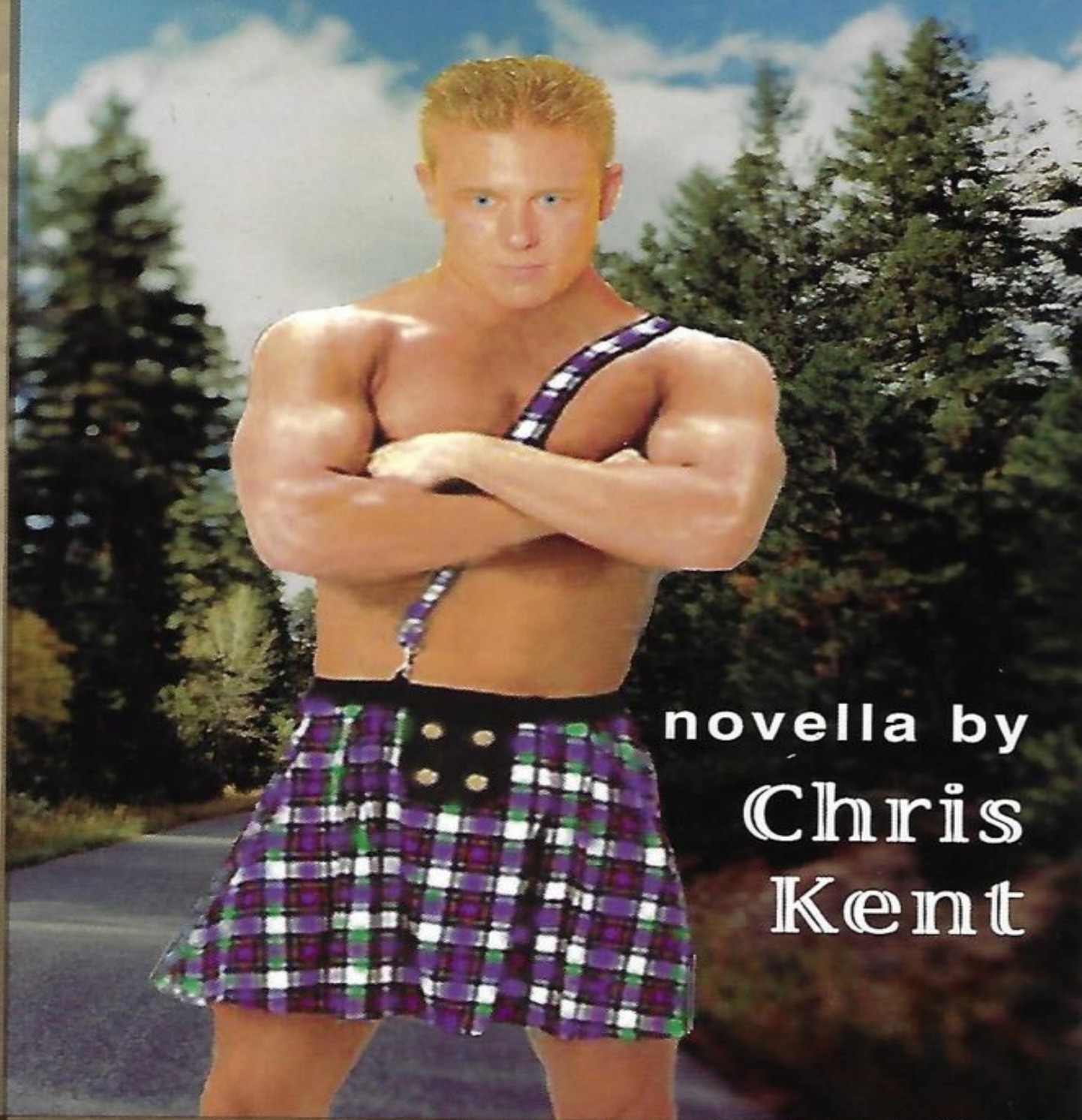


Bravehearts



novella by
**Chris
Kent**

TWO NOVELLAS

**Bravehearts
and Memories**

Table of Contents

First Edition

BRAVEHEARTS

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Chapter 4

Chapter 5

Chapter 6

Chapter 7

Chapter 8

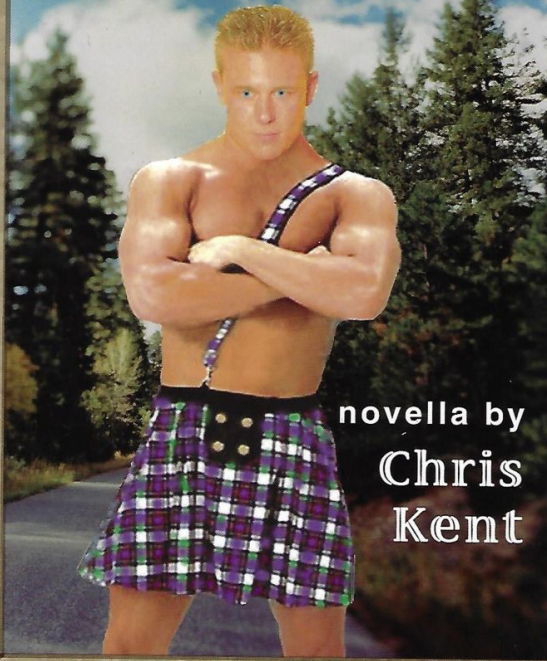
Chapter 9

Chapter 10

Chapter 11

Chapter 12

BRAVEHEARTS



novella by
**Chris
Kent**

TWO NOVELLAS

**Bravehearts
and Memories**

First Edition

Copyright © 2006 by GLB Publishers
All rights reserved. Printed in the U.S.A.

© Copyright GLB Publishers by Chris Kent 1998

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording or any Information storage and retrieval now known or to be invented, without permission in writing from the publisher, except by a reviewer who wishes to quote Brief passages in connection with a review written for inclusion in a magazine, newspaper or broadcast,

Published in the United States by
GLB Publishers
P.O. Box 78212, San Francisco, CA 94107 USA

Cover by W. L. Warner

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are either the products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

Library of Congress Control Number

2004114924

2004114924

1-879194-89-9

Published 2005

BRAVEHEARTS

Novella by **Chris Kent**

An adventure tale of boys coming of age in the Scottish Wars of Independence and finding that not only their race but their love for each other can put them in opposing ranks in the struggle between their nations.

Chapter 1

DUNMORE

The boy stood with his head thrown back, his fair curls floating in the mountain breeze, his blue eyes clear and bright and keen as those of the wild eaglet fixed upon a craggy ridge on the opposite side of the gorge. His left hand was on the collar of the huge wolf-hound who stood beside him, sniffing the wind and showing by every tremulous movement his longing to be off and away were it not for the detaining hand of his young master.

“La-ha-hoo!”

Far down the widening valley and up the wild, crag-filled ravine, rang the strange but not unmusical call. It awoke the slumbering echoes of the still place; a hundred voices seemed to take up the cry and pass it on as from mouth to mouth. But the boy’s quick ears were not to be deceived by the mocking voices of the spirits of solitude, and presently the call rang out again with greater clarity than before.

“La-ha-hoo!”

The lad was very simply clad in a tunic of soft, well-dressed leather, upon the breast of which was stamped some device that might have been the badge of his house. His limbs were encased in the same strong yet yielding material that clearly delineated his growing manhood. The only detail about him which indicated rank or birth was a belt with a richly-chased gold clasp and a poniard with a jewelled hilt. Yet the noble bearing of the boy was the best proof of the noble name he bore. One of the last of the royal house of

Dunmore, he looked every inch a prince as he stood bare-headed in the sunlight amidst the ever-lasting hills of his beloved home, but he was too young to see the clouds which were settling so darkly and so surely upon the bright horizon of his life. He dreamed still—dreams of glory and triumph that culminated in the complete emancipation of his well-loved country from the hated English yoke.

The dog strained and whined against the detaining clasp upon his neck, but the boy held him fast.

“No, Aodh, we are not going hunting,” said the boy. “Is that not the sound of a horn? Are they not even now returning? Over yonder fell they come. Let me but hear their hail, and we will be off to meet them. I would they heard the news first frae my lips. My faither bid me warn them. He fears what Dugald and Duncan might say or do if they were to find English guests in our hall and they all unwarned.”

Once more the boy raised his bee-stung lips and uttered the wild call which had awakened the echoes before. This time his practised ear distinguished amongst the multitudinous replies an answering call from human lips. Releasing Aodh, who dashed forward with a bay of delight, the lad sprang from rock to rock, up the narrowing gorge until he reached a spot where the dwindling stream could be crossed by a bound. The boy sped onwards with the fleetness and agility of a born Highlander, the hound never far from his side. Voices ahead of them gradually became distinctly audible, and soon a little group was observed approaching, laden with the spoils of the hunt.

In the van of the little party were three lads, one of whom bore so striking a resemblance to the youth who now hastened to meet them that the relationship could not for a moment be doubted.

As a matter of fact, the four were brothers. They followed two distinct types—Jamie and Ewan being fair and bright-haired, whilst

Dugald and Duncan (who were twins) had something of the night about them: dour, crabbit craiturs, with black hair and brows, swarthy skins, and something of the wildness of aspect which often accompanies such traits.

Jamie, a well-formed youth of fourteen, walked slightly in advance of his brothers. He greeted Ewan's approach with a bright smile.

"Ha, Ewan, you should have been with us today! We have had rare sport. The guid fellows behind can scarcely carry the booty home. You maun see the noble stag my arrow brought down. His head will adorn the hall; his antlers are something to see, I warrant you. But what brings you out so far frae home? And why did you hail us as if we were wanted?"

"You are wanted," said Ewan, raising his light voice so that all might hear his words. "Faither himself bid me go in search of you, and it is well you come home laden with fresh meat, for we shall need to make merry tonight. There are guests come to the castle today. Ruaraidh was fingering his chanter even as I came away, to entertain our guests tonight. They are to be lodged for as long as they will bide; but the manner of their errand I know not."

"Guests! Why, that is guid hearing. Now we may learn some news. Come these strangers frae Edinburgh? With luck we shall hear somewhat of the noble Wallace, who is standing so boldly for the rights of our nation. Oh, I would that this were the summons to take up arms against the English tyrant who bestrides our country! Would I not fly to his standard, stripling though I be! And would I not shed the last drop of my blood in the glorious cause of liberty!"

Dugald was the speaker. His black eyes glowed fiercely under their straight dark brows. His face was the least boyish of the four. His supple, sinewy frame bore the emergent muscle of manhood. The free, open-air life that all these lads loved and the training they

received in all martial and hardy exercises had given them strength and confidence beyond their years. Though he was but sixteen, it was no idle boast on the part of Dugald to speak of his readiness to fight. He would have marched against the De'il himself when it came to a matter of honour, and doubtless would have acquitted himself well as any, for what the lads lacked in strength, they made up for in their agility and quickness.

Ewan's face was unresponsive, even a little downcast. He gave a quick glance into the fierce, glowing face of his elder brother, and then turned his eyes upon Jamie.

"There is no such news," he said slowly. "The guests who have come to Dunmore are English."

"English!" echoed Dugald fiercely, at first staring and then turning away with a smothered imprecation upon all who hailed from perfidious Albion.

Duncan asked with quick indignation, "What right have English guests at Dunmore? Why were they received? Why did not our guid fellows fall upon them with the claymore or drive them back the way they came? Oh, if we had but been there . . ."

"Calm yourself, brither," said young Ewan quickly. "Is not our faither lord of Dunmore? Do you think that you can usurp his authority? And when did ever gallus Scotsmen fall upon unarmed strangers? Are we to observe the laws of hospitality, or do we make war upon harmless travelers, women and children? It were a base thought. Let not our parents hear us speak such words."

Duncan looked a little discomfited by his youngest brother's rebuke, though he read nocht but sympathy and approbation in his twin's sullen face and gloomy eyes. He dropped a pace or so behind and joined him whilst Jamie and Ewan led the way home.

“The young lad is right enough,” said Dugald, “but I know how your blood boils. Who is this proud Edward that he should lay claims to our lands, our homage, our submission? But let us talk no more of this till we are safely home. We have hunted hard and long today, and I would share a hot tub with you before we meet these English strangers who have come to our hearth.” He slung an arm around his twin’s neck and brushed his cheek with his fingers, an action which often soothed the savage breast that beat beneath Duncan’s tunic. The lad accepted the caress with a sigh.

It was not difficult work for the brothers to traverse the rocky pathway. Dangerous as the descent looked to others, they were as sure-footed as Highland goats and sprang from boulder to boulder with utmost confidence. The long summer sunlight came streaming up the valley in level rays of shimmering gold, bathing the loftier peaks in lambent fire and filling the low lands with layers of soft shadow flecked with gold. A sudden turn in the narrow glen, through which ran a brawling tributary, brought the brothers full in sight of their ancestral home; for a few seconds they paused breathless, gazing with ardent love upon the scene before them.

The majestic pile stood out boldly from the mountainside and was approached by a winding road from the valley. A mere glance showed how strong was the position the castle, or fortified house, occupied, and how difficult such a place would be to capture. On two sides the rock fell away almost sheer from the castle walls, whilst on the other two, a deep moat had been dug which was fed by small mountain rivulets that never ran dry. The entrance was commanded by a drawbridge whose frowning portcullis was kept by a grim warder looking fully equal to the office allotted him. Lovely views were commanded from the narrow windows, and from the battlements and the terraced walk that ran along two sides of the building.

Rough and rude as were the manners and customs of the age, and partially civilised as the country was in those far-off days, there was a strong vein of poetry lying latent in its sons and an ardent love for the rugged beauty of the country who called their own.

An impalpable sense of the troubles to come hung over the fair landscape, and Jamie's eyes grew dreamy as he stood gazing on the familiar scene, so much so that Ewan had to touch his arm and hurry him down to the castle. Ewan gave his brother a look, and then his eyes too travelled lovingly over mountain and glen, over the purple shadows and the curling mists, the dark mysterious woods, the sparkling sunlight on the mountaintops, and the serried battlements of their home. There was something of mute wistfulness in his own gaze as he did so.

"Brither," Ewan said thoughtfully, "I think I know what those feelings are which bring tears to the eyes of men, tears of which they need feel no shame. Never fear to share with me all thy inmost thoughts. Forever we are brothers in all things." Jamie returned his brother's smile; no further words were needed.

The boys quickly crossed the drawbridge and passed through the entrance, finding themselves in a narrow vaulted passage, very dark, which led, with many twists and turns and several ascending stairs to the great hall where the members of the inner household were accustomed to assemble. The hall was a huge place, large enough to contain a muster of armed men. There was little furniture to be seen, and that was of a rude kind, though not lacking in a certain massive grace. The walls were adorned with trophies of all sorts, some composed of arms, others the spoil of glen and forest. The skins of many savage beasts lay upon the stone flooring of the place, imparting warmth and harmony by the rich tints of the furs. Light was admitted through a row of narrow windows, but the vast place

would have been dim and dark had it not been that the huge double doors with their rude massive bolts stood wide open to the summer air and the dying beams of the westering sun.

Auld Ruaraidh, the player of pipes and singer of songs, was a study in himself, his flowing hair, fiery eyes and picturesque garb giving him a weird individuality. But it was not upon him that the eyes of the brothers fell, nor even upon the handsome figure of their father who stood leaning against the chimney-piece with folded arms, eyes shining with the patriotic fervour of his race.

No! The attention of the lads was enchained by another more sumptuous figure, that of a fine-looking man, approaching to middle life, who was seated at a little distance from the piper, smiling with pleasure and appreciation at the wild sweetness of the stream of melody that auld Ruaraidh conjured from the chanter beneath his fingertips. One glance at the dress of the stranger was enough to tell the brothers his nationality; the make and set of his garments and the jewelled and plumed cap held upon his knee alike proclaimed him to be English, a Sassenach. Yet, as the brothers gazed upon his handsome, noble face and looked into the clear depths of the calm and fearless eyes that met their own, they felt no hostility towards this representative of the Auld Enemy, but rather a reluctant admiration.

“In faith he looks born to command,” whispered Duncan to Dugald. Their whispered conversation, held just below the level of the music, continued whilst Ewan, one eye on the stranger, listened intently to his brother’s musings.

Jamie’s attentions were elsewhere, for his glance had fallen upon a young boy who sat off to the left of the chimney-piece, apparently listening attentively to the Highland melodies, but yawning now and again rather more openly than politeness allowed. He was a bonny

little chap, perhaps a year or two younger than Jamie. Golden-haired, green-eyed, with a creamy skin not often seen in the harsher climes of North Britain. He was slim yet sturdy, his tightly-drawn pantaloons showing off shapely legs, above which jutted forth a tightly-muscled rounded bottom that lifted his tunic at the rear.

As Jamie gazed at the young visitor, he felt a new sensation enter his life, a sensation to which he could not give a name, but which he felt shiver down his back, flutter his stomach, and tingle his groin. To his acute embarrassment, he felt the beginning of a 'stiffie', the name his brothers gave to that phenomenon of Nature associated with the duties of procreation. As the gallus Dugald would say, Jamie was springing a 'michty hard-on' about which he could do little or nothing. Surreptitiously, he adjusted his cock so that, in gaining full erection, it might point straight up his belly rather than straight out at its cause.

Other bold eyes, with their fringe of dark lashes, were looking straight at him. As Jamie gazed, the boy suddenly rose and darted towards the brothers as if he had wings on his feet.

"Oh, you've come back!" he said, looking from one to the other, seemingly puzzled for a moment by the likeness; "And, why, there are two of you!" and the boy broke into the merriest and silveriest of laughs. "Oh, I am so glad that I have company at last. I do like boys so much, and I never have any to play with at home. I am so tired of this old man and his thingy. Please show me the castle, please do," and he took Jamie's hand, looking up saucily into his face, and added, "You are the most handsome; I choose you."

Jamie's face glowed, but on the whole he was flattered by the attention and the preference of the gallus young fellow. He understood his soft English speech perfectly, for all the Dunmore brothers had been instructed in the English tongue by an English

monk who had long lived at the castle. Their father, Lord Urquhart, foresaw, and had foreseen many years, the gradual usurpation of the English, and had considered that a knowledge of that tongue would be an advantage to those who were likely to be involved in the coming struggle.

The boys all possessed the quick musical ear of their race and found no difficulty in mastering the language, which was not so distant from that of Laeland Scots, though unbridgeable miles from their own beloved Gaelic.

So as Jamie looked into the bright upturned face, he was able to reply readily and smilingly, "Where would you like to go, lad, and what would you like me to show you?"

"I want to go and see the sun," said the boy. "I am tired of this gloomy hall."

Jamie led the boy out upon the great terrace which overlooked the steep descent to the valley and away to the glowing west. Jamie lifted the boy up in his strong arms to peer over the wide stone balustrade. As he stood behind the boy, holding him under the arms, he felt the heat of the boy's bottom press into his own heat. His semi-engorged cock swelled again and pressed into the boy's crack, the heat as fierce as the flush which coursed across his face.

"It's wonderful, wonderful," cried the boy. "I should like to stay here forever, or at least until the sun goes down. I should like to live here sometimes if it was always summer. Tell me your name, big boy. I hope it is not very hard. Some people here have names I cannot speak right."

From the corner of his eye, Jamie observed Ewan approach. Both disappointed and relieved, he lowered his precious burden. "They call me Jamie," he said. "And here comes Ewan, my youngest brither. These are not hard names, are they?"

“No, not very. And how old are you, Jamie?”

“I am fourteen.”

“Oh, how big you are!” cried the boy, opening his eyes wide. “I thought you must be a little older than that. I am twelve, and you can hold me up in your arms. But then I was always so little; they all say so.”

“Yet you travel with your faither,” said Ewan joining the conversation.

“I never did before, but this time I begged, and he took me. Sometimes he says he will have to give me to the monks because he has nobody to take care of me when he has to travel about. But I don’t think I should like that; I would rather stay here!”

Jamie and Ewan laughed, but the boy was not at all disconcerted. He was remarkably self-possessed for his years, even if he was small of stature and somewhat juvenile in appearance.

“What is your name?” asked Jamie; and the boy answered with becoming gravity and importance: ‘I am called Sir Robert Fitzallan, but you may call me Robbie if you like.’”

“Well then, Robbie,” said Ewan, “you are to lodge with Jamie and me while you are at Dunmore.” He turned to his brither. “Show Robbie our room. I will be with you soon. I missed the hunt today, and I want to be sure I can go hunting tomorrow. I will speak to our brothers, then return to help you look after our guest.”

“Let us stay here for a while,” Robbie asked Jamie. “I want to watch the sun going down, and if you hold me up again, all will be perfect again.” Jamie grunted yes, glad to see that Ewan had turned away and did not see the blushes sweeping across his brother’s cheeks.

Ewan walked away quickly. He turned down a winding staircase, then slipped into a narrow opening. This was one of the many

passages which criss-crossed the castle. Though few of them were secret, few people knew every twist and turn the way the brothers Urquhart did. So many hours of hide-and-seek had been played in these dark passages that the boys could have navigated them blindfolded if necessary.

Three left, two right, and Ewan had reached the narrow slit that led into his elder brothers' chamber. The slit was screened by a tapestry of rough plaid which Ewan, about to enter the room, edged aside. He paused sufficiently to glance into the chamber, stopped, held his breath and let the heavy hanging slide almost closed, hardly able to believe his eyes.

Across the room, his brothers, naked, stood in a large tub of steaming water. This in itself was nothing new; he often shared a hot tub with Jamie, and the boys knew each other's bodies almost as well as they knew their own. But what Jamie saw now, he had never seen before.

Dugald and Duncan stood in the wooden tub which was large enough to reach their knees. Dugald stood behind his twin, his arms wrapped around Duncan's shoulders, his face nuzzling his wet corbie hair. Ewan saw the muscles of Dugald's arse ripple as he ground himself against his twin's hurdies. Ewan saw Dugald's right arm jerk up and down in a rhythm that he recognised immediately. He did not have to see where Dugald's hand was; he knew it was wrapped around Duncan's thick dark cock; knew that the black silky hairs of Duncan's crotch were wetly wrapped around the lower fingers; that Duncan's balls would soon rise high into his scrotum; knew that his brother would soon spit out the hot seed that he himself had spit only half a dozen times in his lifetime.

Ewan felt his erection burn against the soft leather inside his tunic, felt his fingers slip around the shaft and begin those rubbings that

would bring him to a copious spending.

Suddenly the boy, with willpower of the Urquhart clan, pulled his hand away from himself, let the tapestry slip close, and turned the way he had come. He was breathing heavily. He needed time to gather his wits. He would not return to the terrace immediately, but find a dark shady nook where he could sit solitary and examine what he felt about his brothers' . . . his brothers' . . . what? As yet he had no name for what he had seen.

Time passed. Time passed for Jamie and Robert on the great terrace. Time passed for Dugald and Duncan locked in their wet warm embrace. Time passed for Ewan in his solitary hideaway. Time passed and the sun set over Dunmore.

"Have you any sisters?" the boy was asking as they watched dying rays of the setting sun.

"No, only two more brothers."

"More brothers! and what are their names?"

"Dugald and Duncan."

"Dugald and Duncan," echoed the boy. "They looked rather fierce, but then many Scots soldiers look like that—at least until they come into the presence of the great King Edward." The boy's smile was so mischievous, it was clear he meant no real harm.

Jamie's cheek burned ruby red, but he made no reply, for at that moment a head suddenly appeared round an angle of the wall and a heavy grip was laid upon the shoulder of the boy. A wild face and pair of flashing black eyes were brought into close proximity with his, and a smothered voice spoke in fierce, low accents.

Chapter 2

BROTHERS IN ARMS

“What is that you dare to say?”

The voice was harsh, the words were spoken with a rough accent, unlike the gentler tones of Jamie and Ewan. The boy uttered a little cry and shrank away from the grip of the strong hand, and might have been in some danger of losing his balance and falling over the balustrade had not Jamie thrown a protecting arm around him whilst pushing back with the other hand that of the rude interloper.

“Dugald, for shame!” he cried in the Gaelic. “Are you a man who claims the blood of princes and yet can stoop to frighten a mere boy?”

“The boy spoke of conquest, the conquest of our country,” replied Dugald fiercely in the hated English tongue, scowling darkly as he spoke. “Do you think that I will stand patiently by and hear such words? What right has he or anyone besides to speak of that tyrant in such tones?”

Robert Fitzallan stamped his foot. “King Edward is not a tyrant, he is not a usurper. He is great and noble. You do not know him, you cannot know how great and good he is. I will not hear you speak against him. I love his majesty next best to my own father.” Jamie marvelled at the heroic stance the boy assumed. “When I was a child, he would dandle me on his knee and play with me. If you would but give your homage to him, you would be happy and safe; he would protect you; he would . . .”

But Dugald's patience was exhausted; he would listen no more. With a fierce gesture that made Robert shrink back, he turned upon the boy, and it seemed for a moment he would strike him despite Jamie's sturdy protecting arm. But then his own shoulder was suddenly grasped by an iron hand and he himself confronted by the stern countenance of his father.

"What means this, boy?" asked the Lord Urquhart severely. "Would you dare to raise your arm against a bairn, a noble, a guest in your father's house? For shame! I blush for you. Ask pardon instantly of Sir Robert and of his father. I will have no such dealings in mine house. You can be well assured of that."

The beetle-browed boy was crimson with rage and shame, but there was no yielding in his haughty face. He confronted his father with flashing eyes, and as he did so he met the keen, grave glance of the stranger's fixed upon him with a calm scrutiny which aroused his fiercest rage.

"I will not yield. I will not ask pardon," he shouted. "I will not degrade my tongue by uttering such base words. I will not . . ."

"Haud yer wheesht!" The father's hand descended heavily on the son's head in a dunt that would have stunned a lad less hardy and hard-headed. "I'll hae no girnin jessies here." The Urquhart was not one to be defied with impunity by his own sons, and he had had hard encounters of will before now with Dugald who, he admitted to himself, was so much like his younger self.

Dugald glanced up into his father's face and saw no yielding there. Duncan was making vehement signs to him which he alone could interpret. His younger brothers were gazing eagerly at him, and Ewan went so far as to murmur words of entreaty. It seemed as though the silence would never be broken, but at last the headstrong culprit spoke in a low and sullen tone.

“I meant no harm. I would not have hurt Sir Robert.”

“Ask his pardon then, and tell him so.”

“Nay, force him no more,” said the English boy, who regarded this curious scene with lively interest, and who began to feel sorry for the dark, wild, handsome boy who had frightened him by his vehemence. “I was to blame myself. I should not have spoken as I did.—Father, tell our hosts how my tongue is always running away with me. Have you not told me a thousand times that my little tongue would get me into trouble one of these days? It is right and meet that a boy should love his country. Do not think ill of him for that.”

“Ay, let the lad go now, good friend,” said Lord Fitzallan. “No doubt this little sprig of mine was at the bottom of the mischief. His tongue, as he truly says, is a restless fellow. He has found a staunch protector in Jamie at least, and will come to no harm amongst your stalwart lads. I envy you such sons as these, and hope that Robbie will learn to emulate them while we are here among you.”

The Urquhart smiled, but he had not loosed his grip upon his son’s arm.

“Say that you are sorry ere I let you go, Dugald Urquhart,” he said in low but stern tones; and, after a moment’s hesitation, the boy spoke in audible tones: “I am sorry.”

Then as his father’s grasp relaxed, he darted away like an arrow from the bow and plunged with Duncan through a dark and gloomy doorway which led up a winding turret stair to a narrow circular chamber.

“Sorry, sorry, sorry!” he panted fiercely, throwing himself onto a pile of skins that served as a mattress. “Sorry is what I am. Sorry that I did not wring the lad’s neck as the fowler wrings the neck of the bird his shaft has brought down. Sorry I am that I did not cast him headlong down the precipice, that there might be one less of that

hated race contaminating the pure air of Scotland with his poisonous breath. Sorry! aye, that I am!”

Dugald paused, choking back the fierce tide of passion that engulfed him, hardly aware that Duncan had sunk to the mattress by his side and was gently unfastening his breeks. His heart was burning, his soul stirred to its depth. The hot blood in his veins coursed through his rising cock, but he was hardly aware of Duncan’s fingers coaxing him to full erection.

Duncan seemed to understand him without the medium of words. The links which bound the twins together were subtle but strong. If Dugald was the more violent and headstrong, Duncan was more than his equal in diplomacy.

As he manipulated his brother’s cock, Duncan whispered in his ear. “I know what we could do. We could force upon our faither a step which will make a rupture with the English inevitable. We could do a thing which would bring upon us the wrath of the mighty Edward and force both ourselves and our neighbours to take up arms against him.”

“Ach, truly,” responded Dugald, “and could such a thing be, gladly would I lay down my life in the cause of liberty and freedom.” He opened his legs wider to give his brother easier access to what he now sought. “But how might such a thing be done?”

“I know not yet, but we have time for thought. The boy Robert will remain here beneath our father’s charge for a while. His faither goes south to Edinburgh to parley on behalf of the tyrant Edward. The lad remains with us until his return. I had this frae Ruairaidh’s lips.” Dugald could not forebear a grin; both brothers had had so much ‘from Ruairaidh’s lips’ when they were knee-high to a dark-eyed fawn from the forest.

Dugald's eyes glowed. The darkness gathered round the boys in the circle of the chamber. They thought not of descending or of asking for food, even after their day's hunting in the glens. They were hardy and seasoned to abstemious ways. Silence before supper was settling down on the castle and they had no intention of leaving the room until what had begun in the tub was accomplished.

Gentle pressure on the back of Duncan's head signalled that his brother was ready. He stretched his mouth wide and lipped it over the mushroom-shaped head from which the foreskin had already been pulled back. With the tip of his tongue, Duncan flicked away some opalescent drops of his brother's passion, and then engulfed the thick shaft even to the black silky hair at its root. The boys, under the tuition of Ruaraidh, had begun early, and Duncan relaxed his throat muscles easily as Dugald slid deep within. His free hand slid from his brother's scrotum on the hot dark path, marked by the perineum, to the puckered ring at the centre of his being. His head began to bob up and down over Dugald's groin as his finger eased past his sphincter muscle. Dugald sighed and stretched himself; this was how he liked to do his thinking, not that he was over-fond of thinking, but if it had to be done, this was the way to do it. Soon enough all thought would be gone.

Supper over, the boys were back in the chamber though this time another was with them. Ruaraidh loved all his boys, but he was particularly attached to the twins. He shared to the full their ardent love for their country and their untempered hatred of the English race. He saw, as they did, nothing but ill in the temporizing attitude now to be found amongst certain Scottish nobles with regard to the claims made by the English monarch; and much of the fierce hostility to be found in the boys was the result of the lessons instilled into their minds by the passionate bard. It was with ease that he joined in

their discussions on how best to exploit the presence of their unwelcome guests.

“The boy Robert has dwelt in the household of Edward himself, and is said to be a favourite of the king. He has played with his children, and is beloved of them all. Let Edward but hear that the boy is lost in the fastness of Dunmore, and he will march in person to his rescue. All Scotland will rise in arms to defend itself; north will join with south, Highlands with Lowlands, Inverness with Edinburgh, and Scotland will shake off the hated foreign yoke forever.” The boys listened spell-bound. They had often talked together of some step which might kindle the conflagration, but had never yet seen the occasion. Discontent and resentment were rife all over the country, but it was the fashion to compromise and temporize with the invader rather than to defy him openly. There was a strong party of nobles in the country whose policy was that of paying homage to Edward and retaining their lands, both north and south of the Border, under his protection and countenance. This was a policy utterly incomprehensible, both to the boys and to the man who had tutored them in love and hatred.

“What can we do?” asked Dugald hoarsely.

“I will tell you,” whispered the bard, leaning across the mattress to brush the hair from Dugald’s eyes. “This very night I leave the castle by the postern door. In the moonlight I will make my way to the Clan Cameron, where dwells that gallus patriot Cameron of Lochiel. To him I will tell all. He will risk everything in the cause. It will be simply done. You boys must pretend a while, must feign friendship for the boy left behind. Your brothers have won his heart already; you must not be behind them. The kestrel must have no fear of the young eaglets. The lad has a high courage of his own; he loves adventure and frolic; he will long to stretch his wings and wander

amid the mountain heights. The day will come when the thing is to be done. In some of the wild fastnesses will be lurking the gallus Camerons of Lochiel. Thither you maun lead young Robert, first by some device getting rid of your brothers, who might try to thwart the scheme. These gallus fellows will carry off the boy to the safe-keeping of Lochiel. Aince let him be their prisoner and there is no fear of escape. Edward himself with all his forces at his back will scarce wrest away the prize. The whole country will be united.

“Now, my lovely lads, get to your chamber. Get to bed. Sleep well. And in the morning, be as fine friends to Robert Fitzallan as he has ever had. I’ll away to the Lochiel and set our plans in motion.” He ran his hand down Duncan’s flushed cheek and murmured, “Had I but one hour more . . .”

Whilst within the upper turret-chamber this plot was being concocted against the innocent by two passionate, hot-headed boys, and an elder who should have known better, Robbie was himself sleeping soundly and peacefully between the younger brothers within a small inner closet.

Ewan, too, was sound asleep, the rigors of a day’s hunting having pleasantly exhausted him. Jamie could not sleep. All three boys lay facing the wall, Robbie cradled in Jamie’s lap.

Jamie sighed and listened to the regular breathing of the sleepers. How he wished to join them! But his cock was so hard it ached to the memory of Robbie’s bottom pressed against him on the terrace. Once again his hard cock pressed into the boy’s crack, this time separated only by the thin flannel of their nightgowns. Jamie pondered on rising from the mattress, padding to the hole that plunged into the moat, and relieving himself by those sinful actions to his person he had learned that summer. But how unsatisfactory that would be!

Cautiously, he separated himself from Robbie, and gently eased up his own nightgown till his erection sprang free. Gripping himself, he jerked the shaft gently. Ah, that was better! But it was not enough. Disbelieving his own folly, he eased Robbie's nightgown up and over his bottom until it rested in a bunch at his waist. He ran his fingers over the cool creamy skin he half-saw in the gloom of moonlight. He held his cock at its base and ran the head up and down the boy's crack. Ah, the sensation! Ah, the relief!

Jerking himself gently, the head of his cock running the length of the boy's crack, Jamie slipped his free hand round and onto Robbie's belly. It slid downwards. Was that silkiness hair? He touched the tip of the boy's cock and jerked back his hand. It was hot. The boy was fully erect! He slipped his fingers around the shaft, surprised by its thickness as much as its length; almost as long and thick as his own. He jerked himself and the sleeping boy in matching rhythms. He wanted it to last forever, but the more he wanted it, the less able was he to make it last.

He jerked and jettied, squirting little spurts of hot juice into the crack of Robbie's bum. Four, five, six. He fought against the juddering of his legs, the fluttering of his stomach muscles. He jerked himself empty, then carefully wiped the semen with the bottom of his nightshirt. Robbie sighed. Jamie froze. The younger boy turned in his sleep, threw an arm round the older, and pressed his groin, cock still erect, into Robbie. He murmured something in his sleep, then fell into the breathing rhythms of before. Robbie laid his cheek against the boy, sighed and joined him and his brother in the arms of Morpheus.

It had been quite a day.

Chapter 3

WHERE EAGLES DARE

“Where is Robert, father?”

“I know not, my son. I thought he was with thee.”

“I have not seen him anywhere. I have been busy with Aodh and the hounds.”

“Where are your brothers?”

“That I know not either. I have seen no one since I rose this morning.”

“The boy had risen and dressed himself, and had slipped out betimes,” said Lord Urquhart, as he took his place at the breakfast board beside Jamie. “Methought he would be with thee since you two have become such fast friends. But Robbie is a veritable sprite for flitting hither and thither after thee. Doubtless he is somewhere with the others. It is good to see how Dugald and Duncan have befriended him. Who knows where the lads have gone this morning. They are not wont to be absent at the breakfast hour.”

A question addressed to the servants at the lower end of the board shed some light. By what was said it appeared that Ewan had started off early to fly a new falcon, and it seemed probable that his brothers and Robert Fitzallan had accompanied him. For whilst he had been discussing with the falconer the best place for making the proposed trial, Dugald had been to the stables and saddled and led out the sturdy pony on which their young quest rode habitually. There

seemed no reason to doubt that the party had gone somewhere up the highlands to witness the maiden essay of the bird.

“Robbie would be sure to want to see the trial,” agreed Jamie, attacking the venison strips before him with a hearty appetite. “He loves to go with us when there is anything to see or hear. Though I marvel he spoke not of it to me, but perchance it slipped his memory.”

The early risers were late at the meal, but no one was anxious about them. When anything so engrossing as the flying of a young falcon was in the wind, it was natural that so sublunary a matter as breakfast should be forgotten. The servants had finished their meal and had left the table before there was any sign of the return of the wanderers, and then it was only Ewan who came bounding in, face flushed, eyes shining as he caressed the hooded bird upon his wrist.

“See this beauty, Jamie. I wish you’d been there. I took him up to . . .”

“Ach, tell us all that when you have had something to eat,” said Jamie. “And where is Robbie? He maun be well-night famished by this time.”

“Robbie? Nay, I know not. I have not seen him. I would not have wearied him with such a tramp through the heavy morning dews.”

“But he has his pony,” protested Jamie. “Dugald led it away ere it was well light. Were you not all together?”

“Nay, brither. I was alane. Dugald and Duncan were off and away before I was ready; for when I sought them to ask if they would come, they were nowhere to be found. As for Robert, I never thought of him. I thought he was abed with you. Where can they have taken him so early?”

A look of anxiety crossed Jamie’s face; but he repressed any exclamation of dismay, and glanced at his father to see if by any

chance his feelings were shared. But his face was calm and placid as he said composedly, "If the boy is with Dugald and Duncan, he will be safe. They have taken him on some expedition, but none will harm the boy with two such stout protectors by his side." Their father rose and moved away to commence his round of duties, which in those days was no sinecure.

Jamie stood in the midst of the great hall with a strange shadow on his face. Ewan, who was eagerly engaging his porridge, looked wonderingly at him. "Brither, what ails thee?" he said at length, "Thou seemest ill at ease."

"I am ill at ease," answered Jamie, and with a quick glance around him to assure himself that there was no one by to hear him, he swung himself along the bench to sit close to his brother. He spoke in a low, rapid English.

"My heart misgives. You know what Dugald ever was, and Duncan is but his shadow. They appear to be friends to Robbie, but I have mistrusted this strange friendship before now, remembering what chanced that first day. Dugald never forgives nor forgets."

His brother broke in anxiously.

"I know not what to think, save that Ruairaidh has been up to Lochiel, and you know what the Camerons think of the English. Then I overheard Dugald and Duncan talking of late of the eagle's nest on the crag half-way thither." (Ewan failed to mention that he'd heard his brothers talking as he concealed himself behind the tapestry in the circular chambers, fascinated by the carnal relations they seemed to enjoy.) "If they named it to Robbie he would have been wild to go and inspect it. But Robert is our father's guest; I cannot believe it of our ain brothers."

"Yet, Ewan, if the thing is so, there is no time to lose. You maun quietly collect and arm a few of our staunchest men, together with

the English servants left here with their young master. God forbid, but it may be that our brothers are about to betray our guest into the hands of one of England's most bitter foes. Yet, I do not want to betray our brothers, so we must exorcise this demon ourselves. I would not for very shame live to see the day when I must avow to him what had befallen a child at the hands of my brethren, his sons. Let us pray that we are on a fool's mission, and that our fears are groundless."

Ewan was fully alive to the possible peril menacing Robert Fitzallan, and eagerly took orders from his elder brother. It would be difficult to summon up a dozen armed men without alerting his father, but he would do it. They would follow upon Jamie's fleet steps with as little delay as might be, and would at least track the fugitive and his guides, whether they succeeded in effecting a rescue that day or not.

Jamie waited for nothing but to give a few directions to his brother. Then unleashing two of the fleetest, strongest, fiercest hounds, he sped up across the glen towards the lonely crag of the eagle's nest, which lay halfway between the Castle of Dunmore and the abode of Cameron of Lochiel.

There was one advantage Jamie possessed over his brothers; he could take the wild deer tracks which led straight onward and upward, whilst they with their charge would have to keep to the winding pony-track, which trebled the distance. The boy moved as if he had wings on his feet, and although the hot summer sun began to beat down on his head, and his breath came in deep, laboured gasps, he felt neither heat nor fatigue but pressed eagerly onwards and upwards with the strong, fleet hounds at his side.

The honour of his House drove him onwards as did another vision; that of the naked Robbie standing in a hot tub while Jamie soaped

and sponged his body. The creamy, soap-scented skin. The strong little chest. The curve of his belly. The legs so well-articulated from the bony hips. The fine down at the base of his belly. The little snake of his penis that swelled without warning and rose to stand proud and perpendicular. The boy had giggled, then become gravely serene as Jamie gently dighted his growing parts with a cloth of fine linen. How Jamie had wanted to kiss the little purposeful head that protruded from its mantle of foreskin; and how Robbie had thrust his little hips towards his friend's face. Both boys had resisted temptation, knowing they would succumb sooner rather than later to the impulses of their nature.

The path grew wilder and steeper. Jamie thrust the vision away to concentrate on the ascent. The heat of the sun was

tempered by the cold of the upper air. It was easier to climb, and the boy felt that his muscles were made of steel. Suddenly a new sound struck upon his ear: the whinny of a pony. In that sound was a note of distress. Glancing cautiously over a ridge, Jamie saw Robert's brown and white pony standing precariously on a ledge of rock looking pitifully about him, unable to move either up or down. The fellow had plainly been turned loose and abandoned and become stranded upon this ledge, frightened to move a step. Jamie was fond of all animals and could not leave the pony in such dire straits.

Although every moment was precious, the boy contrived to get the animal up the steep bank and on to better ground, then tethered him on a small grassy plateau where he could feed and take his ease for an hour or two to come. The matter accomplished, the lad was up and off again, trusting now to the hounds to direct him, for he did not know which tracks his brothers had taken, and the hard rocks refused to betray their secret passage. But the hounds were well used

to the work, and with their noses to the ground followed the trail with a confidence that made Jamie's spirits rise.

Jamie had reached the shoulder of the mountain; he could see across the glen; could see the narrow winding track that led to the stronghold of the Camerons; saw the Eagle's Crag, as it was called, fall away precipitously on the other side.

Ha! What was that?

A thin cry in the thin air.

For a moment Jamie's blood ran cold. He recalled the traits of fierce cruelty which had sometimes shown themselves in Dugald from childhood, his well-known hatred of the English, his outburst against Robert, so quickly followed by overtures of friendship. What if . . .? But the thought was too repellent to be seriously pursued and, shaking it off by effort, he raised his voice and called his brothers by name.

Then, almost as it seemed from beneath his very feet, there came an answering call; but the voice was not that of his brothers, but the cry of a terrified boy.

"Oh, Jamie, it is I, Robbie. Do, please, come to me . . . I am frightened. I fear I shall fall . . . I know I shall be killed. Do come to me quickly. I don't know where your brothers have gone."

"I am coming! I am coming!" called Robbie, his heart leaping into his mouth. "Do not move. I shall be with you in a moment!"

Robbie slipped his way down a narrow path that surrendered to a drop of more than a thousand feet. He came to a break in the path of about six feet, paused, then jumped cleanly to the other side. He turned a corner, and it was crouched up against the cliff in this little alcove that Jamie found Robert, white-faced, but not bowed, pressed against the rock, faint from want of water, terrified at the loneliness and at his own fears for the safety of his disappeared companions.

At the sight of Jamie, Robbie rose and stepped into his friend's open arms. He clung to the older boy, sobbing into his neck, then kissed him passionately about the face, the cheeks, the lips. Unable to think, Jamie returned the kisses until both boys, breathless, stepped apart and began to laugh.

"Well, what a fine sight we are," said Jamie. "Standing in Eagle's Crag, kissing like two young maidens."

"You don't mind, do you?" asked Robbie, a note of uncertainty returning to his sweet unbroken voice.

Robbie laughed, pulled the boy into his arms, then kissed on the lips again. "I only mind if you do."

"And I don't," laughed Robbie, "so all is right with the world again."

"All is most certainly not right, at least not yet," said Jamie, a sober note in his voice. "We maun get down frae this eyrie and back to Dunmore before the world is right again."

Taking his junior partner by the hand, he led him to the break in the path and urged him to close his eyes. "One, two, three!" and the boys jumped together, landing safely if untidily on the other side. They climbed to the top of the escarpment, the dogs bounding around them, till they reached the grassy plateau where the tethered pony cropped the grass quietly in the sun.

Jamie sent the hounds running home, then sat down in the grass and pulled out a leather water pouch. "Come, sit by me, Robert Fitzallan. Drink, then tell me of the adventure that befell you this morning. Leave nocht out; I need to know all." The younger boy lowered himself to the grass, and, without a by-your-leave, stretched out so that his head lay in Jamie's lap. He trickled some water down his throat, then told his tale.

Dugald and Duncan had been so kind. They had taken him in search of the eagle's nest. They had not minded him being so slow, but had brought him all the way; and when he wanted to follow them along the ledge to get a better view of the next, they had blindfolded him lest he become giddy, and had put a rope around him and brought him safely along the narrow ledge till he had got to the place where Jamie found him. But the nest could not be seen even from there, and they had left him to see where it really was. They said they would soon be back, but they had not returned, and he had got first anxious and then terrified for them, and then fearful for his own safety. At last when faintness and giddiness had come upon him, and he could get no answer to his repeated shouts, his spirit had altogether given way; and had not Jamie come to rescue him, he was certain he would have fallen down the precipice. He did not know how he should ever get back along the narrow ridge, he was so frightened and giddy. Did Jamie know where his brothers were? Would Jamie take care of him, and bring him safely home?

"I will if I can," answered Jamie, with a strange light in his blue eyes. "Ewan is on his way with plenty of help. He will be here soon. 'Tis best we wait here till they arrive. Rest now and regain your strength, for you have had a fright.'

The English boy murmured his thanks and moved his head in his saviour's lap to make himself more comfortable. Jamie blushed as he realised his cock had lengthened and hardened under the warm pressure. He thought of the night when he had pulled the boy close to him, and how they had lain, naked skin to naked skin, hard cock to hard cock, one asleep, the other fully alert until the spurting sperm brought him peace.

Robert twisted his head until it lay sideways in his friend's lap. He could not but notice the bulge under the soft leather that seemed to

stretch even as he watched it. His curious finger tips ran its length. How hot! How hard!

Expecting every moment to be brushed away, he let his fingers pull open the draw string that held the breeks together. He ran his fingers inside. He could feel the hot length beneath the thin weave of Jamie's undergarments. His fingers insinuated themselves inside, grasped the hot hard cock and pulled it into the light.

He heard Jamie gasp above him.

How pretty it was! How handsome! How masculine! A good two inches longer than his own and twice as thick! He let his pert little nose run its length. The shaft felt like iron and silk. How could it be so hard and soft at the same time? He edged the skin farther down the head: purple it was, purple like the heather he'd seen on an autumn visit to Dunkeld on his father's business. His own was pink, little boy pink, but Jamie's was a manly purple.

He squeezed, he sniffed, he tasted, letting his tongue run over the fat head of Jamie's throbbing cock. For throbbing it was; he felt the beating against his cheek. He returned his lips to the head and, pursing them, sucked a full inch into his mouth. The taste was familiar and alien at the same time. He knew the smell of piss, but there was something extra here, something in the gooey juices that coated his lips, within and without. He let Jamie's cock slide deeper into his mouth, his throat, gagging for a moment, then reaching a comfortable compromise where he could lie there and suck it like his wet nurse's tit.

Jamie tried to lie still, stricken, stunned, disbelieving what was happening, but rapidly slipping from guilt to ecstasy. He tried to stay still, but imperceptibly, then palpably, he began sliding his cock in and out of the hot eager lips that held him. He felt Robbie's fingers play with the curls at the base of his cock, slide around his balls, then

return to jerk the base in time with the ministrations of his hot little mouth. He tried to bide still but he was pumping now, pumping hard into the boy's mouth. He felt his hurdies tighten, felt his balls rise in his scrotum, felt his arsehole contract and dilate ever faster.

Did the boy know what was going to happen? Would he be prepared for the hot spurts of semen that would soon fill his mouth? Should I warn him? Should I—push him away? Should I . . .? Too late! Jets of semen spurted and spurted hard into the sucking boy's mouth as the hard cock jerked out of control. He did not push it away; he sucked harder, revelling in the hot creamy fullness in his mouth and the front of his throat. There was so much juice; so much became too much and spurted from the sides of his mouth, bubbled over his soft red lips, and ran down his child-like chin.

Robbie coughed, spluttered, gagged, pulled his head away and rolled into the grass. He was trying to laugh and swallow Jamie's juices at the same time. He was in danger of choking in his delight. Jamie pulled him up from the grass to a sitting position and clapped him vigorously on the back. Robbie swallowed hard, then pulled Jamie into him. They kissed full-mouthed, then open-mouthed, and for the first time Jamie tasted his own juices mixed with the saliva of his bed-companion.

At last they pulled away breathless.

"Since the first night you touched me in bed, I have wanted to taste all of you, Jamie Urquhart," said Robert Fitzallan with a new-found gravity. "But I was afeard we might waken Ewan, and I was afeard you might think me over-bold."

Jamie blushed furiously; his heart thumped in his chest.

"I wish what you wish," he gasped. "There is an auld Gaelic proverb. It best translates in the English tongue as, 'What will be, will be.' Let us rejoice that we have found each other, and keep the

secret to ourselves. My Robert, my Robbie, my grilse.” [A grilse is a young salmon which has only been to the sea once. Author]

The boys embraced again, but this time they embraced as young men.

Voices carried on the thin air reached them. Jamie, alert as a fox, quickly pulled himself together. He spoke in a grave, manly way that at once riveted the English boy’s attention.

“I am afraid that those voices do not belong to our friends, but to a band of brigands who are coming to take you prisoner to a stronghold farther up the glen.”

The boy shrank back and put his hand before his eyes.

“No, do not be frightened. I will save you frae them if I can. There is help coming for us, and I think we can dodge them for some time to come. Keep a guid heart and not be frightened. You may see some hard blows struck but you can shut your eyes and not think about it. If they kill me and carry you off, do not give up hope, for Ewan and our own men will follow after and rescue you.”

Robert’s eyes dilated in protest.

“I am young, but I am no milksop!”

His soldier spirit awoke within him, and he snatched the dirk that Jamie carried in his stocking. He drew his small figure to its full height and said, “We will both fight. We will both fight and we will both die rather than let them take us.”

“Come then,” said Jamie. “There is a narrow passage on this track where we cannot be outflanked. There is sheer heugh on one side and a drop of five hundred feet on the other. I have but a poniard, yet that is easier to manoeuvre in the confined space we will defend than the heavy claymores they bear. And, after all, they mean to capture you, not injure you, so all in all, we may make a fecht of it yet!”

The boys hurried down the track, then slowed as they navigated the narrow ledge of which Jamie had spoken. Here they stood, and here they made their stand.

All too soon, Jamie heard the incautious steps approaching along the path, and he gripped his weapon more tightly in his hand. The red light of battle was in his eyes, and the moment he caught sight of the ruffian threading his perilous way along the path, he sprang upon him with a cry of fury, ran him through, and sent him tumbling into the gulf beneath.

Down fell the fellow, utterly unprepared for such an assault, and his sharp cry of terror was echoed by half a dozen voices.

A second ruffian appeared round the corner of the cliff and was similarly despatched into the heart of the abyss; but a sharp thrill of pain ran through Jamie's frame as a barbed arrow pierced his leather jerkin above the heart.

"Hold your arrows," commanded a voice in the Gaelic. "It is Jamie Urquhart! It is one of the sons of Dunmore. Jamie, art thou mad? We are the friends of thy father's house. We are here at the instigation of thy ain kindred. Give us the Sassenach, and thou shalt go free. We would not harm thee!"

"Stir but one step nearer, and I slay thee as I have slain two of thy comrades," cried Jamie in a voice that all might hear. "I deal not in treachery towards those that trust us. This boy is a guest in my father's house; take your dealings to the Urquhart if you must. As for me, I will answer for the safety of this boy with my ain life. Shall we men of Scotland give right cause to the English to call us traitors, cowards, and the murderers of children? Take my life if you will, but you will never take my honour!"

"La-ha-hoo!"

Hark! What was that? It was a shout, a hail, and then the familiar call of the Dunmore brothers rang through the still air.”

“La-ha-hoo!”

It was Ewan’s voice. He had come at last. The foe heard and paused, for if they were menaced from another quarter, it was time to think of their own safety. Summoning up all his strength, Jamie sent back an answering hail, then saw his antagonists lower their weapons and return the way they had come with fearful backward glances lest their boy-foes be upon them. Jamie had no wish to do that. He was spent and exhausted and wounded worse than he knew. He turned towards the safer bield of the little alcove, and sank down beside the panting Robbie. Before he slipped into unconsciousness, he whispered, “Dicht your lips. They sparkle of me.”

Chapter 4

JAMIE'S REWARD

Jamie knew very little of the occurrences of the next few days. He was carried down the mountainside to the castle and to the chamber he shared with Ewan and Robert. There he lay for several days and nights in a dreamy, semi-conscious state, tended by his mother, the Lady Urquhart, with all the skill and tenderness she possessed, and, save when the pain of his wounds made him restless and feverish, sleeping much, and troubling his head little about what went on within or without the castle walls.

He was dimly aware that Robert slipped in and out of the room sometimes, and that his caressing gestures were soothing and pleasant. But he did not trouble his head to wonder how it was that he was lying there, nor what event had crippled him so, nor why his English friend sometimes licked the sweat from his chest, his belly, and even lower. Only in fevered visions did he see himself once again standing upon the narrow ledge of the Eagle's Crag with a host of foes bearing down on him to overpower both him and his charge.

But after a few days of feverish lassitude and drowsiness, the lad's magnificent constitution triumphed; the fever left him; and though he now lay weak and pale, his mind was perfectly clear, and he was eager and anxious to know what had happened whilst he had been shut out from the life of the castle.

His mother was naturally the one to whom he turned for information. He saw that she was unwontedly blanched and grave

and thoughtful. As she sat beside his bed with her needlework in her hands one bright afternoon, the sunlight streaming into the chamber and the air floating in through the narrow casement full of scent and birdsong, his eyes fixed themselves upon her face with more of purpose and reflection, and he begged her to tell him all that had passed.

“For I know that our guests are still here. Robert and Ewan come daily to see me. But where are Dugald and Duncan? I have not seen them once. Is my father angry with them still? Or have they been chastised and forgiven?”

“Your brothers are still close prisoners,” answered the mother with a sigh. “They have been chastised with more severity than any son of ours has needed to be chastised before; yet, they remain sullen, defiant, obdurate and vengeful. Thy faither will not permit them to come out from their confinement so long as our guests remain. Perchance it is for the best; it would surely cause trouble in the house for them to meet. I would that they could see matters differently, and yet there are many amongst our people who would say that the true patriotism was theirs.”

“Ah, mother,” cried Jamie, wincing a little from shoulder pain in his enthusiasm, “none would question their patriotism, only the means by which they would serve their country. The kidnapping of children is not the Highland way. But tell me, mother, our guests—when will Robert and his father depart?” He hoped his mother did not hear the slight tremble in his voice.

“Lord Fitzallan awaits thy recovery, my son. He hath a very warm feeling towards thee, and would speak to thee of something that is in his heart ere he quits Dunmore. He has spoken of it to thy faither and to me, but he wishes thee to hear it from his ain lips.”

The boy's interest was aroused.' Something in his mother's expression told him that the thing of which she spoke was a matter of some importance. "What is it he wishes to say? Canst thou not tell me thyself?"

The Lady of Dunmore paused awhile in thought; and when she spoke, it did not appear to be in direct reply to her son's question.

"My son, what I tell thee thou maun keep to thy heart. This promise thou maun make as much to the Mother of the King of Kings as to thy own mother." Jamie swallowed hard, for rarely had he heard his mother pronounce such a terrible condition upon his silence. Wide-eyed, he nodded his assent.

"Knowest then, Jamie Urquhart, that thou art heir to Dunmore. Thy faither, my husband, wills it so, for thou knowest the law of the first born is not the law of this land, and the title may be appointed as well as inherited. In the fullness of time, thy faither will appoint thee Lord Urquhart of Dunmore."

Jamie's gasp was audible. His mother put her fingertips to his lips.

"Thou knowest what thy brothers are—I speak of Dugald and Duncan. I cannot but fear for them—unless, indeed, the rapacious greed I see in Dugald proves stronger than his fierce hatred for the English, and he prefers to do homage for his lands rather than lose them. Thou hast a head on thee, Jamie Urquhart, and wits within that head; thou knowest in thy head if not thy heart that Scotland is no match for the Conqueror Edward, at least whilst our country is rent by petty feuds and factions.

"But thou wilt be the head of the family, and the chief power will rest with thee when thy faither is gone. I counsel thee, if the time comes when thou maun make thy choice, be not led away by blind hatred of the English. They may prove less cruel foes than thine own countrymen are to one another. Remember that no people are cruel

and rapacious in their entirety. There are generous, noble, honourable men amongst them, of whom I'm sure our guest is one."

"Nay, not one, mother, but two," blurted Jamie. "Thou hast forgotten Robbie."

"Nay," laughed his mother. "I have not forgotten thy bosom friend, but he like thou is but a boy. In time you will both be fine men, but for the moment cherish thy boyhood."

The conversation ended there, and was not renewed, but the very next day Lord Fitzallan sought Jamie's room when the lad was lying alone, wearying somewhat of his own company. The light sprang into his eyes as he saw the guest approach, for in his own boyish way he had a great admiration for the man.

"Well, lad, I am glad to see you looking something more substantial and like your own self," said the English nobleman, seating himself upon the edge of the bed and taking Jamie's hand in his. "This hand has done good service to me and mine—good service, indeed, to its own country and to the King of England who would have been forced to chastise with severity the outrage planned upon a subject of his, and one so dear to him from association with his own children. As for me, there is no way I can repay you for what you have done for Robert, but, believe me, I will try, I will try."

Jamie's cheeks flushed.

"I did but do my duty by any guest beneath my father's roof. I was responsible for the safety of your son. I had with pleasure taken that duty upon myself. I want nothing; he is safe, and that is enough. Only if you would speak to my faither for my brothers. I know they merited deep displeasure, yet they are but lads, and doubtless were led away by evil counsels. My father would hear pleading better from you than from me."

“It shall be done,” said Lord Fitzallan, regarding Jamie steadily. “And now, my boy, I would speak to you seriously and gravely as man to man, for you have proved yourself to be a man in action, in courage, and in foresight. And your parents tell me that you are acquainted with the burning questions of the day, but that your brothers’ headstrong hatreds and prejudices do not blind you.”

The boy made no reply, but fixed his bright eyes steadily on the man’s face, who on his side, after a brief silence, began again in clear, terse phrases.

“I know that you will one day be Lord Urquhart, Lord of Dunmore. My son Robert will one day be Lord Fitzallan. Your father and I have a plan. We would unite the titles of Urquhart and Fitzallan, so that both rule our estates in England and in Scotland, hoping by unity to destroy enmity.” Unexpectedly, the man laughed merrily. “If one of you were a fair maid, there would be no problem. Marriage, not friendship, would unite our houses. Yet, I know my Robert loves you like a brother, and you have the same enthusiasm for him. So, let us unite our houses in friendship, for as the poet has said, a sound friendship will outlast the mountains. What do you say, lad?”

Jamie’s face glowed with a sort of boyish shame, not unmingled with pride; but the idea was altogether too strange and new to him to be readily grasped.

“I have never thought of such things,” he said, “and, perhaps, need time to think on the consequences. If our nations should meet in fierce conflict, as that may yet be, it would be a cruel thing for Robert to be linked with a rebel, for such we are called by the English monarch when we rise to fight for the liberties bequeathed by our ancestors. Nay, noble lord, frown not on me. There be moments when two spirits strive within me, and I am fearful of trusting even myself. Bind not your son to one whose fate may be set with perils

and shadows. There be those amongst our seers who tell us that a dark fate hangs over the house of Dunmore, and that we four brothers shall be the last to bear that name.”

Lord Fitzallan looked grave and earnest.

“Give me but a year and a day. Summon me to Fitzallan. Then we will see more surely what Time and Fate have decreed for us all.”

“Well, lad,” said the Englishman, “you have spoken bravely and well. Perchance your words are right; perchance it will be well to let matters rest as they are for the present. We will have no solemn agreement until a year and a day have run their course. And now I must say you farewell, for tomorrow we ride the way we came. I trust to see you at the king’s court one of these days, and to make known to his royal majesty the noble youth of Dunmore.” He turned to go, then turned again.

“A final favour. My son Robert has missed his nights with you. If you are strong enough, he would spend his last night in the bed where he has learned to sleep so deep and safe. What do you say?”

Only the beating of Jamie’s heart and the pain it caused prevented a furious blush that might have betrayed the depth of his feelings on hearing such words. He attempted to speak gruffly, yet found his voice leaping an octave high.

“I am strong enough,” he said, “and have no objections if Robert wills it so.”

His erection was good and strong ere Lord Fitzallan quit the chamber.

Just before the sun set that summer’s day there came down the stone corridor which led to the bed chamber the patter of feet, and Jamie leaned up on his elbow with brightening eyes as the door opened and Robbie came dancing in.

“Look, my hero,” the English boy said, “I have broke this gold coin in two—the king gave it me once. I got the armourer to do it, and to make a hole in each half.” He scrambled with care onto the bed and lay full length by Jamie’s side. “You must wear one half round your neck, and I will wear the other ”

Jamie let him hang the half of the coin round his neck by a strong silken line, strange new thoughts crowding into his mind as he felt the boy’s hands about him. Suddenly he clasped them in both of his and pressed warm kisses upon them. Robbie threw his arms about his neck in a childish paroxysm of affection, saying as he did so between his kisses—“And now you must give me something that I will remember.”

The boy slid down Jamie’s body, slipping open his night tunic as he went, pressing wet kisses to his neck, his chest, each hard little nipple, his belly button, the little forest of hair at its base, the tip of his hard throbbing cock, the length of the shaft, and the balls, already rising in their sac, that swelled beneath.

Chapter 5

THE KING'S CHILDREN

“Dunmore—did you say Dunmore? O, Eleanor, it must be he!”

A tall, slim, fair-faced maiden with a regal mien looked up quickly from an embroidery frame over which she was bending and glanced from the eager, flushed face of the boy who stood beside her to that of the stalwart English youth who had brought the news. She asked in her unconsciously queenly way: “What is it, Sir Godfrey, that you have told this impetuous boy to have set him in such a quiver of excitement?”

“Only this, gracious lady, that certain youthful Scottish chieftains have hither to Berwick to pay their homage to your royal father Edward. In his absence at York they have been lodged within the castle walls as becomes their station. It has been told me that amongst them are four sons of one Lord Urquhart, lately dead, and that he was Lord of Dunmore. I was telling what I knew to Sir Robert when he broke away to speak to you.”

“Eleanor, it must be he—it must be they!” cried Robert Fitzallan with flushing cheek and kindling eye. “Dunmore. Urquhart. Four sons. It could be none else than they. O, Eleanor, dear friend, bid them brought hither to see us!” The messenger waited for her decision.

“You have heard the story of how we went thither, my father and I, one year gone now, and of what befell me there. I have never heard a word of Jamie since, and I have thought of him so oft. Thou art

mistress here now; they all heed thy lightest word. Bid the brothers in your presence. I do so long to see him—them—again!”

Robert was fairly trembling with excitement, but this was no unusual thing for him as he was an ardent, excitable little mortal, and ever in fever of some kind or another. The young knight who had brought the news looked at the boy with unmistakable admiration and pleasure, and seemed as though he would gladly have obeyed any behest of his; but he was fain to wait for the decision of Eleanor, the king’s eldest and much-beloved child, who in the temporary absence of her parents occupied a position of no little importance in the royal household, and whose will, in the royal apartments at any rate, was law.

“Ay, Eleanor, bid Jamie Urquhart come,” pleaded the prince Alphonso, a fragile-looking boy a year younger than Robert, whose violet-blue eyes and fair skin were in marked contrast to Robert’s gipsy-like darkness of complexion. Prince Alphonso, a close friend of Robert’s, had often thrilled to the story of Jamie Urquhart of Dunmore who had held the Eagle’s Crag against half a hundred foemen to save his sweetest friend from captivity or death.

The gentle Eleanor indulged these feelings and was glad to give to the young knight, Sir Godfrey Mortimer, a gracious message for the young Lord of Dunmore to the effect that she would be glad to receive him and his brothers in her father’s absence, and to give them places at the royal table for the supper meal shortly to be served.

Great was the delight of Robert Fitzallan when the message was despatched. His companions crowded round him to hear again the story of his adventure on the Eagle’s Crag. Robert never knew how he had been betrayed by Jamie’s brothers. He believed that they had been accidentally hindered from coming to his rescue by the

difficulties of the climb after the eagle's nest. There was a faint, uncomfortable misgiving in the boy's mind with regard to the handsome, black-browed twins, but it did not amount to actual suspicion, far less to any certainty of their enmity; and although Eleanor had heard the whole story from her parents, she had never explained the matter fully to young Robert.

An invitation from royalty was equal to a command, and the eager children were not kept waiting long. The double doors at the end of the long gallery, which had closed behind the retiring form of Godfrey, opened once again to admit him, and closely in his wake there followed two manly youths—two, not four—upon whose faces every eye was instantly fixed in frank and kindly scrutiny.

Jamie had developed rapidly during the last year, although he retained all his old characteristics. The waving hair was bright as gold, the open face sunny, yet resolute, alert, manly and strong with its rather square features. The fearless blue eyes had not lost their far-away dreaminess, as though the possessor were looking onward and outward beyond the surroundings visible to others. Beneath the calm determination of the expression was an underlying sweetness which shone out from time to time in a broad smile which always won the heart of the beholder. The figure had become that of a young man rather than a lad—tall, strongly knit, full of grace and power; the faintest of yellow moustaches on his upper lip showed the dawn of manhood in the youth. There was something in his look which seemed to reveal that he had known sorrow, trial and anxiety; but this in no way detracted from the power and attractiveness of his countenance, but rather gave it an added charm.

Ewan retained the marked likeness to his brother and was almost equal in height, but there was a gentleness about him that could not fail to make itself observed. He looked much younger than his

brother, despite his stature, and he blushed like a boy as he saw the eyes of Sir Godfrey fixed upon him in a stare that was almost impertinent.

“Jamie, Jamie Urquhart, don’t you know me?”

The young man started and raised his eyes towards the speaker. So far, he had only been aware that there were a number of persons collected at the upper end of the long gallery. Now he found himself confronted by a pair of eager, dancing eyes, as soft and dark as those of a forest deer, whilst two slim hands were held out to him, and a silvery voice cried playfully: “Jamie, Jamie, to think you have forgotten!”

“Robbie! Robert! Sir Robert Fitzallan!”

“Ah, I am glad you have not forgotten. I should have known you anywhere. But come, Jamie, come Ewan; I would present you to my companions, who would fain be acquainted with you. They know how you saved my life that day, I have told the tale so oft. Let me present you first to our sweetest Lady Eleanor, our great king’s eldest daughter. You will love her, I know—none can help it. And she lets me call her sister.”

Jamie was much relieved by the extent of Robbie’s speech, for it gave him time to compose himself and beat down the hot images that reared themselves in his brain. Images of the boy’s body stretched naked against his own. Images of his stiff cock throbbing between those red lips. Images of his balls hanging on either side of that pert little nose. Images of . . . No! He must beat them down. He took refuge in the formality of the royal presence.

Young things have a wonderful faculty of growing intimate in a very brief space, and the formalities were not excessive, especially away from the trammels of the court. In ten minutes’ time, Jamie and Ewan had grasped the names and rank of all those to whom they

had been presented, and were joining in the eager talk with ease and enjoyment. Godfrey stood beside Jamie, listening with unfeigned interest to his answers respecting himself and those near and dear to him. Alphonso had drawn Ewan to an embrasure of a window, and was looking up into his face as they compared notes and exchanged ideas. It seemed from the first as though a strong link formed itself between those two.

“Your father is dead then?” asked Robert with sympathy in his eyes. “He was a noble man and true.”

Jamie hesitated, but he was too young to have learned the lesson of reticence, and there was something in the free atmosphere of the place which prompted him to openness. “Aye, the Urquhart is died. We were visited by a terrible sickness later that year, and our people sickened and died in great numbers. The sickness took my father early. Ewan was also lying at the point of death, and we despaired of his life, but he battled through and came back to us from the very gates of the grave. What think you of him, Sir Robert? Is he changed from what he was when last you saw him, ere the sickness fastened upon him?”

Several eyes turned towards the slim, tall figure of the Scotch lad leaning against the embrasure of the window. The sunlight fell full on his face, showing the sharpness of its outlines, the delicate hectic colouring, the tracery of the blue veins beneath the skin. The same transparent look was visible on the countenance of the young Alphonso, who was talking with the stranger youth, and more hearts than Jamie’s felt a pang as their owners’ eyes were turned upon the pair beside the window.

“And your brothers,” said the Lady Eleanor, “they would not come? Was that fear or shame or pride?” The king’s daughter looked steadily into Jamie’s flushed face. “Nay, think not that we would

compel any to visit us who did not do it willingly. Robert has prepared us to find your brothers different from you. Methinks he marvelled that they had come hither at all with their submission.”

“I myself was surprised at it,” said Jamie frankly. “Dugald and Duncan have not been friendly in their dealings with the English so far, and we knew they aided Wallace in the revolt which has been lately quelled. But since my faither died and the title was set on me, I have seen but little of them. They become joint-owners of the estates of Drymen, and removed from Dunmore to the Castle of Colquhoun in their own territory, and until we met them some days since coming to tender their homage, as we ourselves are about to do, we knew not what to think of them or what action they might take.”

Further exchanges were interrupted by the appearance of servants who carried in the supper, laying it upon a long table at the far end of the gallery. No great state was observed even in the royal household when the family was far away from the atmosphere of court as it was held at Westminster or Windsor.

A certain number of servants were in attendance. There were a few formalities gone through in the matter of tasting dishes served to the royal children, but they sat around the table without ceremony. When the chaplain had pronounced a blessing, the unconstrained chatter began again almost at once, and the Scotch lads lost all sense of strangeness as they sat at the table of the English king’s children.

Jamie found himself seated alongside Robert. He flushed as he felt the younger boy’s thigh pressed hotly against his own, but concentrated wonderfully on the words addressed to him by the king’s daughter.

“Our father and mother will not return for several days,” said Eleanor. “We have liberty to do what we wish and go where we like. I hope that you and Ewan will accept our hospitality. I have placed you

in Robert's chamber, and Alphonso will play the bed-time host to young Ewan. Say, Robert, shall we tell Jamie on what we have set our hearts? It may be he would help us to our end."

"Jamie," said Robert, his voice rising in excitement, "have you ever hunted a wolf in your high lands?"

"Ach, many a time, though they be more seldom seen now. But we will never rid ourselves altogether of them, do as we will."

"And have you killed one yourself?"

"Aye, I have done that too."

"And is it very dangerous?" interrupted Eleanor.

"I scarce know. I never thought about it. I think not, if one is well armed and the dogs are trained to their duties."

Young eyes were alight with excitement.

"Jamie," said Prince Alphonso, "there is a wolf up yonder in the valley. Some of our people have seen and tracked it, but they say it is an old and wily one, and no one has got near it yet. We have set our hearts on having a wolf-hunt of our very own. We do not want all the men and dogs and the stir and the fuss which they would make if we were known to be going. I know what that means. We are kept far away behind everybody, and only see the beast after it has been killed miles away from us. We want to be in the hunt ourselves—Godfrey and Robert and I. If you and your brother would but come, we should be safe without anybody else. Godfrey has dogs, and we could be well armed, and we would promise to be very careful. We could get away early, as Robert did that day he slipped off to the Eagle's Crag. Do answer, do say you will come! You are not afraid?"

The Urquhart smiled at the notion. He did not entirely understand that he was requested to take part in a bit of defiant frolic which the young prince and princess were aware would not have been permitted by their father. All he grasped was that the Prince

Alphonso and Robert requested his assistance in a hunt, with whose details he was perfectly familiar, and he agreed willingly to the request, not sorry, either for his own sake or for that of his discontented brothers that the monotony of the days spent waiting the return of the king should be beguiled by anything so attractive and exciting as a wolf hunt.

The Dunmore brothers had hunted wolves before, and he saw no special peril in the sport. He agreed, and the delight around the table was palpable. For an hour or so, animated conversation filled the room, but as the gloaming gave way to darkness, each pair of youngsters bid the others a good night, and headed to their separate chambers.

The door closed behind Jamie and Robert. For a moment the older boy stood nonplussed, shamed yet thrilled by the memory of the youthful indulgences of nights spent together in Dunmore. He stood at the edge of the bed, uncertain whether he should disrobe before the younger boy's eyes or retreat behind a bed curtain.

His uncertainty was terminated in the most sudden of ways. With a whoop, Robbie dived at him, bearing him down and across the bed, where Jamie lay spread-eagled under the pleasing weight of his one-time boy-lover. Before he could regain his breath or balance, he found his face smothered in kisses, his shirt ripped open at the neck, and his breeks slipped wide by enquiring fingers.

"Ah," gasped Robbie, "hard and hot. I mean something to you still." He jerked the Scots lad's erection into the open, and slid down his body to engulf it without ceremony. His sucking was ruthless, and Jamie feared he might choke the boy as his shaft slipped deeper and deeper into the hungry mouth. Then Robbie was up and upon him again.

“Naked,” he gasped. “I want to feel your skin against mine. My mouth against your skin; your mouth against mine.” All the while he scrabbled at the older boy’s clothes while divesting himself untidily of his own. It would be as tedious to describe the stripping of the boys, as it was tedious for Robert Fitzallan to wait the seconds it took to remove them. Soon they were naked, rolling in each other’s arms; sweat mingled with sweat, saliva with saliva, body juices with body juices.

Then Robbie was straddling Jamie’s groin.

“In me, I want you in me,” he gasped, almost furious in his pleading.

Jamie was stunned. Did Robbie mean what he said? Was he asking for coupling? His cock grew even harder as the image seared his brain. He felt and saw the boy rise above him, felt the boy grasp the shaft of his cock, felt the boy nudge the head of his cock against the hot centre of his being. Was this happening, really happening? It felt like the feverish dreams he knew from the arrow wound in his breast. He would awake and find only the pain. But he was awake, and there was no pain, only pleasure.

Something gave, and two inches of his cock slid inside a sleeve of hot, treacly pudding, the kind his mother made from sugar beet. The sponginess encased him, and he bore up to drive his cock deeper into the sweetness. He dared to look up and saw Robbie’s head thrown back, hair tossed loosely onto his shoulders. He remembered that night in Scotland. One hand reached for the boy’s nipple, the other grasped the boy’s straining cock and began to pump, seeking a rhythm that might counterpoint the rise and fall of the boy riding his cock.

Robbie’s eyes were open now. He was smiling, his upper teeth biting into his lower lip as he fought the pain and revelled in the

ecstasy. A further sinking, and the boy's arse was split open, buttocks spread-eagled against Jamie's groin. And still he was riding, riding, as Jamie pumped and pumped.

A thickening of cocks. The dancing delight of seed set free. The seed danced up both their young hot cocks, spurting into Robbie's arse and across Jamie's chest. Hot, strong, youthful spurts that made their love a liquid reality. They gasped, trembled, shuddered and held onto each other. The castle seemed to shake around them, the very walls to tremble until, the spendings dying away, Robbie fell forward onto Jamie's chest, and Jamie felt the sweetness of his neck and hair on his lips.

Many minutes passed before Jamie slid his cock from Robbie's hole, before Robbie slid into Jamie's arms, and they lay, under silken sheets, in each other's arms. The younger boy whispered into the ear of the older. "Welcome home, welcome home," and they fell asleep in each other's loving embrace.

Chapter 6

WOLVES AND FOXES

Duncan grunted again and tightened his grip on the window ledge. He felt Dugald's thick cock drive in to the hilt, and for a moment saw as many stars behind his eyes as he saw above the crenallated walls of Berwick Castle.

"Ugh!"

He felt the thick bush of hair at the base of his brother's cock tickle the crack in his arse, and knew his brother could go no deeper. Relief swept over him. His guts already ached, and he ground his hurdies back into Dugald's groin, trying to make him expel his seed as quickly as possible. It was not that Duncan disliked the cock rammed deep into his fundament; Dugald had fucked him since that night of their eleventh birthday, and he had quickly come to love it. But there was an element of rough play in Dugald's love-making that scared his twin brother. Even now rough fingers grabbed his nipples and twisted them, as the strongly-muscled back bore him down until his chin caught the window ledge.

The pumping grow fiercer, the strokes short and fast; Duncan knew his brother would make hot seed soon, and his legs, spread wide apart, trembled as he bore the weight.

"Ugh! Ugh! Ugh!"

He was not sure if the groans came from Dugald or himself. His own hard cock rubbed against the pebbled wall, and he could feel his cock thicken and expand in readiness for the seed that bubbled in his

scrotum. His nipples were sore, his right ear ached from the savage nips Dugald gave the lobe. Duncan looked at the moon, and, despite the pain and pleasure that pulsed through him, could not stifle a grin.

Tomorrow they would hunt a wolf. Perhaps the beast was out there now, howling at the moon, while he, a boy called Duncan, hung out of the window, watched the starry sky, and felt like howling himself.

Seed spurted within him and without; as his own juices splattered against the wall beneath the window, his brother's juices splattered against the inner walls of his arse, his anus, his rectum, as Brother Gilchrist had taught them when they were but eight years old.

Was that why he loved his own brother so? Because of the hours spent on Brother Gilchrist's knee, listening to sweet Latin nothings in his ear, while the holy clerk had played with his little pizzle, and pressed his own big cock into the child's crack? Duncan sighed. Brother Gilchrist has promised them that life was full of mysteries, and had set them a riddle of his own. Were he and Dugald only to find the answer with each other?

Dugald pulled himself from his brother's arse and wiped his dripping cock on the English brocade that hung around their bed. Naked, he climbed into bed, then threw back the coverings for his twin. Together they lay, spent and spooned, and whispered of the opportunities tomorrow's wolf hunt might bring.

In attending the English king at Berwick, the young Highlanders were submitting themselves to the inevitable with what grace they could, but with indignant and hostile feelings hidden deep in their hearts. Their old hatred towards the English remained unaltered. They would have fought the foe tooth and nail to the last had they been able to find allies ready to stand by them. But with Wallace in hiding in Galloway, and when most of the clan chiefs had submitted,

and the smaller chieftains were crowding to pay homage, and when they knew that nothing but their own nominal subjection would save them from being deprived of their lands, then indeed discretion did seem the better part of valour. Sooner than see themselves despoiled, they had resolved to take the hated step and do homage to Edward for their lands. The humiliation was great and it was hard work to keep their hatred of the English in check. Those wild spirits had not been used to exercising self-control, and the lesson came hard while the untempered recklessness and heat of youth still reigned in their veins.

And thus it came about that one clear, cold, exhilarating morning in May, when the world was just waking from its dewy slumber, that the Urquhart twins attended the son of their hated enemy as the party gathered at the appointed spot on a piece of wild moorland, and the hunt was on. The little band numbered in its ranks the aforementioned, accompanied by Jamie, Robert, Godfrey, and a small but well-equipped company whose spears and dogs were supplemented by the long, murderous-looking hunting-knives needed by those who follow the tracks of the wild beasts of mountain and moor.

How the quarrel began no one was certain. Perhaps the Urquhart twins might have borne the company of Alphonso, Prince of the Realm, with silent stoicism had they not seen the flattering attention the boy paid to their brother Ewan. What his purpose was they knew not, but to see a scion of the House of Urquhart enthralled by the sweet words of a Plantagenet outraged them, and in whispers all could hear they began to murmur against "the barbarous rule of a barbarous Sassenach."

Alphonso simply smiled, which enraged the twin patriots even more. Doubtless Jamie would have intervened had he noticed the track of the argument, but he was up ahead engaged in his own deep

conversation with Robert Fitzallan. At what point Dugald went too far is not recorded, but when the party were forced by the character of the ground to dismount from their horses and take to their own feet, Godfrey pressed up to Alphonso and said: "Sweet sire, why burden yourself with those who having naught but the language of villains deserve the treatment of villains?" The prince laughed at so silly a play on words. "Sire, it is not for you to be thus . . ."

But the sentence was never finished, for Dugald's strong right hand flew out straight from his shoulder, and Godfrey received on the mouth a stinging blow which brought red blood to his lips and the crimson tide of fury into his cheeks.

With an inarticulate cry of rage he drew his sword and sprang upon the dark-browed Urquhart. Swords were drawn between Scotland and England only too readily in those days, and in this case there was provocation enough on both sides to warrant bloodshed. The youths were locked at once in fierce conflict, striking madly at each other with their shining blades before those who stood by well knew what had occurred.

Alphonso, aware that his laughter had assisted in the precipitation of the quarrel, drew the small sword he always carried at his side, and threw himself between the combatants. Striking upon their blades, he cried in tones of such authority as only those can assume who feel the right is theirs:

"Put up your swords, gentlemen. I command you in the name of the king. Shame on you. Shame, I say!"

But young Dugald, maddened and blinded by the heat of his passion, and forgetting who Alphonso was or by what right he interposed betwixt him and his foe, turned furiously upon him, and before anyone could act or react, a red gash in the boy's wrist showed what the Scotch lad's blade had done.

Jamie and Ewan flung themselves upon their maddened kinsman and held him back by main force.

“Dugald, Dugald, art thou mad? It is the king’s son!” cried Jamie in their native tongue. Robbie sprang towards the prince and commenced binding up the gash, the lad never for a moment losing his presence of mind, or forgetting in the smart of the hurt the dignity of his position.

Dugald’s burst of passion had spent itself, and the sense of his younger brother’s words had come home to him. He stood shame-faced and sullen, and secretly somewhat afraid; Duncan trembled in every limb, and if looks could have annihilated, Godfrey would not have existed as a corporeal being a moment longer.

“Gentlemen,” said Alphonso, turning to those about him, and holding up his bandaged hand, “this is the result of accident, pure accident. Remember that, if it ever comes to the ears of my father. This youth knew not what he did. The fault was mine for entering the quarrel so hastily. As you value the good will in which I hold you all, keep this matter to yourselves. We are not prince or subject today, but comrades bent on sport together. Remember and obey my behest. It is not often I lay my commands upon you, but I do so today.”

Alphonso, every inch a king-to-be, looked at each youth in turn, then spoke again.

“The Scots nation is dear to me, and its countrymen shall always be our honoured guests and brothers. Have we not learned to love them?” His glance fell upon Ewan, and a smile touched his lips. “Trouble not thy heads more over this mischance, and let it not cloud our day’s sport. Godfrey,” he added with some sternness, “I know thou lovest me dearly, but thou art a turbulent spirit. Lack not the courtesy of a true knight towards those whose position is trying and

difficult. Thou wilt not keep thy spurs if thou mendest not thy ways. Give thy hand now, before our eyes, to the youth thou didst provoke.”

It was not often that the gentle Alphonso spoke in such tones, and therefore his words were the more heeded. Godfrey stepped forward and held out his hand. It was not with much alacrity that Dugald took it, but there was a compulsion in the glance of the royal boy which enforced obedience. Harmony being thus nominally restored, the party once more breathed freely.

“And now upwards and onwards to the lair of the wolf,” cried Alphonso; “we have lost time enough already. Who knows the way to his favourite haunts? They cannot be very far away now.”

When the party moved on, Robert stole up to Jamie’s side, and said as he glanced into his troubled face, “He did not mean it? He will not do it again?”

Jamie glanced at him with a start and shook his head. “He forgot in the heat of the moment that it was the king’s son—that I verily believe; but I know not what Dugald may say or do at any time. He never speaks to me of what is in his head. Robert, you know the king and his ways. Will he visit this rash deed upon my brother’s head? Will Dugald suffer for what he did in an impulse of mad rage, provoked to it by yon haughty youth whose words were hard for any of the Urquhart to brook?”

“Alphonso has great influence with his father,” answered Robert. “He will stand by your brother through all. But thou knowest the aroused wrath of King Edward. Perchance Dugald may be detained in some sort of captivity a while; perchance he may not have his lands confirmed if this thing comes to the king’s ears. But his person will be safe. Methinks Alphonso would sooner lay down the crown than that harm should befall a guest from what chanced upon a day of sport.”

Much reassured, the conversation turned to lighter matters.

“O, but I am glad to be unhorsed,” whispered Robbie. “My arse burns where you took your pleasure last night. You are a big boy now, Jamie Urquhart.”

Jamie blushed, then grinned. “So, the pleasure was all mine, and none of yours. When your seed spat upon my chest, yea up to my chin, for you it was naught but duty to a guest?”

“Only to your chin?” flirted Robbie. “If memory serves me well, some hot juices reached that lovely mouth of yours. Was it duty made you flick your tongue and taste me? Was it duty that made you lick my juices from my cock and belly? Ah, duty, you are a hard taskmaster.”

“Yes, indeed,” said Jamie with dancing eyes, “it was naught but duty, and I shall do my duty tonight when I take that hot hard cock of yours into my mouth, and suck you dry. You flatter me with the words ‘big boy’, I but describe the truth when I call you my ‘little pony cock’.”

How this banter would have continued we know not, for there was an impatient call from the front and Jamie sprang forward, the hunter awakening within him at the sight of the slot of the quarry. He peered intently at the tracks in the soft earth, and then pointed downwards in the direction of a deep gully in the hillside, which looked dark and gloomy to the party who gathered in the sunshine of the open.

“The wolf has gone that way,” he told the party; “and by his tracks and these blood-stains, he has prey in his mouth. Likely his mate may have her lair in yon dark spot, and they may be rearing their young in that safe retreat. See how the dogs strain and pant! They smell the quarry, and are eager to be off. We must be alert and wary, for wolves with young to guard are fierce beyond their wont. At this

season of the year wolves have meat in plenty, and will not attack a man save in self-defense.”

Slowly and cautiously they followed the track of the wolf down into the gloomy ravine which seemed to shut out all the light of the sun between walls of solid rock. It was a curious freak in which nature had indulged in the formation of this miniature crevasse between the hillsides. At the base ran a dark turbid stream, which had hollowed out for itself a sort of cavernous opening, and the walls of the rock rose almost precipitously on three sides, only leaving one track by which the ravine could be entered. The stream came bubbling out from the rock, passing through some underground passage; and within the gloomy cavern thus produced, the wolves had plainly made their lair, for there were traces of blood, skin, bones and fur upon the rocky platform. Jamie’s acute ear detected the sound of subdued and angry growling proceeding from the natural cave they were approaching.

“The beasts are in there,” he whispered, pausing, and the next moment Duncan had loosed the dogs, who darted like bolts along the narrow track. Immediately a great he-wolf sprang out with a cry of almost human rage, and had fastened upon one of his canine assailants, whose piercing scream indicated his immediate demise.

Jamie was not far behind. He was not one of those huntsmen who give all the peril to the dogs and stand aside from the fray themselves. Drawing his long hunting knife, and shouting in Gaelic to his brothers to follow, he sprang down upon the rock platform himself, and the Urquhart three were at his side in a moment. A sharp blade gleamed in the air, and the he-wolf gave a scream of agony.

The cry must have pierced the heart of the mother-wolf, and suddenly, with almost preternatural strength and agility, she

bounded clean over the forms of boys and dogs. She dashed straight for Alphonso with all the ferocity of an animal at bay, and of a mother robbed of her mate and her young. Jamie saw the attack, but his weapon was buried in the body of the male wolf and he had no time to disengage it. His brothers were equally involved in subduing a beast of incredible strength and ferocity.

Turning, Alphonso attempted to fly up the rocky path, his wounded hand rendering physical resistance impossible; but the beast was upon him. She bore him to the ground, and hot breath scorched the royal cheek.

But help was close at hand. Ewan rolled from under the he-wolf, and had followed close upon his mate. Flinging himself fearless upon the struggling pair, he plunged his knife into the neck of the she-beast, causing her to relax her grip on the grounded prince. Had he stabbed her to the heart, she might have inflicted worse injury upon Alphonso in her mortal struggle; as it was, there was fierce fight left in her still. Ewan knelt upon the wildly struggling body with all his strength, "Quick, the knife!"

In an instant Alphonso gave the merciful death stroke, hot blood spurting into his face. The wolf shuddered and lay still. Ewan helped the regal boy to his feet. They were joined by his brothers, and all stood gasping round the dead wolf, whose dead mate lay a few feet away.

Alphonso used the bandage round his wrist to clear the blood from his eyes. The fire of battle burned in them brightly.

"If all the Scots fight like the Urquhart brothers," he grinned, "I shall think twice before I wage war on them . . . If I am ever king," he added modestly. "I have learned today that I am but a fox cub amongst noble wolves."

All the boys joined in the regal laughter, then turned to complete the business that would end the hunt.

Day passed into night, and Alphonso, his wound properly treated, retired to his chamber, adjoining which lay the smaller chamber allotted to Ewan. It was no surprise when Ewan found himself summoned to the prince's bedchamber, though his eyes dilated when he saw how little clothing garbed the young Alphonso.

"It is a warm night for May," said Alphonso, waving away Ewan's movement to cover himself with a robe. "Come as you are. I can have no secrets from the boy who saved my life."

The boys lay on the huge princely bed talking about the hunt and the extraordinary events which had made it so memorable. They lay there almost naked, only brief clouts of cloth around their private parts. Again Ewan was taken aback as the other boy started to stroke his chest, shoulders, and stomach, letting his long slim fingers glide across the clear, unmarked skin. At first Ewan thought of refusing the regal intentions, but then sighed and lay back, accepting these attentions as another extraordinary facet of the day.

He could not but notice how Alphonso paid particular attention to his penis, which to his fascination grew long and hard under the stroking fingers. With a smile of genuine warmth, Alphonso undid the clout and tossed it to the floor. Taking one of the Scots boy's hands, he led it to his own clout, which Ewan did with trembling but excited fingers. Each boy felt that the other was enormous.

Alphonso's caresses turned to kisses, which Ewan speedily returned. Cheeks became lips, lips surrendered, and tongues probed the inner cavern of each other's mouths. The play went on for some time, and Ewan thought that if this was all he had to do there was not much to feel concerned about, and in truth he was rather enjoying the experience.

He may have drifted off to sleep in Alphonso's arms for a while, but then was awakened by the young prince urging him over on to his stomach. Alphonso gently stroked his sweet young arse, parted the crack and probed at the little brown rosebud at its centre. For a few moments, Ewan wished to protest, but he was fascinated by the question which always intrigues humankind: "What will happen next?"

He gasped audibly as felt something warm and wet press against his hole, and realised it the boy's tongue. The next king of England was kissing his arsehole; nay, was pressing his tongue into his arsehole! To both his delight and dismay, Ewan found the experience delightful.

The boy on his stomach, arse in the air, felt the other rub something round his anus, then slide his finger in, slowly at first, and then quicker, until it was slipping speedily back and forth from tip to hilt. After some time, Alphonso urged Ewan onto his back; he lay there blushing furiously and shielding his eyes, embarrassed that he had an erection which seemed to throb and ache to the seeing eye. Alphonso raised the boy's legs onto his shoulders, leaned forward and pinned him to the bed. Ewan felt something thrust into him; pain and pleasure mingled in equal quantities, but as his rectum accustomed itself to the invader, pleasure became paramount.

He felt that he had been split wide open, felt as if a hot log had been thrust up his arse, felt a burning sensation around his anal ring, felt his own cock throb against the prince's belly, felt Alphonso spit hot seed inside him.

How could he face the gaze of the boy who had fucked him? He did not have to, for Alphonso, in time, withdrew gently, lowered his legs, slid down his body and swallowed his cock. The royal mouth sucked

eagerly, and it was but moments before Ewan spat his seed into the willing orifice.

Alphonso slid up Ewan's body, and pulled him close.

"Sleep with me tonight, dear Ewan," he whispered. "A prince of the realm may not often choose his sleeping partners, but I would choose you—I would choose you every night of every year, if I could."

That night Scotland and England slept in each other's arms—at peace.

Chapter 7

THE KING'S JUDGMENT

The great King Edward had been sitting enthroned in the state apartment of Berwick castle, receiving the homage of those amongst the Scots nobles and chieftains who had been summoned to pay their homage to him, and had obeyed this summons.

It was an imposing sight. The gentle but courageous Queen Eleanor, who was seldom absent from her lord's side be the times peaceful or warlike, was seated beside him for the ceremony. The young Alphonso stood at the right hand of the king, his face bright with interest and sympathy; he was ever ready with some graceful speech or small act of courtesy, which generally acted like a charm on even the most dispirited chieftain. The father regarded the son with a fine pride and let him take his own way with these haughty, untameable Highlanders, feeling perhaps that the tact of the royal boy might do more to conciliate and win hearts than any word or deed of his own.

The brothers of Dunmore were the last of those who came to pay their act of homage. The day had waned, and the last light of sunset was streaming into the long room as the fair-haired Jamie bent his knee in response to the summons of the royal herald. The king's eyes seem to rest upon him with interest, and he spoke kindly to the youth; but it was noted by some in the company that his brow darkened when Dugald followed his brother's example, Duncan attending him as Ewan had supported Jamie. There was none of the

gracious urbanity in the royal countenance now that had characterised it during the past hour.

The homage paid, an attendant whispered to the Urquhart brothers that it was the king's pleasure they should follow him in his personal retinue, as he had something to say to them in private.

Jamie's heart beat faster than its wont. He had had some foreboding of evil since that unlucky expedition on which Dugald's sword had been drawn upon an English subject, and had injured the king's son likewise.

Supper was the first business of the hour, and the Dunmore brothers sat at the lower table with the attendants of the king. The meal was well-served and plentiful, but they had small appetite for it. Jamie felt as though a shadow hung upon them; and the chief comfort he received was in stealing glances at the sweet, sensitive face of Robbie, remembering how those bee-stung lips had sucked the nectar from his cock that afternoon.

He wondered how it was that Lord Fitzallan had never sought him out to speak to him. Little as the lad had thought of their parting interview at Dunmore a year since, it all came back to him with the greatest vividness as he looked upon the fine calm face of the English noble, a bonny face that was a mature version of his own Robbie's face. Was it possible he had forgotten the half-pledge once given?

After the supper was ended, the royal family withdrew into an inner room and presently the four brothers were bidden to enter, as the king had somewhat to say to them. The greater numbers of the courtiers and attendants remained in the outer room, but Robert, Godfrey, Alphonso, and a small armed guard were present in the apartment.

Edward was seated before a table on which certain parchments lay. Alphonso stood beside him, and Ewan fancied that he had only just

ended some earnest appeal, his parted lips and flushed cheeks seeming to tell of recent eager speech. The king looked keenly at the brothers as they made their obeisance, and singling out Jamie, bid him by gesture to approach nearer. There was a kindliness in the royal countenance which encouraged the youth; few could approach the great soldier-king without experiencing something of the fascination which his powerful personality exercised over all his subjects.

“Come hither, lad,” he said. “We have heard nought but good of you. You have an eloquent advocate in yon son of Lord Fitzallan’s, and mine own has praised your gallantry in no measured terms. We have made careful examination into these parchments here, containing reports of the late rebellion, and cannot find that you have had a part or lot in it. You have paid your homage without dally or delay. Wherefore it is our royal pleasure to confirm to you your castle at Dunmore, its territory and estates. We only caution you to remain faithful to him you have owned as king, and we will establish you in your rights if in time to come they be disputed by others.”

Jamie bowed low. If there was something bitter in having his father’s rightful inheritance granted to him as something of a boon, at least there was much to sweeten the draught in the kindly and gracious bearing of the king, and in Alphonso’s friendly words and looks.

He stood aside as Edward’s glance passed on to Dugald and Duncan, and it was plain that the monarch’s face changed and hardened as he fixed his eye upon the twins.

“Dugald—Duncan,” he said, “joint-lords of Craigmore, we wish that we had received the same good reports of you that we have done of your brethren, Jamie and Ewan. But it is not so. There be dark records in your past—some in the recent past—” and here the king

glanced at his frowning son, and at the silken bandage round his wrist. "Nevertheless, you are yet young. Wisdom may come with the advance of years. But the hot blood in you requires taming and curbing. You have proved yourselves unfit for the place hitherto occupied as lords of the broad lands bequeathed to you by the former Lord Urquhart, who in his wisdom settled Dunmore itself on your younger brother, Jamie.

"For the present those lands are confiscated. You must win the right to call them yours again by loyalty in the cause which every true Scotsman should have at heart—the unification of this island of ours."

Such were the black looks on the brothers' faces that king's guard stepped two paces forward. Edward waved them back. "Foxes may wound the cub; they will not trouble the wolf." He looked at Dugald and continued. "It is not willingly that we wrest from any man the lands that are his birthright. Less willingly do we do this when homage, however unwilling and ungracious, has been paid. But we have our duties to ourselves and to our submitted subjects to consider, and it is not meet to send firebrands alight into the world when a spark may raise so fierce a conflagration, and when thousands of lives must pay the penalty of one mad act of headstrong youth. It is your youth that excuses you from graver punishment for graver offences, but those who are too young to govern themselves are not yet fit to govern others."

As the king's words made themselves understood, the brows of Dugald and Duncan beetled and contracted with a fierce anger and rage, which betrayed itself also in their clenched fists and heaving chests; and although they remained speechless—for the awe inspired by Edward's presence could not but impose itself upon them—it was

plain that only the strongest efforts put upon themselves hindered them from some outbreak of violence.

Edward's eye rested sternly upon them for a moment; then he addressed himself once again to Jamie.

"To you, Jamie, Lord Urquhart, we give the charge of these two turbulent kinsmen of yours. Had not the Prince Alphonso spoken for them, they would even now be southwards bound to enjoy my hospitality in the Tower. Take them back with you to Dunmore, and strive to make them like yourself, and your shadow there, who is, my son tells me, your youngest brother, and as well disposed as yourself. Say, young man: will you accept this charge, and be surety for these haughty boys? If their own next-of-kin will not take this office, we must look elsewhere for a sterner guardian."

For a moment Jamie hesitated. He knew well the untameable spirit of his brothers and the small influence he was likely to have upon them, and for a moment his heart shrank from the task. But again he bethought what his refusal might mean to them—captivity of a more or less irksome kind, harsh treatment perhaps, resulting in actual imprisonment, disease or death. At Dunmore they would at least be free. Surely, knowing all, they would not make his task too hard. Jamie remembered words spoken by the dying bed of his father, and his mind was made up.

"I will be surety for my brothers," he said. "If they offend again, let my life and lands be the forfeit."

Edward gave the youth a searching glance, and then turned to the black-browed twins.

"You have heard your brother's pledge," he said in low, stern tones. "Be loyal to him, and loyal to the cause he has embraced, and in four years, if you have so redeemed your past and put behind you youthful folly, you will receive at our hands the estates we now

withhold. In the meantime, they will be administered by Sir Godfrey Mortimer, who will draw the revenues and maintain order there.”

Dugald started as if he had been stung as these words crossed the king’s lips. His black eyes flashed fire, and as he lifted his head and met the mocking glance of Godfrey, it seemed for a moment as if in the actual presence of the king he would have flown at his antagonist’s throat. But Jamie’s hand was on his arm, and even Duncan had the self-command to whisper caution. Alphonso sprang gaily between the angry youth and his father’s keen glance, and began talking eagerly of Dunmore, asking how the brothers would spend their time, now that they were all to live there once more. Dugald drew back, but cast at Godfrey Mortimer such a look of bitter scorn and hatred that the English knight involuntarily shrank before it.

“Thou hast taken a heavy burden upon thy young shoulders, lad,” said a well-remembered voice in Jamie’s ear. Looking up, he met the calm gaze of Lord Fitzallan bent upon him, whilst Robert, flushing and sparkling, stood close beside his father. “I wouldst thou pay me a visit before retiring tonight. Robert will be present, too. Let us say in an half hour in my chambers.”

Jamie nodded, then watched the retreating backs of the Fitzallans as they returned to the king. He frowned, but then allowed himself a small smile as Robert turned and stuck out a wagging tongue at him. The boy was impossible, beautifully impossible.

The audience dispersed as Edward and Eleanor retired to the inner apartments. There would be an early night for all, as each faction would be setting out their separate ways on the morrow.

“Young man,” said Lord Fitzallan in tones of considerable gravity, “I do not know if you have any memory left of the proposal I made to you when last we met at Dunmore.”

Jamie's colour rose as he saw brightness leap into Robbie's eyes.

"I remember right well," he answered simply.

All three sat round a small oak table in the lord's ante-chamber. Before each was a goblet into which Fitzallan had poured a measure of fine Rhenish wine, the least for his son, whose eyes in the presence of the young Scot always shone bright enough. He smiled at the affections of youth.

"I spoke words then of which I have often thought since," continued the Englishman. "Words that I have not repented till today, nor indeed till I heard you make that pledge of surety for the turbulent twins."

Quick, troubled looks crossed the faces of the boys, but neither spoke, and Lord Fitzallan continued. "I greatly fear that you have taken on more than you can accomplish, and that instead of drawing your brothers back from the abyss, you will rather be compelled by them to make a leap that will overwhelm you. I do not have to remind you how headstrong Dugald and Duncan can be."

Alas! even Jamie did not know how headstrong his brothers could be, for at that very moment they were in the act of violating a subject of the king.

About a quarter of an hour earlier, the brothers had invited young Godfrey to their chamber to discuss the terms of a truce between them that might last the four years of possession of their estates, recently awarded to the young knight by the king. Truce was the farthest thing from the brothers' minds, and as Godfrey entered the room, he was seized, his arms tied behind his back, blind-folded, and gagged by the silken partner of the kerchief that bound Alphonso's injured wrist. He was then bundled face down onto the bed; and his breeks and underclout were dragged to his ankles, so that his naked hurdies were left high and unprotected from Scotch assault.

“I should kill you here and now,” hissed Dugald, “but a quick death is more than you deserve. You shall possess our estates for four years, but then you will hand them over without a murmur, or tonight’s business will be known throughout this island.”

Godfrey felt rough hands part his buttocks, and he screamed as he felt a stab of pain at their centre. At first he thought it must be a wooden baton, but then realised it was a cock, a huge, hard Scottish cock that fought for entrance at his most personal orifice. He screamed again, but the scream was heard only in his head, causing him almost as much pain as the alien flesh that sought to penetrate his virgin arse.

“I know my brothers well,” Jamie was saying. “But, in truth, I could have given no other answer. Could I leave my ain brethren to languish in captivity, however honourable, when a word from me would free them? Methinks, sire, you scarcely know what freedom is to us wild sons of Scotland, or how the very thought of lost liberty chafes our spirit and frets us past the limit of endurance. In our inmost hearts, we are all the sons of William Wallace. Sooner than be fettered by bonds, however slack, I would spring from yonder casement and dash myself to pieces on the stones below. To give my brothers up into unfriendly hands would be giving them up to certain death. If my spirit could not brook such control, how much less could theirs?”

Dugald felt the English youth’s body buckle below him as he rammed his cock in to the hilt. Gripping either side of the lad’s hips, he began a cold, calculated fuck designed to humiliate the one and pleasure the other. For pleasure there was; unlike Duncan’s arsehole, this was virgin territory, so hot and tight he felt as if his cock were gripped in a chicken’s hole, for he had experimented when not eight years old.

He bent his knees, then raised them to drive forward, his cock sliding home until his crotch was hard against the other's buttocks. Duncan licked his lips; Dugald nodded to him.

Godfrey felt the gag removed from his lips; but already he knew he would not scream. The Urquhart brothers would surely be executed for this ignoble act, and he would take the title to their lands in perpetuity, but his humiliation would be known throughout the land. Best grit his teeth and bear it. After the initial assault, and when the pain had ebbed into a steady throbbing, there was almost something pleasurable in the act. He had never felt so full back there, as if his rectum held the biggest shit in Christendom. Nay, he would not scream; he would grit his teeth and bear it.

He had little opportunity to grit his teeth; for as his mouth opened in a circle of pain or pleasure, it was filled by a shaft of hot hard flesh that invaded to the very bend in his throat, then retreated and thrust again. He resisted the impulse to bite hard on the invader; revenge might taste bloodily sweet, but it was a long drop into the castle moat. To be found floating there, whey-faced, and with a Scotch cock embedded in his throat was not the way Sir Godfrey wished to be remembered. If he had been able to sigh audibly, he would have; he might have even grinned; best to get on with it then.

Robert's eyes gave eloquent and sympathetic response to Jamie's remarks, for he had unconsciously addressed his justification to him rather than to his father.

"I truly am a Scotsman," said Jamie, "and in that heritage I rejoice. If you fear to unite your lands with mine as you proposed, if you fear to link your reputation with one of that despised race, so be it. I give you back your pledge."

Lord Fitzallan smiled as he laid his hand upon the young man's shoulder. "So hot and hasty, Jamie Urquhart—as hasty as those

black-haired twins. Yet, I like you for your outspoken candour, and I would not have you change it for the smooth treachery of courtly intrigue. What I say is this. I cannot forget what you have done for Robert, nor what he owes you. I love you well, and would fain welcome you as a second son. But my love for Robert bids me wait till we see what is the result of this office you have taken upon yourself. You have acted rightly and nobly, but in this age, trouble often seems to follow the steps of those who strive most after the right. The term that the king has set will soon pass by, and the time will come when this charge ceases. Then we may unite our houses in the manner I proposed at Dunmore. Meanwhile, keep your brothers free from mischief as best you can.”

Grunts of pain and pleasure, and the smells of sex, almost animal in their pungency, filled the small chamber where the bed rattled, rocked, and rolled as if was itself a participant in the fucking at both ends of Godfrey Mortimer. Duncan had spotted that their ‘victim’s’ cock was as erect as their own, and in an act of mercy that might not have been approved by his twin, he ruthlessly jerked it in time, as best he could, with the mass of moving flesh that set the bed to roar.

A howl filled the room as Dugald rammed himself home and held there, the semen jetting from his cock with more excitement than perhaps he would have wished; for Godfrey Mortimer was an uncommonly good fuck. Moments later, his twin released his load of semen down the youth’s throat, the gulping indicating how heavy a load it was. The youth bucked again and again as his own seed shot onto the damask cover of the bed, leaving pools of slimy, glittery stuff that would make the chambermaid giggle in the morning.

The Urquhart boys lay outstretched on the bed; the humiliated English youth lay at their feet; then with uncommon self-possession

he rose, pulled up his breeches, and tied the cords at his still swollen crotch.

“I take my leave then,” he said, semen hanging on his lips and chin. “I did not ask for your lands or for your enmity. I will try and govern them justly, and I will make no objection to their return to you at the end of the term set by the king. I wish you safe journey to your homeland. You will not mind if I do not accompany you tomorrow; I think it will be some days before I can sit a horse with any degree of comfort.”

Godfrey bowed, turned, and with a laudable show of dignity walked from the room, albeit with a walk that had more than a hint of a stagger.

The Urquharts turned to each other, laughing for the first time since they had entered the castle at Berwick.

Their younger brother was not laughing, though he was more content than he had expected to be at the beginning of the interview with Lord Fitzallan.

“Jamie, now that my father has retired, I can tell thee that I will ever be the friend thou wantest me to be. Fear not. My father denies me nothing. Thy trial may be a hard one, but thou wilt come nobly forth from it. Only be true to us, and thou shalt not suffer.” Jamie made no reply, but Robbie’s words were like a gleam of sunshine breaking through the clouds; one more such gleam was in store for him on the morrow. But the morrow was not yet come, and the thirst of their love still needed quenching.

“Jamie,” whispered the boy, “let me lie with thee tonight as man and wife. Though I am no woman, nor ever would wish to be one, I would lie with thee face to face, my legs drawn up about thy hips, so that thou canst penetrate me while I flutter tiny kisses on thy lips. If I straddle thee as I have done before, I cannot control my excitement.

If thou but takest the lead, we can ride the night until the stars lose their fires. I would fuck till the lark begins his morning song, and the nightingale droops his weary head.”

“Come here, you fucker,” laughed Jamie.

“Come here, you fucker,” Ewan was laughing, at that very moment trying to drag the prince Alphonso away from his bottom. “Thou sniffest me like a dog in heat.”

“Woof! Woof!” responded the son of England.

On the morrow, when the Scots and English bade their final adieus before the general departure from Berwick, Robbie fulfilled his promise.

“I have my half gold coin, Jamie. I shall look at it very day and think of thee. Thou wilt not forget me.”

“Never so long as I live,” he answered, drawing a leather cord from beneath his shirt on which hung, pierced, his half of the golden token of their love. “And some day, I will come to thee again.”

“I shall be waiting,” answered the boy, with a mixture of arch sweetness and playfulness that Jamie scarce knew whether to call childlike confidence or mature trust. But the look in Robert’s eyes went to his heart and was treasured there, like the memory of sunshine on a loch, for many long days to come.

Chapter 8

TRANQUILLITY AND TURBULENCE

The sons of Urquhart returned together to Dunmore, there to settle down, outwardly at least, to a quiet and uneventful life, chiefly diversified by hunting and fishing and such adventures as are inseparable from those pastimes in which eager lads are engrossed.

Jamie both looked and felt older for his experiences in the castle of Berwick. His face had lost much of its boyishness, and, though strikingly bonny, had taken a thoughtfulness beyond his years. Yet as the days merged into weeks and the weeks lengthened into months, and still there had been nocht to alarm him unduly, he began, as the inclement winter drew on, to breathe more freely; for in the winter months all hostilities of necessity ceased; the glens were blocked with snow, and both traveling and fighting were practically out of the question for a considerable time.

Jamie, too, had matters enough to occupy his mind quite apart from the charge of his two haughty brothers. He had his own estates to administer—no light task for a youth not yet seventeen—and his large household to order; and though Ewan gave him every help, Dugald and Duncan stood aloof and would not take the slightest interest in anything that appertained to Dunmore. They gave no reason for their conduct, and were not in other ways unfriendly to their brothers.

Scotland itself was, for the time being, quiet and at peace. Exhausted by its own internal struggles and by the campaigns

against the English of the Wallace years, the land was, as it were, resting and restoring itself in preparation for a mortal struggle yet to come.

Dugald and Duncan never spoke of the English without words and looks indicative of the deepest hatred; the smouldering fire in their breasts was kept glowing by the knowledge that Godfrey Mortimer ruled their estates. Often they sat by a glowing fire of logs that blazed in the long winter evenings and listened to the wild songs of the old bard Ruaraidh, whose fierce words and sentiments hardened their hearts and braced their wills against any kind of submission to a foreign yoke. Since the adventure of the Eagle's Crag, Jamie had mistrusted the old minstrel, and was uneasy at the influence he exercised upon the twins, but the idea of sending him from Dunmore was one which never for a moment entered his head. Had not Ruaraidh grown old in his father's service? Had he not been born and bred at Dunmore? Be he friend or be he foe, at Dunmore he must remain as long as the breath remained in his body.

So the days and weeks and months slipped by, and Jamie and Ewan seemed almost as much alone as they had been after their father's death, when the twins had betaken themselves to their castle at Craigmore. And in the quiet dark of their beds, Jamie and Ewan felt still more alone, as each thought respectively of the boys who might be with them: Robbie and Alphonso, who, if they were true, lay at the same moments in their beds far to the south, dreaming of them. More than once Ewan, lying there pumping his cock in the dark, wondered if the young prince was at that self-same moment bringing himself to a lonely ecstasy fueled by dreams of their nights in the castle of Berwick.

And in the darkness of his bed, Jamie consoled himself that, if silent and sullen, at least his elder brothers did not appear to

entertain any plan likely to raise anxiety in his mind as to the pledge he had given to the king. They kept at home, and never spoke of Craigmore. As the winter passed away and the spring began to awaken the world from her longwhile slumber, they betook themselves with zest to hunting, and mounted long expeditions that sometimes lasted many days, returning laden with spoil, and apparently in better spirits from the bracing nature of their pursuits.

Ewan, who had felt the cold somewhat keenly, and had been drooping and languid all winter long, picked up strength and spirit as the days grew longer and warmer, and began to enjoy the open-air life once more. Jamie was much wrapped up in this younger brother of his, who had always been dearer to him than any being in the world. As summer swept the glens, Ewan was almost his former self again, or so Jamie hoped. Although Ewan's lack of rude health hindered both from joining the hunting expeditions planned and carried out by the twins, it never occurred to Jamie to suspect that there was an ulterior motive for these, or to realise how unwelcome his presence would have been had he volunteered it, in lieu of staying behind with Ewan, and contenting himself with less adventurous times.

Spring turned to summer, and summer to autumn, and life at Dunmore seemed to move quietly enough, though Dugald and Duncan were visibly restless. They did not go far from the castle, nor did they seem interested in the spoils the hunters brought home. But they spent many long hours in the great gallery where the arms of the retainers were laid up, and their heads were often close together in deep discussion.

Their hour was nigh; they had learned that Godfrey Mortimer was not a welcome landlord of their estates at Craigmore. Indeed, after an initial burst of enthusiasm, he had retired to his English estates,

returning only at quarterly intervals to exact his rents and fees from his sullen tenants. The hearts of Dugald and Duncan swelled within them at the news. It was not for nocht that they, with their own faithful followers sworn to secrecy, had absented themselves again and again from Dunmore on the pretense of long hunting forays. It was true that they had hunted game, but little had the twins themselves to do with the taking of that prey. They had been at Craigmore; they had travelled the familiar tracks, and had found nothing but the enthusiastic welcome from their own people and sullen distaste for the foreign lordling who had been foisted on them by a foreign king. Matters were ripe for revolt. There only wanted the time and the occasion.

The hour had come. But loose as had grown the bond between the Urquhart brothers, the twins were not devoid of a certain rude code of honour of their own and had no wish to involve Jamie in ruin and disgrace. He was surety for their good behaviour, and if it became known to Edward that they had led the attack on one of his appointees, Dunmore itself might pay the forfeit of his displeasure, and Jamie would have to answer with his life. Thus when, upon a wild blustering night in September, a hardy band of Scots, armed to the teeth, crept with the silent caution of wild beasts along a rocky pathway which led by subterranean passage, known only to Dugald and Duncan, into the keep of Craigmore itself, none would have recognised the faces of the two leaders. They were blackened and covered with a tangled growth of hair and beard, the countenances of the twin issue of the late Lord Urquhart.

Thus it was that young Godfrey, who lay abed fervently wishing that this fifth visit was safely over, was aroused from his slumbers by the clash of arms and by the terrified cries of the guard he always had about him.

“The Scots are upon us!” he heard a voice cry out in the darkness. “We are undone—betrayed! *Sauve qui peut!* Every man for himself! They are murdering every soul they meet!”

The last statement was entirely untrue; the marauders had no wish to injure their own countrymen, and as long as the Sassenach laid down his arms, no harm befell him. But in the darkness panic ensued.

In a passion of rage and terror, Godfrey sprang from his bed and commenced hurrying into his clothes as fast as his trembling hands would allow him. In vain he called to his guards and his servants; in vain he called to the page-boys who warmed his bed and body of a night; they, every man and boy, had fled. It was a terrible moment for the young Englishman, half-armed and half-naked, and entirely at the mercy of a vengeful foe. He looked round wildly for some means of escape. The tread of feet was on the stairs. Resistance was hopeless. In a mad impulse of terror, he flung himself on the floor and crept beneath the bed, the arras of which concealed him from sight. There he lay panting and trembling, whilst the door was burst open and armed men burst in.

“Ha, flown already!” cried a voice which did not seem entirely unfamiliar to the shivering youth, though he could not have said exactly to whom it belonged, and was in no mood to cudgel his brains on the subject. “He cannot be far,” enjoined a second voice, equally familiar and unfamiliar to the barely clad boy under the bed, from where Godfrey could make out only two pairs of, what he had to admit to himself, strong, handsome, hairy legs.

“Let us set this part of the keep ablaze.”

That was the first voice again.

“It will be announced there was an accident, a terrible accident, but an accident nevertheless, in which Sir Godfrey Mortimer

perished most nobly.”

Scrambling out from under the bed, Godfrey gripped the first pair of knees he reached.

“Spare me, o, spare me, and I will renounce my claim.” He looked up into a hairy, bewhiskered face which did not seem entirely unfamiliar. “I swear by all that is holy that if you will but grant me my life, I will repair to the king’s court without delay, and I will yield up to him every claim which I have on these lands. I swear by all that is holy in heaven and earth.”

“And what guid shall we reap from that?” came the voice again. “We shall have but another English tyrant set over us. Better kill you outright as a warning to all who may come after.”

Godfrey lifted his voice again in passionate appeal.

“Listen, and I will tell you what I will do. Spare but my life and I will entreat the king to restore these lands to your feudal lords, Dugald and Duncan. It was by my doing that the lands were wrested from them. I confess it freely now. And I confess, forgive me, that I have no love for these estates in Scotland. The life is too harsh and primitive for me. I would return to the balmy south and remain on my own estates. Craigmore is the birthright of Dugald and Duncan Urquhart, and they are welcome to it. Grant me but my life and I will undo the work I have done. I will restore to you your youthful chieftains. Again I swear it, and I have the ear of his Grace. I will trouble you no more myself. I wish I had never seen this evil place. It has been nought but a curse to me from the day it was bestowed.”

A hand helped Godfrey to his feet, and assisted him to the bed, on which he sank down gratefully, legs dangling over the edge. The hairy intruders sat on either side of him, and pressed their suit.

The clout around his middle was removed, and he felt first a hand, then a mouth bring him to a different kind of excitement. He closed

his eyes in terror; what kind of Scotch torture was this. His prick hardened, lengthened and, despite his fear, stood aching erect above his middle. He groaned as hands, fingers and mouths worked their way about his body, his thighs, his balls, and his straining shaft. He felt the bed creak as one of the intruders climbed to straddle his middle; he felt a hand grip his cock and aim its tip into a hot, hairy darkness. Something gave, and he slid into a warm, spongy morass that gripped his member in lascivious embrace. Something nudged his lips, and he opened his mouth to receive a hot, stiff cock that slid in all the way.

Someone was riding his cock; he was being ridden, and the gripping pleasure made him swell to a fullness that throbbed and ached. If this was torture, he hoped he was in Hell.

Nothing lasts forever, and he spurted his juice into the hot fundament, even as the cock in his sucking mouth spat its juice into him. He lay, eyes closed, in shivering ecstasy as cocks softened and were withdrawn. He heard the words as they withdrew from his chamber:

“Keep thy oath, Godfrey Mortimer, and you may return to Craigmore as a welcome guest, for whom we will always be willing to render such service. Take the page-boys, Hamish and Donald, south with you; they have grown much attached to you, and they will serve you well.”

Sir Godfrey Mortimer was as good as his word. He was clever in diplomatic matters, and took good care not to drop a hint as to the unfortunate conduct of the folk of Craigmore, which might draw upon them the royal wrath, and upon him instant disgrace. He simply represented that he was weary of his charge of this barren estate, that he preferred life in England and at the court, and found the revenues of his Scots estates barren and unprofitable. As the

former owners had redeemed their character by quiet conduct during the past year and a half, his gracious Majesty hinted he might be willing to gratify them and their people by reinstating them.

Edward made no trouble about restoring to Dugald and Duncan their lands, only desiring that Jamie should renew his pledge for their loyalty, good faith and conduct, and hold himself responsible yet awhile for his brothers to the king.

And so Dugald and Duncan returned to Craigmore, whilst Jamie and Ewan remained at Dunmore, hoping with fond hope that this act of clemency and justice on the part of Edward might overcome in the minds of their twin brothers the deeply-seated hatred they had cherished so long.

Ah, if wishes were horses!

Chapter 9

THE DOGS OF WAR UNLEASHED

“Jamie, Jamie, it is our country’s call! You cannot hang back. United we stand; divided we fall! Will the Lord of Dunmore be the man to bring ruin upon a noble cause by banding with the alien oppressor against his own kind? I will not believe it of you.”

Jamie and Ewan were standing just outside the great hall at Dunmore. In the background of the hall was a crowd of retainers and soldiers, so eagerly discussing some matter of vital interest that the brothers stepped outside upon the battlemented terrace to be out of the hearing of their eager clamour. There was a deep gravity on Jamie’s face, which was no longer the face of a boy but of a youth of nineteen summers, and one upon whom the cares and responsibilities of life sat somewhat heavily. The tall, well-knit frame had taken upon itself the stature and developed grace of manhood; the sun-browned face was lined with traces of thought and care, though the blue eyes sparkled with their old bright and ready smile.

To a casual observer, the likeness of the brothers remained remarkable, but a closer survey revealed points of dissimilarity. Ewan’s figure was slighter, and save in moments of excitement or agitation there was something of languor in his movements. The colour in his cheeks was not the healthy brown of exposure to the sun and wind, but the fleeting hectic flush of long-standing insidious disease, and his eyes had a far-away look, dreamy and absorbed.

Facing this fair-haired pair were the twin Lords of Craigmore, considerably changed from the sullen-looking lads of old days, but still with some of their characteristics unchanged. They were taller and more stoutly built than their younger brothers, and their dark skins and coal-black hair gave something of ferocity and wildness to their appearance. However, for the past two years a friendly intercourse had been established between the brothers. The country had been at peace, such peace as the endless squabble between claimants for the Scottish crown would allow, and no one had disturbed the sons of Urquhart in the possession of their ancestral rights.

But now something very different was in the wind. The Bruce had raised his standard, and Northern Scotland had risen as one man to flock to the banners of one who could unite the quarreling factions in his person. One after another the Clan chiefs and Lowland nobles who had sworn fealty to Edward renounced their allegiance, and mustered their forces to join those of Robert the Bruce, Earl of Carrick, who had grasped the torch of freedom ripped so treacherously from the hand of William Wallace.

The whole country was in a wild ferment of patriotic fervour. The hour seemed to have arrived when all could once again band together in triumphant vindication of their national rights.

Dugald and Duncan were amongst the first to tender their allegiance to the national cause, and, having sent out a compact band of armed men to announce their arrival in person, had themselves hurried to Dunmore to persuade their brothers to join what would be a *sair fecht*.

They found Jamie less indisposed than they had feared. In the negative, Edward had not visited Scotland in person for too long a time, and the justice of the king was not observed by his English

subjects who lorded it over the Scots so arrogantly. Heart-burnings and complaints were frequent, and Jamie had often had his spirit stirred within him at some take-out outrage and wrong.

“Jamie, bethink thee. When was not Dunmore in the van when the country called on her? Did our father not fecht with Wallace at Stirling Bridge? If you will rise with us, we shall carry the whole of the North. Hang back and the cause may be lost. Brither, why do you hesitate? Why do you falter? It is the voice of your country calling you. Will you not heed the call? Throw to the wind all idle scruples, and rise with us. Think what glorious future may lie before our country, united under the patriotic hand of the Bruce!”

Jamie’s cheek flushed, his eye kindled. He did indeed believe that were his father living, he would be among the first to hasten to Carrick’s side. If indeed the united country could be strong enough to throw off the English yoke, what a victory that would be! Was not every son of Scotland bound to his country’s cause at such a time?

Yet there were causes for his hesitation. Was his word of honour in any wise pledged to Edward? He had paid him homage for his lands; was compelled homage honourable? Did that act bind him to obedience at all costs? Where did honour lie: in the service of his country, or in his oath to a foreign king?

“Jamie, whatever course you take you are damned in Edward’s eyes. You have declared yourself surety for us, and nought but death will hold us back from the cry of our country in need. Envious eyes are already cast by the voracious English upon these fair lands of Dunmore, which these years of peace have given you and Ewan the opportunity to enrich and beautify. Let Edward hear that we have rebelled, and his nobles will claim your lands, your liberty, your life, and you must either yield all in ignominious flight or take up arms to defend yourself and your own. By our act you are lost—yet not even

that thought will hold us back—then why not stand or fall as a bonnie fechter, claymore in hand, than be trapped like a rat in a hole in ignoble inaction? For I do not believe you would ever raise your hand against your fellow countrymen, even if your feudal lord demanded it of you, which, dear brither, Edward Plantagenet surely will.”

“Never!” cried Jamie, and his quick mind resolved the situation thus thrust upon him whilst his brother was yet speaking. His heart swelled within him; his eyes shone with a strange fire. Only one thought checked the immediate utterance of his decision, and that was the vision of a pair of dark soft eyes and a boy’s face, smiling upon him in complete and loving trust.

In complete and loving trust, the laughing Robbie had allowed him to bend his slender legs behind his head until the puckered rosebud of his anus was open to Jamie’s loving assault. How Robbie had moaned and whimpered in delight as Jamie ran his tongue across the little brown ring, probing and poking at his hole, until with a sigh the sphincter surrendered to the inevitable and opened to his lover’s long middle finger. How Robbie had pushed his tight little bottom against the finger until it slid in to the hilt; how bravely he had accepted one, two and three fingers that sawed in the honey of his hole. How he had giggled when the young Lord of Dunmore had kissed his little rose, inserted his tongue through the love-weakened muscle, fastened his lips around the hole and sucked until the heavens swayed.

They had lain, the boys, head to toe, suckling on each other’s stiff cocks, tempting the juices to rise and spit, but withdrawing their lips to prolong the pleasure until each thought he would explode into a milky delight that found equal only in the starry sky. Jamie smiled to mind how Robbie had tried to cram his entire scrotum in his mouth; and how each testicle in turn had popped from the side of his mouth.

How he had kissed the boy on the nape of the neck, then followed his spine with a trail of kisses, probed his crack, turned the corner, licked along his perineum, up the shaft, and down onto the downy pubic hair, across the slightly swollen belly, up the torso, pausing to suck on each nipple, into the muskiness of each armpit, then on to those red, full lips that guarded the entrance to the boy's body, his heart, his lungs, and his very soul.

Jamie suddenly held out his hand, and said in clear, ringing tones: "Brothers, I go with you. I, too, will offer my life and my all for the liberty of our land. The Lord of Dunmore will not shrink from his country's call. The hour has come to do or die. On, on to victory!"

Dugald and Duncan grasped the outstretched hand, and from within the great hall there burst forth the strains of a wild tune from the pipes of old Ruairaidh, who must have heard the words that bound Jamie to the national cause, so exultant and triumphant were the strains which awoke beneath his hands.

It was but five days later that the four brothers rode forth from beneath the arched gateway of Dunmore, all armed to the teeth, and with a goodly following of armed attendants. Jamie and Ewan paused at a short distance from the castle to look back. A rush of strange and unwonted emotion brought tears to Ewan's eyes, which only his brother saw. Their very heart-strings were bound round these homelike and familiar things, and Jamie gladly paused with Ewan alone and silent, whilst the cavalcade was lost to sigh in the long and winding road that would take them south to victory or death.

"Is it a last farewell?" murmured the younger Urquhart. "Shall we ever see this fair scene again?"

"Ewan, Ewan!" cried Jamie, "why shouldst thou leave our home? Thou art more fit for the bield of home than for the strife of war. Why

shouldst thou come forth with us? Let us leave thee here in safety . .
.”

“Jamie!”

It was but one word, but the volume of reproach compressed into it brought Jamie to a sudden stop. The brothers looked into each other’s eyes a moment, and then Ewan said, with his sweet smile: “We have never been separated yet, my Jamie. In sorrow and joy we have ever been together. It is too late to change all that now, and I would not if I could. I will be by thy side to the end, be it for life or for death, we will ride forth together.” He paused for a moment, then added: “Let us go forth together. Let us go forth singing.”

Ewan urged his cuddy forward, and raised his voice in the first song their mother had taught them. He had not gone ten yards when Jamie was at his side, entwining his darker tones with that of his sweetly-tempered brother:

“Oh, the summer time is coming,
And the leaves are sweetly bloomin’,
And the wild mountain thyme
Grows around the bloomin’ heather.
Will you go, laddies, go,
And we’ll all go together
To pull wild mountain thyme
All around the bloomin’ heather,
Will you go, laddies, go . . .”

And so the Lords of Dunmore rode forth to meet their fate at the hands of the mighty English king.

Of that first campaign, the history books give a far better account than this poor hand can do. Following some opening successes, yet once again betrayed by the treachery of certain Scottish lords, Robert the Bruce retired with his army to the fastness of Galloway, where the English dared not pursue them. But the vigorous Edward was not

made of the stuff that easily gives up a pursuit. He knew well that Scotland was in his power as long as the Scottish nobles remained fractious and disunited, and that he but had to exercise patience, resolution and bribery, and the final victory would be his.

Permitting no relaxation of his efforts against the Highlanders, even when the winter's bitter snell was causing untold suffering amongst his soldiers, he commenced to harry the North in a manner so barbarous that his name become forever tarnished in the annals of this island of ours. Dugald and Duncan, as foolhardy as they were brave, were shocked by the magnitude of these depredations, and with a picked band of their hardiest men, marched southwards, hoping to distract the invaders from the unprotected cities of Perth and Dundee.

Jamie would gladly have been of their number, but the condition of Ewan withheld him, for the lad was very ill, and often felt that this winter of hardship up in the mountain air was killing him by inches, although he never complained. It was out of the question for Ewan to fight; he lay most of the day beside a little fire of peat in a cabin that Jamie and his men had constructed with their own hands, beneath the shelter of a rock which broke the force of the north wind, and formed some protection against the deep snow.

Days and weeks passed, until the sun, gaining a little more power, began to melt the snow and bespoke that spring was at hand. No news had been received up the mountains of the results of his brothers' expedition. It was reported by scouts that Edward was at Stirling Castle, making hostile demonstrations of a determined kind, and threatening to lay waste the entire country from John O'Groats to Scottish Berwick if the Clan chiefs and Lowland lords did not submit and surrender Robert the Bruce to his royal mercy.

It was a wild and windy night when the stroke fell, which proved the final blow to all their hopes and ambitions. Jamie had piled the fire high, and was seated with Ewan talking of past days, gazing with an unconscious wistfulness into the glowing embers which took semblance of those familiar towers, turrets and battlements they felt they might never see again. Ewan paused in the middle of a sentence, and looked round with a start. A tall, gaunt figure staggered rather than walked into the bothy, and sank down exhausted by the fire.

“Dugald!” Ewan cried sharply, and Jamie, barring the entrance, came forward like one in a dream. He asked with the calmness of one who reads dire disaster, “Where is our brither? Where is Duncan?”

“Deid,” came the answer in a hollow voice, as though the speaker were exhausted beyond human endurance. “Would that I too lay beside him.”

Jamie, too stunned to say another word at that moment, busied himself in getting his brother food and drink, of which he was plainly in sore need. He ate ravenously and in perfect silence; and his brothers watched him without having the heart to put another question. Indeed they knew the worst: the flower of the Highlands was slain, their own brother among the number, the rest scattered like chaff in the wind.

“It was on the banks of the Tay, near Loch Tummel. We were taken unawares by the main body of the English army, led there by traitorous Campbells. We sold our lives dearly. I thought I had sold mine when my time came, but I awoke beneath the stars and found Duncan lying over me, stark and deid. He had given his life to protect me from the blow that would have finished me. I lay there in the cold dew of morning and listened to the English hunt down our wounded like wolves falling upon injured deer. I was forced to remain two days lying in the open while the stream by my side ran red with Scotch

blood.” His eyes filled with tears. “Since then I have been straggling back here, not knowing what had befallen our camp in these mountains. On my way, I heard that resistance has collapsed in the south. Only the Bruce fights on, and he is trapped in his own western lands in the Galloway.”

The three brothers huddled together, staring at the floor. Then Dugald continued.

“There is but one choice open to us now. Submit to the proud usurper, or go forth sword in hand, and at least die fighting with harness on our back.”

“For now, let us grieve for our brither Duncan,” said Ewan. The young men of Dunmore huddled together and sang the lament for their lost brother, and for their lost country.

Dugald’s words proved true. No sooner did the news of the disaster by Loch Tummel become known than the army melted away like the snow in the increasing power of the sun. The chiefs, without a head, without a champion, either retired to their own wild solitudes or hastened to make their peace with the offended Edward.

Only those who put honour before life itself stood forth sword in hand to die, if it might be, with face to foe in defence of a cause they knew was lost. And amongst this gallant but reckless little band were the brothers Urquhart who, having buried their dead and taken up the sword against Edward, were determined not to lay it down until the Bruce came again or until the hand of death was cold upon each heart.

Chapter 10

STIRLING CASTLE

“There has been a battle, desperate fighting. They are bringing the prisoners into the guard room,” cried Robert, bursting into the royal apartments with small ceremony in his excitement. “Come, Alphonso; let us go and see them. Our fellows say they made a gallant stand, and fought like veritable tigers. In sooth, I wish I had been there. Methinks it is the last of the fighting these parts will see for many a long year.”

Alphonso sprang up at the words of his comrade, eager to go and see the prisoners, his humane and kindly nature prompting him to ascertain that no undue harshness was displayed towards them by the rude soldiers.

The royal family had been for some time in Scotland. They had wintered in Edinburgh. Now they were at Stirling for greater security, the king considering that fortress the stronger of the two. The rebellion was practically at an end, but there was much to look into and arrange with regard to the rebels and their affairs, and there was the prospect of a considerable sojourn at the castle.

At this moment Edward himself was absent, though not far away. It had been rumoured that there had been sharp, irregular fighting all about the region of Inverness, where the rebels had had their headquarters. Thus it was that the news of a victory and the capture of prisoners was exceedingly exciting to those within the castle. Alphonso, who was looking somewhat stronger for his sojourn in the

bracing air of Scotland, sprang up to go with Robert to make inspection.

The guard-room at the castle was a vast and really fine apartment, with a vaulted roof and majestic pillars, that gave the impression of much rude strength of construction. Just at this moment it was the scene of an animated picture, and the youths paused at the door to look about them with eager curiosity. The hall was full of soldiers, most of whom wore Edward's badge and were known by sight to the boys as being attached to the garrison; but mingled with these were other men, some in English dress but others wearing the wild garb of the sons of the mountains and glens. These last had, for the most part, fetters on their wrists, or were bound two and two together and guarded by the English, whilst some of them drooped under the effect of exhaustion or ghastly wounds, and several forms lay stretched along the ground indifferent to or insensible of their surroundings.

Desperate fighting there had been, indeed, to judge from appearances, and Alphonso's gentle spirit was stirred within him as he caught the sound of deep groans mingling with the loud voices of the soldiers. He had inherited his mother's gentle spirit, and the generosity which always takes the part of the weak and oppressed. It mattered not that these men had been taken with swords drawn against his royal father; they were prisoners now, they had lost their all; if rebels from the English standpoint, they had been striving to free their country from what appeared to them as unjust inroads of an alien presence.

Alphonso, himself sinking into an early grave and fully aware of his own state, saw life somewhat differently from his soldier-sire, and felt little sympathy for that lust of conquest which to the great Edward was the elixir of life.

Stepping forward, therefore, with the air of quiet authority which he knew so well how to assume, he enforced silence by a gesture, and gave strict command to the captain of the guard-room to remove the fetters from those who were wounded. They were to see that they had all due tendance and care, while the rest were to be guarded with as little rigor as possible, and shut up together, where they would have at least the consolation of companionship in their misfortune.

The captain gave respectful heed to these words and was by no means loath to carry out his instructions. He was a humane man himself, though inured to the horrors of war, and he, in common with all who came into contact with the young prince, felt towards him love and reverence. There was something unearthly at times in the radiant beauty of young Alphonso's face, and the growing conviction that he was not long for this world increased the loving loyalty shown to him by all.

"Your Grace's behests shall be obeyed," answered the man readily. "I myself will see that the wounded receive due and fitting care. They are brave fellows, be they rebels or no, and verily I believe there is not a man of them but would have laid down his life to save that of the two young leaders who led them on to that last desperate sally. Such gallant feats of arms I have seldom beheld, and it was sore trouble to take them without killing them, so fiercely did they fight."

"I would fain see these youths—said you not they were but youths?" asked Robert, whose interest was fired by the tale he heard.

"Make it so," said Alphonso. "A true victory can be celebrated only when honour is done to an honourable foe."

The bright light of day was excluded from the sick-room, and as the prince and his companion stood in the doorway their eyes took in only the general appearance of two recumbent figures, one lying upon a couch beside a glowing fire, the other extended as if lifeless

upon a low mattress. His attitude bespoke slumber or death, and his face was bandaged in such a way that in no case would it have been recognisable. But as Alphonso's eyes grew used to the darkness and fixed themselves upon the face of the other youth lying on the couch, he gave a start and advanced with quick steps to kneel at his side.

"Ewan!"

The figure on the couch gave a start, a pair of hollow eyes flashed open, there was a quick attempt to rise, checked by the prince himself, who threw his arms about the neck of the young Scot, and, heedless of the presence of Robert Fitzallan, tenderly kissed his cheek.

"Prince Alphonso!"

"Yes, Ewan, it is I indeed."

The prince sat down on the edge of the couch and gazed intently at the exhausted features of the youth, towards whom in days gone by he had felt such a strong attachment. There was something of sorrow and reproach in his face as he said gently: "Ewan, can it really be thou? I had not thought to have seen thee in the ranks of our foes, fighting desperately against my father's soldiers. Whence has come this bitter change of feelings? And what is Jamie doing, who was to act as guardian towards his younger brother? Hast thou broken away from his controlling hand? O Ewan, I grieve to see thee here in such a plight."

Ewan's sad glance met that of the young prince unfalteringly and without shame, although there was something in it of deep and settled sorrow.

"Think not that we took up arms willingly, Jamie and I," he said faintly, yet with clearness and decision. "Ay, it is Jamie who lies there . . ."

There was a gasp, a muffled scream.

“Jamie, my Jamie,” and Robbie was on his knees by the side of the prostrate form on the mattress, cradling him gently in his arms.

“. . . sore wounded, but sleeping soundly after a night of fever and pain. Disturb him not; he is fast in dreamland If you would listen to my tale, gentle prince, I trow you would think something less hardly of us, who have lost our all, and have failed to win the solders’ deaths that we went forth to seek.”

Then Ewan told his tale, told of the wrongs inflicted on hapless Scotland in Edward’s absence in France by the rapacious nobles he had left behind him to preserve order; of the ever-increasing discontent of the people; the wild hope, infused by the rising of Robert the Bruce, of uniting once and for all to throw off the foreign yoke and become a free nation again.

“For I tell you, Alphonso, though it was not yesterday, and it is not today, it will be tomorrow. Scotland was and will be free.”

He told of the action taken by their twin brothers, of the pressure brought to bear on James Urquhart, and how the die was cast in the only way it could be thrown. It was plainly bitter physic to Ewan that they had not met the death they craved but had fallen alive into the hands of the enemy. Alphonso gently chid him, and comforted him with brave and kindly words; he asked what had befallen Dugald, and if he had likewise perished in the fight.

“Nay; he was not with us when we made that last rally. He commenced the march with us, but his wound broke out again, and we were forced to leave him behind. We hoped our brither would find shelter and help; if he had tried to march with us, he maun assuredly have died.”

A violent fit of coughing overtook Ewan. Alphonso gathered the wasted form in his arms and soothed the painful paroxysm as one who knows just what will best relieve the sufferer. The sound roused

Jamie, who had been sleeping for many hours, and his vigorous constitution was such that even these few hours' quiet rest and the nourishment administered to him on the order of the captain had infused new life into his frame. He had strength enough to sit up and push aside the bandage which had fallen over his eyes.

Astonished he was to find himself surrounded by Robert's slim arms, and blushing he surrendered to the hot kisses showered upon his cheeks and lips by the youth. His blush grew deeper as he saw, with disbelieving eyes, his brother in the arms of the son of the king of England, who, with no reserve whatsoever, was mouth-kissing Ewan deep and hard. With a sigh, as one who is constantly startled by the ways of the world, Jamie surrendered himself to Robbie's searching tongue that sought a path through his mouth and throat to his very soul itself.

Then Alphonso, disentangling himself from Ewan, came towards him and, holding his hand in a friendly clasp, told him that he had heard all the story, and that he was still their friend, and he would plead their case to his father.

But though the young prince left lighter hearts behind him in the room where the two young eagles of Dunmore were imprisoned, he found that the task he had set himself was a more difficult one than he had anticipated. For, though he listened to his son's pleadings, and the lad told his story with simple eloquence and fervour, the stern lines on his father's brow did not relax, and his lips set themselves into an ominous curve which Alphonso liked little to see.

"My son," said the king with an impatience that boded ill for the success of the cause, "I verily believe wert thou in the place of king, thou wouldst give to every rebel chief his lands again, and not be contented till thine own crown came sliding about thine ears. Mercy must temper justice, but if it take the place of justice it becomes mere

weakness. Dunmore will pass away from Jamie. It is throwing words away to plead with me. My mind is made up. I trust not a traitor twice.”

There was something in Edward’s tone that warned Alphonso to press the matter no more. He knew that when Edward thus spoke, his word was final and irrevocable. All he ventured now to ask was, “What will become of Jamie and his brother? You will not take their lives, sweet sire?”

“Their lives I give to thee, my son,” answered the king, with a gesture towards his boy which betrayed a deep love, and showed that although he had denied him sternly, he did not do so willingly.

“And let them be my prisoners, I pray,” cried Alphonso, with unwonted energy and animation. “Thou hast granted me their lives; grant me the keeping of their persons, too. Nay, think not that I will connive at their escape. I give thee my word that I will be as secure a warder as any thou might name. But I have often longed for company to share my solitary hours. Give me Ewan and Jamie. They have the royal blood of Scotland flowing in their veins, and methinks they love me even as I love them. And, father, Ewan has not many months to live. I know so well all he suffers that my heart goes out to him. Give me Robert of Fitzallan as my Captain of the Guard, and give me the Urquhart brothers for mine own attendants. Sweet father, I have not asked many boons of thee. Grant me this one, I pray, for my heart is set on it.”

There was something in this appeal, something in the look in Alphonso’s face, something in the very words he chose, that made it impossible for his father to refuse him.

“So be it. Give thine own orders concerning these youths. I leave them in thy hands. Make of them what pleaseth thee. Only let them understand that charge will be given to the custodians of the castle,

and of whatever place they visit in the future, that they are prisoners at the king's pleasure, and that any attempt at escape will be punished with instant and rigorous captivity."

"I thank thee, father, for this boon," answered Alphonso, with brightening eyes. "Thou shalt never have cause to repent it."

Some weeks later, four youths lay spread across Alphonso's regal bed, a huge double bed with canopies of velvet that kept out the chill of the night; and, although it was but four in the afternoon, the canopies were pulled tight around them. Jamie and Ewan had now been assigned to better apartments, near to those occupied by the prince, whose servants they nominally were. Ewan had begun to enter upon some of his duties towards his royal patron, and the friendship begun in boyhood had ripened into a deep and trusting intimacy. Such perfect mutual understanding and sympathy was rare and precious; Ewan did not even look back with longing to the old life, so entirely had his heart gone out to the youthful prince, whose days on earth, like his own were plainly numbered.

In the presence of Jamie and Robert, the young prince and his companion had been suitably restrained in their shows of affection, but it had become harder and harder to keep up the pretense of being only platonic friends. Now they hardly bothered, encouraged by the intimacy they had seen between Jamie and Robert, the latter little caring what the others saw.

As the youths lay there making desultory conversation about court matters, Alphonso slid his hand across Ewan's rump, inside his right thigh, and onto the unmistakable bulge between his legs. Almost casually, he manipulated the boy's penis which hardened and lengthened beneath the thin, silk-like material. Finally, Ewan moaned openly, and slid his legs apart to provide easier access.

Jamie blushed furiously, and his blush deepened as he felt familiar fingers on his own thickening member.

“I wonder,” whispered Alphonso, “which Urquhart brother has the greater prick? Jamie is older than Ewan by a year, but this is a well-built Scottish boy.”

“Not well-built enough,” laughed Robert. “I warrant my Urquhart has at least two inches in length on yours.”

“A bet, a bet! I say!” cried Alphonso. “Ewan against your Jamie. Mine to be at least the equal of the older brother. What say you to five sovereigns?”

“Done!” cried Robert, who was already unstringing Jamie’s breeks. Jamie made a feeble protest, but was already too excited to resist the challenge; besides, Robert was pushing him onto his back. He lay there, full length, Ewan stretched out at his side while nimble fingers undid them both.

“I say, what a beauty!” That was Alphonso.

“But look at this. Here is greatness, indeed.” That was the prince.

“Mine is bigger.”

“Nay, mine is the bigger fellow.”

“But I can grow mine bigger yet!”

Startled Jamie was to feel a hot, wet mouth over his cock, a sucking mouth that bobbed up and down the shaft, tight, wet lips gliding from tip to pubic hair and back again. He heard a grunt beside him, turned and saw Ewan’s face with a smile on his lips that told the same story. The Urquhart brothers lay there, staring into each other’s eyes, seeing each other whole and true for the first time in their loves. Though they had always been close, their intimacy was now singular.

Fingers played with their balls, traced the lengths of the perineums, pressed at their puckered holes. Lips, mouths, tongues,

throats, played on their erections with all the skill of a master-piper. They grunted simultaneously as fingers tips pushed past their anal rings, spread their sphincters, and worked into their rectums to the knuckles and the hilt. Their eyes closed as their mouths opened, and their lips met. Boys, who had always shared the same soul, now shared each other's bodies.

The heads at their groins bobbed faster, mouths sucked harder, and fingers, in twos and threes, tenderly raped their arse holes; and the Urquhart brothers found it good. Their bodies spasmed, their hips rolled, their stomachs jerked, and they pumped hot semen into the hungry mouths that swallowed and sucked on their cocks. Their hands slid lower to grasp the hair of their worshippers, to slow down the ministrations, as their cocks became too sensitive to touch. They gasped, slid up onto their elbows, and gasped again; for below them lay Alphonso's head in Jamie's crotch, Robert's head in Ewan's crotch, lips still wrapped round softening cocks.

Both boys raised their heads, and grinned, semen still clinging to their lips. Alphonso turned to Robert: "You were right; Jamie is delicious." He licked his lips.

"And you were right," replied Robert. "Ewan, too, is milk and honey, albeit with a little salt."

Understanding dawned on the Urquhart pair; they had been tricked. With a war whoop they leapt onto the enemy, bore them to the bed, and ripped away bodkins and breeks. They found cocks as hard and erect as theirs had been only moments before.

"Revenge!" cried Jamie in the Gaelic, and he manoeuvred himself so that Robert's hard young cock split the crack of his arse, the hot tip finding the Scots lad's puckered hole. "Aye, revenge!" cried Ewan, heaving the heir to the throne of England into the same position, so

that the younger Scot could lower his arsehole onto the regal member.

There was much grunting and giggling as willing pricks were rammed into willing arseholes. “Then a-hunting we will go!” cried Ewan, riding his mount hard from the off. “Wait for me!” cried Jamie as his bum began to bounce up and down on Robert’s crotch.

“Such little fellows, these Sassenachs,” grunted Ewan in Gaelic, the pain and pleasure in his well-stuffed hole contradicting his words as he spoke them. The lads leaned over the spread-eagled boys till their hair brushed their cheeks, then lips brushed lips, tongue sought tongue, and they rode eagerly, sweatily, compulsively to the finishing line.

Hot spurts of juice filled their holes. Jamie grinned at Ewan, thinking it was over. “Nay!” cried Ewan, “The best is yet to come, at least for us.” Jamie was startled to see his younger brother slide up Alphonso’s body, and set his arse firmly across the prince’s face. Slurping sounds indicated the reason for the act, and in seconds Jamie was crouched across Robert’s face, thrilling to the hot tongue that sought to retrieve the juices which had been pumped up there only moments before.

Jamie’s cock hardened again, hardened and stiffened until it ached and throbbed. After a few minutes, he slid a little way down Robbie’s body until his freshly-invigorated ‘stiffie’ (for so the boys had called it in their childhood) was pressed against Robbie’s lips. His mouth opened to receive the hard cock, and soon he was sucking as if he sought to drain his lover’s balls forever. A glance to the left showed that Ewan had followed his brother’s lead; his cock was now embedded in Alphonso’s face, a face that shone with sweat and excitement. How far away all the political upheaval seemed now. If only the young of both nations were left to settle disputes for

themselves, warfare might become redundant, as warrior learned to love warrior in ways which had brought such honour to the ancient Greeks.

Soon, all too soon, the boys, exhausted but content, lay in each other's arms, not one caring whose limbs pressed against his; like the four-leafed clover from the Emerald Isle, four had united in one.

But one of the lads was not content long; all too soon, misery crept back over Jamie's features, and his companions knew its cause.

Consider the surprise then, when Alphonso started up with a cry: "Ewan," he said, "it seems to me that through an error of my father's we may yet find means to encompass the deliverance of your grieving brother. Recall you not his encounter with my father yesterday morning?"

It had been some weeks before the king saw his son's new attendants, but coming into Alphonso's private apartment one day, he found Alphonso lying on a couch, and his look of fragile weakness struck cold to his father's heart. Of late the lad's strength had been failing rapidly, but Edward tried to blind his eyes to the truth. He had taken a hasty step towards the couch and encountered Jamie rising quickly from his seat beside his son's couch to bend the knee before the king.

"Ha, Ewan," said Edward, with a grave but not unkindly glance. "I remember your face well, young man. You have always been a friend to my son, and I would it had not been my duty to place you under restraint; but you are brother to Jamie; and he has broken faith with me; and you must pay part of that price."

Twice Jamie had opened his lips as if to speak, but Alphonso laid his hand upon his arm with a warning touch, which said as plainly as words could do, "Be silent." So Jamie held his peace, and only bent his head in submission. Then the king turned to his son, and spoke

with him on some message of state, and departed with “Farewell, young Ewan. Be faithful to my son, who is like a brother to you.”

Now, as Alphonso outlined his plan, a note of excitement crept into his voice: “There are none of those save ourselves who know which of you twain is the first-born and which the youngest. When you were brought here, a bandage hid your face. And in those faces there is little to mark you one from the other, so did my royal father mistake Jamie for Ewan.

“Ewan, if thou be willing to be called Jamie, and Jamie, if thou be willing to be called Ewan, then we may perchance make your way, Jamie, plain to depart and live in liberty once more. For it is Jamie, and not Ewan, who has so roused my father’s anger. Ewan, he will easily consent to pardon under my promptings; but Jamie he will keep as a hostage in his own hands, possibly for life itself.”

Ewan listened, and a strange look crept into his face. His cheeks flushed, and his breath came thick and fast. He understood Alphonso’s motive in suggesting this change of identity, for his mind was as close to that of his lover’s as the bodily fluids they exchanged so joyously. Their chiefest wish now was to remain together until death should call them home.

Robert’s face had flushed a deep red; he put out his hand and clasped that of Ewan hard; there was a sob in his voice as he said: “Oh, if you will but save him. He is like an eagle, caged, with drooping feathers, and darkening eye. Let us return him to the crags from which he came.”

The lads wrapped their arms around each other; for though they might soon be separated in body, in soul they would always be together: one for all, and all for one.

Chapter 11

HOMeward BOUND

Edward's work in Scotland was done. The country was quiet, and he had no longer any fear of serious rebellion. Let Robert the Bruce skulk in the west country; the king would return in the spring and complete the business of war. The first thought in his mind was the precarious condition of his son, and immediate steps were taken to convey the invalid southward where more comforts could be obtained, and where the climate was milder and more genial.

A horse-litter was prepared for him, and by his own special request this easy conveyance was shared with the two Scots youths, to whom, as his father and mother thought, he had taken one of these strange sick fancies not uncommon to those in his state of health.

Jamie (who we know, dear Reader, was in truth Ewan) was a most devoted nurse during the days of peril, and his quick understanding of the unspoken wishes of the prince evoked a real and true gratitude from his royal parents. The young Scot had a particular gift in soothing and calming the prince when it seemed he was set for a restless night. What herbal brew was employed, no one but the lads themselves knew, but a marvel it was to see young Alphonso, tossing and turning only a half hour before, lying there as soothed as a sleeping babe, whilst Jamie (Ewan) sat guard over him, a curious smile playing on his swollen lips.

Alphonso had all his senses about him, and the wistful look on Ewan's face, as the mountains of his beloved Scotland, grew dim in

the distance, was not lost upon him. He stretched out a hand, and laid it gently upon Ewan's.

"Art regretting that thou leavest all for me?" he asked; and the answer was such a look of love as went to his very heart.

"Nay, I would leave far more than that for thee, sweet prince, but it is my last look at home. I shall see these grand, wild hills, and the purple heather no more."

"No, nor yet I," answered the prince, his own eyes growing somewhat dim; "for I, too, have learned to love them well, though not as thou lovest, my darling. But be content; there are fairer things, sweeter scenes than even these, in store for us. Shall we repine at leaving the beauties of the earth, when the pearly gates of Paradise are opening before our very eyes? O, Ewan, it is a wondrous thought how soon we may be soaring hand in hand above the very stars! And methinks it may well be given to thee to wing thy way to thine own home for one last look ere thou departest for the Holy Land from whence we will never wish to return."

Ewan gave him a bright, eager look, and said, "I will think that myself. I will believe it! This is not my last farewell."

"Come into my arms," laughed Alphonso. "Nay, turn thy body round so we lie head to toe. I wouldst suck on thee whilst thou sucks on me. For now, let us create our own sucking Paradise."

The moon waxed and waned, and found Alfonso lying on another couch, this in one of the smaller state apartments of Windsor Castle, and the window, close to which he had bidden his attendants wheel him, overlooked the beautiful valley of the Thames. The first autumn tints were gilding the rich stretches of woodland whilst a faint blue haze hung over the distance, and the river flowed like a silver thread, glinting here and there into golden brightness as some brighter ray of sunlight fell upon it.

Alphonso loved the view commanded by this window; he and Ewan spent many long happy hours here, looking out on the fair prospect, and exchanging whispered thoughts and bright aspirations with regard to some land even fairer than the one they now beheld. But Jamie never looked at the valley without experiencing a strange oppression of the spirit. It reminded him of that wilder valley of the Tummel, and his eyes would tear and his heart grow sick with the fruitless longing to be no longer a stranger in a strange land. Captivity told upon him, and he was pining as eagles pine when caught and enclosed by man in a gilded cage. He looked pale and wan and wistful. Often he felt stifled by the warm, close air of the south, and felt that he must die did he not escape to the freer air of the highlands of home. But he seldom spoke of these feelings even to Ewan, and strangely enough his illness and these home-sick longings produced an effect which was wonderfully favourable to the plan fermenting in the brains of Prince Alphonso and his dearest companions, Ewan and Robert Fitzallan.

Jamie had lost the sturdiness of figure, the brown colouring, and the strength of limb which had distinguished him in the old days from Ewan. A striking likeness had always existed between the brothers, whose height and contours were the same. Now that illness had sharpened the outlines of Jamie's face, had reduced his fine proportions, and had given him something of the hollow-eyed wistfulness of expression which Ewan had so long worn, this likeness was so remarkable that few in the castle knew one brother from the other. Knowing this, they both answered indifferently to the name of either, and any change of personality would be managed without exciting fear of remark.

Jamie was perplexed at times by the persistence with which he was addressed as Ewan, even when he was certain that the speaker was

one of the few who knew him and his brother apart; but he had not troubled his head much over the matter until the day Alphonso openly spoke to him of the plan that was in their minds. He bade him prepare for a secret flight from the castle, promising that there should be no ardent search after him, as Jamie, not Ewan, was the culprit who had fallen under the royal displeasure, and the king would care little for the escape of the next of kin so long as he held the ex-Lord of Dunmore in his own safe-keeping.

Jamie's indignant refusal to leave his brother and make good his escape showed Alphonso how little he realised Ewan's condition, and with gentle sympathy, but with candour and frankness, he explained to the elder brother how short would be the period of captivity—how soon and how completely the release for which Ewan was patiently and contentedly waiting.

Jamie gave a great start as the meaning of the prince's words broke upon him, and then he buried his face in his hands, and sat motionless, neither answering nor moving. Alphonso looked at him, and by-and-by put out his own pale hand and laid it upon Jamie's knee.

Hoarsely and impetuously, Jamie whispered: "If he maun die, at least let him die in freedom, with the old hills around him. Let him be laid to rest beneath their shadow. You say that he might well escape, that no cry would be made after him so long as I am in the king's hands. Let him fly then—let him fly to Dugald who will give him tendance and a home. He shall not die in prison, away from all that he holds dear. I cannot bear the thought!"

"Nay, Jamie," answered Alphonso with a kindling smile, "thou needst not grieve for thy brother because he is here. Ask him—take it not from my lips. His heart is here with me, as mine is with him. Think not that thou art wronging him in taking his name. The one

load now lying upon his heart is the thought that he is leaving thee in captivity. Let him but know that thou art free—that he has been thy helper in thy flight—and he will have nought left to wish for in this world. His soul will be at peace.”

The Urquhart rose and paced through the chamber, and then returned to the side of the prince. His face betrayed many conflicting emotions. He spoke his mind freely.

“And what guid is life to me if I take you at your word and fly this sport? Have I not lost all that makes life worth living? My lands given to Sir Godfrey Mortimer, myself banished from my own country. What use is life to one so lonely and bereft? Where should I fly? I have never lived alane. I have always had another to live for and to love. Methinks death would be the better thing than such a loveless life.”

“Why, what a dolt thou are! ” cried Alphonso. “Why should thy life be loveless? Dost not thou know? Does not thine own heart tell thee that one faithful heart beats for thee and thee alone? Have I not seen thee with him time and time again? Have not your eyes told eloquent secrets? Have I not seen what thy lips have done? Aye, and his lips, too. Thinkest thou that Robert loves thee only for thy handsome looks and big Scots cock? Thou fillest his arse, aye, but thou also fillest his heart, mind and soul, as Ewan filleth mine.”

Jamie’s face was all in a glow, but he broke in hastily: “Prince, prince, speak not of him. There is none like him in the world. I have known it for long. But even because I know it so well I may not even dream of him. It is not with me as of old, when his father spoke to me of uniting our titles and lands. I am a beggar, an outcast, a prisoner; he is rich, honoured, courted. He is the brightest star of the court . . .”

“And Robert Fitzallan loveth thee,” interposed Alphonso. “He has loved thee from boyhood with a faithful and true love which merits

better than to be cast aside like dross in times of adversity.

“Jamie, know this. On Lord Fitzallan’s dying bed, this son of his avowed his love for thee, and the dying man gave him his blessing and bade him act as he would. Fie man! Art thou too proud to take more than thou canst give? Fie, man! the world is wide, and thou art young. The wheel of fate spins and spins again. Take what the wheel giveth thee, and be grateful for the treasure you have won. Fear not but that thou wilt bring as much as thou wilt receive. There are strange chances in the fate of each one of us. Who knows but that thou and he will not jointly reign again in the halls of Dunmore?”

Jamie started and flushed, and again paced the whole length of the room. When he returned to the window, Alphonso had gone, and in his place stood Robbie himself, his clear skin aglow with blushes, his hand stretched out towards him, his lips quivering with the intensity of his emotion. Jamie paused just one moment, looking at him, and then holding out his arms, he said, “Robbie, Robbie, my love. ”

Next moment they were clasped in close embrace, shedding happy, manly tears upon each other’s shoulders. “Oh!” whispered Robbie at last, “it has been worth waiting for this. I never thought I could have been so happy.” And, leading Jamie by the hand, pulled him to a low table, where, stooping across the table, he unloosed his britches, then reached back to grasp his lover’s stiff cock and lead it home. “Fuck me, my lord, fuck me,” whispered Sir Robert Fitzallan huskily.

There was a quieter joy in the castle that evening.

“Alphonso, it is all settled. He will leave the castle with me; he will help me in the administration of my estates. But he will not act whilst Ewan lives. And he is right. They have so loved each other, and he will not leave him to die amongst strangers in captivity.”

“It is well,” said the prince. “Robert, you found a very proper knight, as we told you from the first, when he was but a lad, and held

the Eagle's Crag against a score of men. I do not think we will have long to wait. Every day Ewan looks more shadowy and frail."

And, indeed, there was less time to wait than either of them had imagined.

Three nights later they were gathered around Ewan's bed. A taper was burning beside the bed, and the sick youth lay propped up with pillows, his breath coming in laboured gasps, though his eyes were bright and full of lively comprehension as Jamie led Alphonso and Robbie to his side.

The elder brother was startled at the change he saw in the patient since he had left him that morning. There was something in his look that struck chill upon his heart. He came forward and took his brother's hand in his. It was deadly cold, and the unearthly radiance upon the lad's face was as significant in its own way. Had not their beloved mother looked at them with just such a smile when she had slipped away into the other world, whilst yet they were persuading themselves that she was better.

"My brither," whispered Ewan. "Oh I am so happy! You will be good for each other. Jamie and Robbie . . ." He made a faint effort, and joined their hands together; and then, as if his last earthly task was accomplished, he seemed to look beyond them to Alphonso, and beyond the prince as if another bonny young man beckoned him into eternity. A strange expression of awe and wonder shone from his closing eyes.

"Duncan," he whispered, "Father . . . Mother . . . oh, I am coming, I am coming! Have you ever seen such light? I am coming, I am coming! Take me with you. Take me home."

Then his beautiful head sank onto the pillow, the light slipped from his eyes, his cool hand fell away from his brother's grasp, and they knew that Ewan was the king's prisoner no more.

Three days later the young Lord Robert Fitzallan said farewell to his royal companions, and started forth for his own estates in Derbyshire, which he had proposed for some time to visit. Had the minds of those at Windsor been free to wonder at anything so trivial as the movements of minor nobility, they might have felt surprise at his selecting this time to betake himself to a solitary and independent existence, but the mortal illness of the Prince Alphonso occupied the whole attention of the castle. The remains of the so-called Jamie, late of Dunmore, had been laid to rest with little ceremony and less pomp, and the very existence of the other brother was almost forgotten in the general dismay and grief which permeated all ranks of people both within and without the castle walls.

The young lord had a small but sufficient retinue; but it was considered rather strange that he should not set forth until the dusk had begun to gather around Windsor, so that the confusion of the start was a good deal increased by the darkness which stole upon the place. Had there been much time or attention free, it might have been noted by a keen observer that Lord Fitzallan had added to his personal retinue one who looked like a tall and stout woman, though her hood was so closely drawn that her face was seen by none of the warders who let her pass unchallenged, so many faces being hidden in the general grief.

If there were any fear or excitement in Robert as he and his companion passed out of the gate and rode quickly along the path which led through the town, he did not betray it by a look or gesture. His eagerness was only shown by his desire to push on northward as fast as possible, and the light of a full harvest moon made traveling almost as easy as by day. On they rode, past sleeping hamlets and dreaming pastures, until the lights of Windsor lay twinkling in the dim, hazy distance miles away.

Robert suddenly threw back his hood, and leaning towards his companion whispered: "O, Jamie, thou art free! Tomorrow will see us safe within those halls of which thou art rightful lord. Captivity and misery are at an end. Nothing can hurt us greatly now, for are we not one in bonds that no man may dissever?"

The pair rode swiftly on until they had outridden their followers; then Jamie leaned forward and kissed Robbie in a whispering wood, and they trotted on through the glades of silvery moonlight towards the new life that was waiting them.

And the new life came to Jamie Dunmore as a delightful surprise.

"Hills, wild rocks, woods, and water!" cried Jamie, with a sudden kindling gleam in his eye. "O, Robbie, you never told me the half! I never guessed that England had aught so like home as this. Truly it might be Dunmore itself—that brawling torrent, those craggy glens, and these grey stane walls. And to be free—free to breathe the fresh wind, to go where fancy prompts, to be loosed from all control save the sweet bonds that you twine around me, like your legs and arms in the night. Ah, my boy, how shall I ever thank you for this boon?"

"Why, by being your old self again, Urquhart," said Robert, who was standing by his side on a natural terrace of rock above the Hall which was to be their home. He had brought him out in early morning to see the sun rise upon their home, and the rapture of his face, the passionate joy she saw written there, was more than he had hoped for.

"You had grown old and worn of late, too saddened, too grave for your years," the younger told the older. "You must grow young again and be the bright-faced boy who took my heart."

"In sooth I shall grow young again here, sweet-heart," quoth Jamie. And yet Robert could not but observe the shadow that flitted across his face.

“Come now, Urquhart,” he said, with surprising authority. “There must be no secrets between us. What troubles you? What mars this perfect moment?”

Jamie smiled wryly.

“I was but thinking that if we could produce an heir, all would be well, and all manner of things would be well. But that is hardly possible.”

Robbie’s laughter surprised him.

“But we shall produce an heir, as many as you like. How that puzzled frown suits you! But listen. We shall find the prettiest wench in Fitzallan. We shall take her together. We shall take her at the same moment: you in the front chamber of love, I in the rear. Then we shall exchange places, and you will fill her shit-chute while I fill her love-chute. Our seed will issue, and the child will truly be our offspring. When the girl has borne us a son, I shall reward her well, and send her to my estates in the south; there she will be wed to another. She will be content, happy, and silent, for we will take her in the dark, so that she never knows who her suitors were.”

A broad grin spread across Jamie’s face.

“By God’s wound, you are a non pareil,” he cried. “Come here, for I shall practise our love-making on your back passage. Shit-chute, indeed!”

But all this was yet in the future. As Jamie and Robbie stood on that high platform overlooking the fair valley of the Derwent, it seemed to one that the other had undergone a subtle change during the past few days. There was a new light in Jamie’s eyes; his frame had lost its drooping air of languor; he had stood the long days of riding without the smallest fatigue; and when he buggered the lad, it was with the new-restored joy and enthusiasm of their Scottish nights. It really seemed as if the old Jamie had come back again, and

Robbie smilingly asked him how it was that he had gained such strength in so short a time.

“Ah, that question is soon answered. It is freedom. The freedom of which William Wallace spoke so eloquently. You may take our lands, you may take our lives, but you will never, never take our freedom. I know not if your English-born sons can brook the sense of fetter and constraint, but it is death to us. Let us not think of it more. That page has closed forever; and never shall it reopen, for sooner will I die than fall into the hands of a foe. Nay, sweet Robbie, look not so reproachfully at me. Thou shalt soon see that I mean not to die, but to live, to live with and for thee. Here in this fair, free spot we begin our new life together. It may be even yet—for see, is not that bright sky illumined by those quivering shafts of light? and do they not point northwards?—that as thou showest me this fair spot with which thou hast endowed me, I may one day show thee again and endow thee with the braw lands of Dunmore.”

Chapter 12

THE LORD OF DUNMORE

“Urquhart, Urquhart, the hour has come! That false traitor Godfrey has joined the revolt against England’s king. Loyal men are called upon to put the rebellion down, and such as do will be rewarded with the lands reft from the traitor. Urquhart, Urquhart! Lose not a moment; arm and take the men, and fly to Dunmore! Now is the time to strike the blow! And I will to Edward’s court, to plead with him for the lands and castle of Dunmore as thy guerdon for his services. O, Jamie, have I not always said that you would live to call yourself Lord of Dunmore again?”

Robert of Fitzallan came flying to his beloved, looking scarce less young and certainly none less bonny and happy than he had done five years back, when they had first stood within the walls of his ancestral home. A beautiful, sturdy boy hung upon his hand, keeping pace gallantly even with his flying steps, and the joy of fatherhood had given something of added lustre to the soft beauty of his dark eyes; otherwise he was scarce changed from the Robbie of past days. As for Jamie, he still retained the eagle glance, the boyish freshness of colouring, and the soldier-like bearing which distinguished his race. The gold of his hair had not tarnished or faded, though he had developed from youth to man, and was a noble specimen of manhood in the zenith of its strength and beauty.

Rising hastily, Robert gazed at Jamie with parted lips and glowing eyes, whilst he once more told him the news, brought by special

messenger from Windsor. Five years of peaceful prosperity in England had in no whit weakened Urquhart's love for his own country or blunted the warrior-like instincts of his race. If there was to be a fight, he hoped it would be a good one. There was something of the light of battle already in his eyes as he gazed at Robbie and their son, and his voice rang out clear and trumpet-like as he gathered the sense of the message he brought.

"Take up arms against Godfrey Mortimer? Ay, verily, that I will. False first to his kindred and country, then false to the king who trusted and rewarded him so nobly. But why now? And for what gain?"

Robert's face darkened.

"Thou knowest that old King Edward has been ill for some time. Men already talk of the new King Edward. They say that the son of the eagle is soft-breasted thrush. They say he is weak, and will be subject to strong men. Likely it is that Godfrey of Mortimer seeks to be one of those strong men. He has thrown down the gauntlet, hoping, perhaps, that young Edward will stoop to pick it up."

Jamie picked up their son and held him in close embrace: "Ach, Ewan, my boy, thou shalt reign at Dunmore one of these days, please God to give us victory over false friends and traitorous allies." And even as the 'parents' stood smiling at the sturdy little fellow with dimpled knees, the blast from the warder's trumpet gave notice that strangers were approaching the fortified Hall.

Hurrying to the entrance-gate, Jamie and Robbie beheld a little troop of horsemen winding their way up the valley, headed by a pair who seemed to hold some exalted position, for the trappings on their steeds and the richness of their own dress marked them as of no humble rank.

Visitors were sufficiently rare at this lonely place for this sight to cause stir in the Hall, and Robert, shading his eyes with his hand, gazed eagerly at the two figures in the distance. Suddenly he gave a little cry of rapture, and bounded forward through the gateway.

“It is Dugald! Jamie, it is thy brother Dugald and his companion. Oh, they have come to bid thee to the fray! They bring tidings, and are come to summon thee to the fight. Dugald, dear brother, ten thousand times welcome to our home! Nay, I can scarce believe this is not a dream. How I have longed to see thee here!” Robert, generous to a fault, had long understood and long forgiven the wildness of the incident at Eagle’s Crag.

Dugald, much hardier and heavier, slid from his cuddy as did the remarkably bonny youth at his side. Stepping forward, he threw his bear-like arms around James Urquhart, and cried: “How great it is to see you, dearest brother! How I have missed you, the last and, perhaps, the best of all my brothers.”

He turned and embraced Robert.

“Forgive me, Robbie Fitzallan, I had forgotten for a moment that you are now my youngest brother. Welcome to the Urquhart Clan, honoured and fortunate we are to have you in our family.”

He turned to the lad of about sixteen years who stood by a few paces back, and led him into the company.

“This is Kieran. Alphonso had his Ewan. David had his Jonathan. Jamie has his Robbie. And I have my Kieran.” The lad blushed prettily, but stood proudly erect before the gazes upon him.

“Come,” said Robert, “summon your men within the Hall. There is plenty for all.”

In the banqueting hall the noonday repast was spread, and having given charge to the seneschal for the hospitable entertainment of the retinue, Robert led the guests to the benches where they ate heartily.

The meal was followed by an intense discussion amongst the principals; then Robert and Kieran withdrew to allow the Urquhart brothers time for memories, both sad and joyous, that were purely familial. Had Robert known the full content of the conversation, he would not have enjoyed the company of the bonny Kieran quite so much.

It is not our wish to give a detailed account of the brief struggle that followed. Save to say that Jamie joined his brother on a furious forced-march north, north to his homelands. Messengers were sped through the wild glens and wilder mountains, and many sturdy sons came gladly and willingly at the call of their clan chief who for too long had been absent from them.

And fighting there was for all, but the struggle, though fierce, was brief. Godfrey of Mortimer was a coward at heart, as it is the wont of a traitor to be, and finding himself opposed by foes as relentless and energetic as the Urquhart brothers, he was speedily driven from glen to glen till at length he was forced to fly south and surrender himself a prisoner to the Earl of Huntingdon. He, a former lover, connived at his escape to Ireland, where he lived in seclusion for some time. But the spirit of ambition was still alive within him, and two years later he returned to England to challenge the right of Edward the Younger to succeed his father to the English throne. He succeeded in collecting a rabble of four thousand turbulent spirits about him, at the head of which force he fought a pitched battle with the king's justiciary, Robert de Tibetot. The rabble were cut to pieces; Godfrey himself was taken prisoner and met a cruel death at York.

The halls of Dunmore saw him no more from the moment when Jamie Urquhart, with a swelling heart, drove him forth, and planted his own foot once again upon the soil dearer to him than any other spot on earth. As he stood upon the familiar terrace, his heart

swelled with thankfulness and joy, and if a slow, unwonted tear found its way to his eye, it was scarce a tear of sorrow. He felt assured that his brothers Ewan and Duncan were sharing in the joy of this restoration to the old home, and that Ewan's loving and gentle spirit was not very far from him at this supreme hour of his life.

"Father, father, father!"

Urquhart turned with a start at the sound of his son's joyous call, astounded to remember that two years had slipped away since he had last seen Robbie and the young Ewan. The next moment he was clasping lover and son to his chest. He could not speak. He pressed one passionate kiss upon the lips of his friend, and another upon the brow of his noble boy, who looked every inch a Dunmore, with the true Urquhart features, and the bold, fearless mien so like his father's at seven years old.

O, dear Reader, could we but close our chronicle at this joyous moment, we would leave Jamie, Robbie and Ewan wrapped in warm embrace upon the terrace at Dunmore. But neither life nor history are within our constraints, and we are compelled to relate, as briefly as accuracy allows, the horror which followed . . .

For two months later, Dugald, on a visit to Dunmore . . . O, break, heart, break, attempted forced entry of the young Ewan, and, caught in the assault by Robbie, grappled with him on that self-same terrace, until both, locked in a travesty of a lovers' embrace, fell headlong from the terrace to the unforgiving rocks below.

How James Urquhart grieved all winter long, no pen can relate, and had it not been for the loving presence of young Ewan, he might well have followed brother and lover into the wild and windy space around Dunmore.

But then came the news! then came the man! then came the hour!

News that Robert the Bruce, Earl of Carrick, rightful King of Scotland, had raised the Cross of St Andrew once more.

The Lion was rampant, and the Lion roared.

Freedom!

Suddenly from some dim recess in the old hall there issued a strain of wild music—the sound of the pipes played by no unskilled hand, whilst mingling with their drone came the voice of the ancient bard, cracked through age, yet still retaining the old power and sweetness. Pipes and voice were raised alike in one of those triumphant songs that have ever been as the uisge-beatha of life to the strong, rude, warrior-poets of Scotland.

Other Chris Kent Books at GLB Publishers

The Boys of Smith's Hall
English schoolboy novel
1-879194-25-2
US\$ 13.95
UK £10.50
(How many?)



Boys In Shorts
English Schoolboy
Short Stories
1-879194-28-7
US\$ 14.95
UK £10.50



The Real Tom Brown's School Days
English Schoolboy Novel
1-879194-39-2
US\$ 13.95
UK £10.50



**Boys Will Be Boys:
Two Novellas**
Two novellas back to back
1-879194-40-6
US\$ 14.95
UK £10.50



The Rag Star Boys
English schoolboy novel
1-879194-52-X
US\$ 14.95
UK £10.50



To order by mail in the US and Canada only, add \$2 per book:
Send book(s) to:

Send order to:
GLB Publishers
P.O. Box 78212
San Francisco, CA 94107 USA

Sorry, mail orders cannot be filled
outside the U.S. and Canada.