

Kidnapped

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

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OXFORD BOOKWORMS

KIDNAPPED

The years after 1745 were an unhappy time for Scotland. The Highlanders had fought against King George of England, and lost, and now his soldiers were driving many Highlanders out of their homes.

David Balfour is from the Scottish Lowlands and is not worried by the English soldiers. When he leaves his home to begin a new life, he is not looking for trouble and danger. But trouble quickly comes to him. He meets his rich uncle, who is not at all pleased to learn that he has a poor nephew. One danger follows another, and David finds himself in the Highlands, where he meets Alan Breck, a proud Stewart. The Stewarts hate both the English and the Campbells, who work for King George, so Alan is a dangerous friend for David to have.

Then murder is done, and David and Alan are on the run for their lives across the mountains . . .



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Thriller & Adventure

Kidnapped

Stage 3 (1000 headwords)

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ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Kidnapped

The Adventures of David Balfour
in the Year 1751

www.ZabanBook.com

Retold by
Clare West

Illustrated by
Chris Koelle



OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

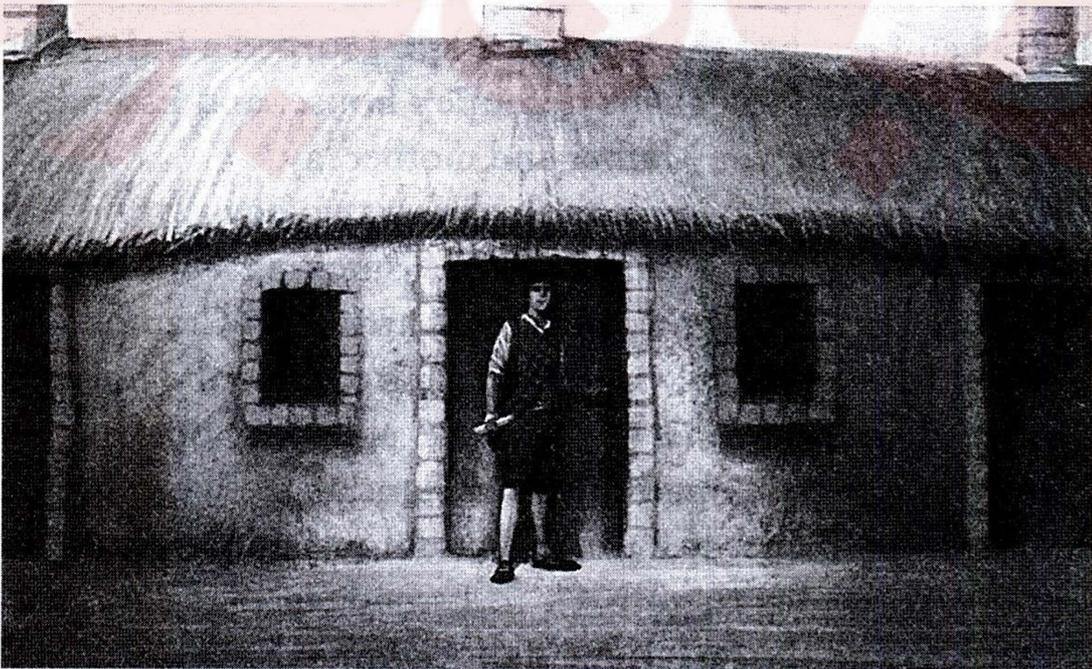
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1

David meets his uncle

It was early in the month of June, 1751, when I shut the door of our house behind me for the last time. All my life I had lived in the quiet little village of Essendean, in the Lowlands of Scotland, where my father had been the dominie, or schoolteacher. But now that he and my mother were both dead, I had to leave the house. The new dominie would soon arrive, and *he* would teach at the school and live in the dominie's house. So, although I was only seventeen, there was nowhere for me to live, and no reason for me to stay in Essendean.



I shut the door behind me for the last time.

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But my heart was beating with excitement as I walked down the road, because in my hand I carried the letter that my father had given me just before he died. ‘Davie,’ he had said, ‘when I am dead, take this to the house of Shaws, near Cramond. That’s where I came from, and that’s where you must go. Put this letter into the hands of Ebenezer Balfour.’

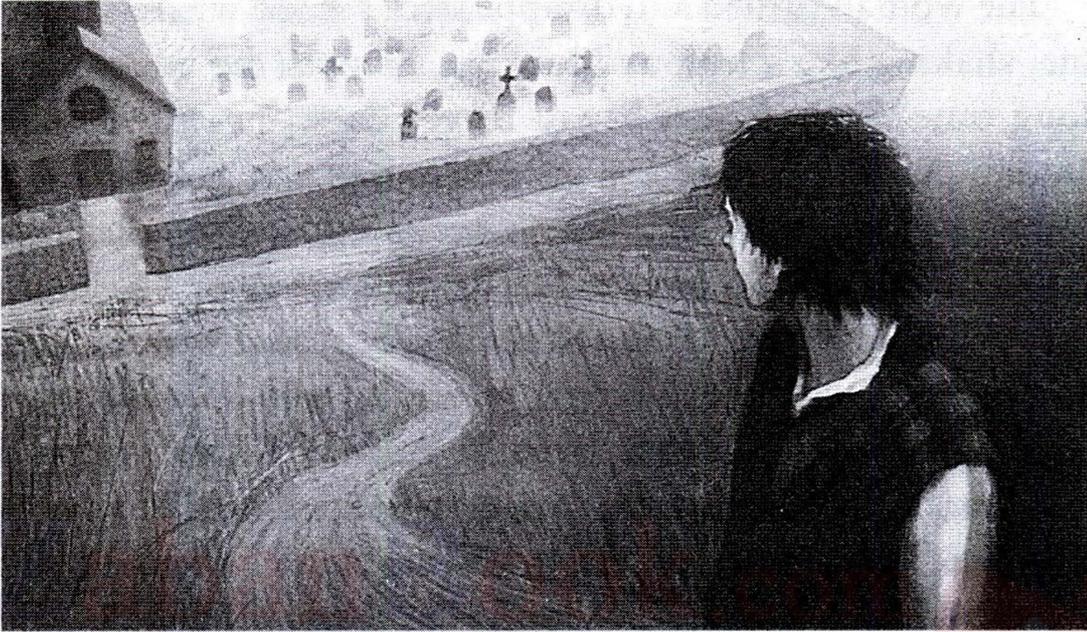
Balfour! The same name as my own! It was the first time I had heard of any of our family outside Essendean.

So I decided to walk to Cramond, hoping that perhaps this Mr Balfour, in his fine big house, would receive me kindly, and help me to become a rich man one day. With my plaid over my shoulder, I walked fast up the hill away from the village. What an adventure, to leave that sleepy place, where nothing ever happened, and go to a great, busy house, to be with rich and important people of my own name and blood! But when I reached the top of the hill, I turned a little sadly, to take my last look at the dominie’s house, and Essendean churchyard, where my father and mother lay.

My journey northwards took almost two days. By midday on the second day I could see the smoking chimneys of Edinburgh in front of me, and soon I arrived in Cramond.

Now I began to ask people on the road for the house of Shaws. Their answers worried me a little. Some people seemed surprised, some afraid, and some angry, when I spoke the name of Ebenezer Balfour. I could not understand this, but it was too far to go back to Essendean that day, and I wanted to find the rest of the Balfour family very much. So I continued on my way, and when I met a dark, wild-looking

David meets his uncle



I took my last look at Essendean churchyard.

woman coming towards me, I asked her where the house of Shaws was. She took me to the top of the next hill, and showed me a large building standing alone in the bottom of the next valley. Although the fields around were green, and the farmland was excellent, the house itself looked unfinished and empty. Part of its roof was missing. There was no road to it, and no smoke coming from any of its chimneys, nor was there any garden.

‘That!’ I cried. ‘No, it can’t be!’

‘It is!’ cried the woman angrily. ‘That is the house of Shaws! Blood built it, blood stopped the building of it, and blood shall bring it down! Black is the heart of Ebenezer Balfour! Ye can tell him from me that I hope to see him die, and his house fall down around him!’

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The woman turned and disappeared. I stood where she left me, shaking like a leaf, and looking down at the house for a long time. But when it began to get dark, I noticed some smoke coming out of the chimney, and felt a little more hopeful. 'There must be a fire, and cooking, and people in the house,' I thought. So I walked up to the front door. The house seemed locked up and unwelcoming, but there was firelight shining through the kitchen window, and I could hear someone talking quietly to himself. Bravely, I lifted my hand and knocked loudly on the strong wooden door. The house was suddenly silent, and there was no reply. I knocked and knocked, and shouted as loudly as I could. Finally, the window opened, and a man holding a gun put his head out.

'What do ye want?' he asked.

'I've come here with a letter for Mr Ebenezer Balfour of Shaws. Is he here?'

'Who is it from?' asked the man with the gun.

'That's none of your business,' I replied, getting angry.

'Well, put the letter down by the door, and leave.'

'I will not!' I answered sharply. 'I'm going to give it to Mr Balfour himself. The letter introduces me to him.'

'Who are ye then?' was the next question.

'I'm not ashamed of my name. It's David Balfour.'

The man almost dropped his gun. After a long while, he asked in a changed voice, 'Is your father dead?' I was too surprised to answer, but he continued, 'Aye, he must be dead, and that's why ye have come. Well, man, I'll let ye in,' and he disappeared from the window.

David meets his uncle

Now the door was unlocked, and a voice from the darkness said, 'Go into the kitchen and touch nothing.' I obeyed, while the man locked the heavy door carefully again. I found myself in the emptiest kitchen that I had ever seen. There was a fire, but no other light. On the table was a bowl of porridge and a glass of water, in front of the only chair. Around the walls were several locked chests. There was no other furniture. The man who now appeared in the kitchen was small, mean-looking and white-faced, between fifty and seventy years old, and wearing a dirty old nightshirt. The worst thing about him was that he could neither take his eyes away from me, nor look straight into my face.

'If ye're hungry,' he said, 'ye can eat that porridge. It's grand food, porridge! Let me see the letter!'

'It's for Mr Balfour, not you,' I replied.

'And who do ye think I am? Give me Alexander's letter! Ye may not like me or my house or my porridge, but I'm your born uncle, Davie, my man!'

This was the end of all my hopes. I was too tired and miserable to speak, so I silently gave him the letter, and sat down to eat the porridge.

'Your father's been dead a long time?' he asked, giving me a quick look from his sharp eyes.

'Three weeks, sir,' I said.

'He was a secretive man, Alexander was. Perhaps he didn't talk much about me? Or about the house of Shaws?'

'I never knew he had a brother, sir, or ever heard the name of Shaws.'

Kidnapped



'Give me Alexander's letter!'

'To think of that!' he replied. 'A strange man!' But he seemed very pleased, and began to look at me with more interest. Soon he jumped up and said, 'We're going to get on well, Davie! What's mine is yours, man, and what's yours is mine. Blood's thicker than water, and there's only ye and me of the name of Balfour. Now I'll show ye to your bed.'

He took me up some dark stairs and showed me into a room. I could not see anything.

David meets his uncle

‘Can I have a light, sir?’ I asked.

‘No, ye can’t. No lights in this house! I’m afraid of fires, ye see. Good night to ye, Davie, my man.’ And before I had time to reply, he pulled the door shut and locked it from the outside. The room was very cold, but luckily I had my plaid with me, so I covered myself with it like a blanket, and soon fell asleep.

The next day my uncle and I had a small bowl of porridge and a glass of water for breakfast, lunch and supper. He did not speak much to me, but was clearly thinking hard. I often noticed him looking at me, while pretending to do something different, and he never left me alone in the kitchen with the locked chests, in which, I supposed, he kept his money. I did not like the way he looked at me, and began to wonder if he was a little crazy, and perhaps dangerous.

After supper he said suddenly, ‘Davie, I’ve been thinking. I promised your father a bit of money for ye before ye were born. A promise is a promise – and so I’m going to give ye . . . forty pounds!’ These last words seemed very painful to him. He added, in a kind of scream, ‘Scots!’

A Scottish pound was the same as an English shilling. I could see that his story was a lie, so I laughed at him, saying, ‘Oh, think again, sir! *English* pounds, surely!’

‘That’s what I said,’ replied my uncle quickly. ‘Go outside for a moment, and I’ll get the money for ye.’

I was smiling as I went out, sure that he would give me nothing at all. It was a dark night, and I could hear wind in the hills. ‘There may be thunder later,’ I thought, not

Kidnapped

knowing how important the weather would be to me that night.

But when my uncle called me in again, he counted thirty-eight English pounds in gold into my hands. It clearly hurt him to do it, and he kept back the last two pounds, but I did not mind that. Surprised and pleased, I thanked him warmly.

‘Now,’ he said, looking cleverly at me, ‘ye can give *me* something, Davie. I’m getting old now, and I need help.’

‘Of course, sir,’ I answered. ‘What can I do?’

‘Well, go outside and climb the stairs at the other end of the house, where the building isn’t finished yet. Go up to the room at the top, and bring down the chest that ye’ll find there. It’s got valuable papers in it.’

‘Can I have a light, sir?’ I asked.

‘No,’ he said sharply. ‘No lights in my house!’

‘Very well, sir. Are the stairs good?’

‘They’re grand,’ said he. ‘The stairs are grand.’

Out I went into the night. As I was feeling my way along the outside wall, there was a sudden flash of lightning, then black darkness again. I found the stairs and started climbing. I was about fifteen metres above the ground, when there was another flash of lightning. That was lucky for me, because it showed me that the steps were uneven, and that I could easily fall to my death. ‘These are the grand stairs!’ I thought. ‘Perhaps my uncle wants me to die!’ Now I was very careful, and I felt each step with my hands before I put my foot on it. A few steps later my hand felt cold stone, and then nothing more. The stairs ended there, twenty metres above the

David meets his uncle

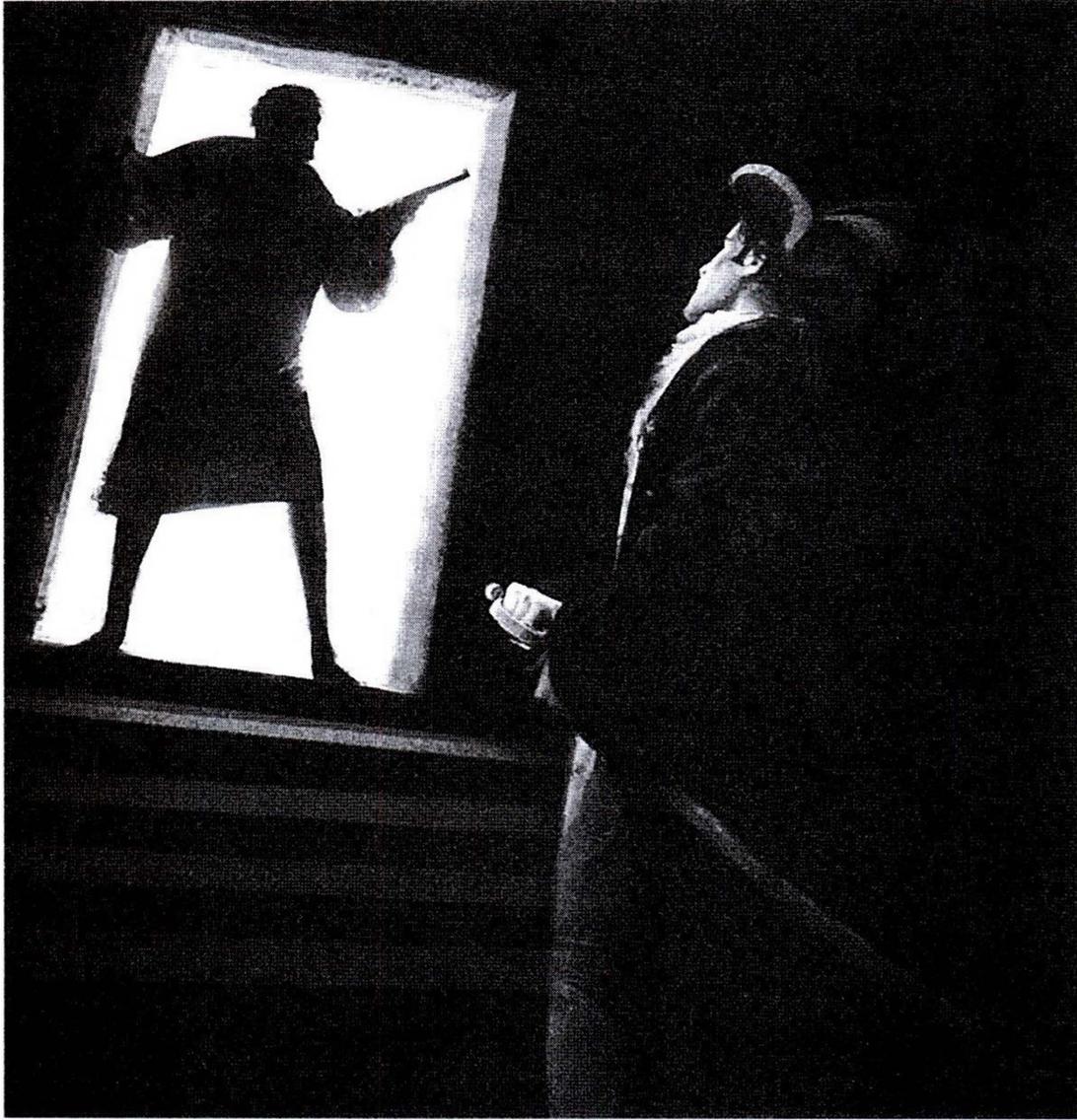
ground. I felt cold with fear, when I thought of the danger that I had been in. Sending a stranger up those stairs in the dark was sending him straight to his death.

Angrily, I turned and felt my way down. There was a crash of thunder, and suddenly the rain came down. At the bottom of the stairs I looked towards the kitchen, and could see, in the next flash of lightning, a figure standing still in the



The stairs ended there – I felt cold with fear.

Kidnapped



'Do ye want us to kill or keep the lad?' said Alan.

for us to keep him? First I need to know how much ye paid Hoseason to kidnap the lad. How much was it?'

'Hoseason? Kidnap? What are ye talking about, man?' screamed my uncle, jumping up and down on the doorstep.

'Hoseason himself has told me about it,' said Alan calmly,

‘so ye needn’t pretend. Just answer the question, or ye’ll find my sword in your stomach!’

‘Don’t get angry!’ cried my uncle. ‘I gave him twenty pounds, that’s all. But to be honest with ye – he was going to sell the lad as a slave, and keep that money, ye see.’

‘Thank you, Mr Thomson, that’s excellent,’ said the lawyer, stepping forward. ‘Good evening, Mr Balfour,’ he said politely to the old man.

And, ‘Good evening, uncle Ebenezer,’ said I.

And, ‘It’s a grand evening, Mr Balfour,’ added Torrance.

My uncle said nothing, but stood there on the doorstep with his mouth open. We took him into the kitchen, and sat down to discuss matters. After an hour, it was all decided. My uncle accepted that Shaws belonged to me, but he would stay there during his lifetime. He agreed to pay me money every year, and Mr Rankeillor would check that he did.

We all stayed that night at the house of Shaws. But while Alan and Torrance and Mr Rankeillor slept on the hard beds upstairs, I lay down on the kitchen chests, which now belonged to me. I, who had slept out on the hills for so many days and nights, was now the owner of a large house and several farms. My head was full of exciting plans and ideas, and I found it difficult to sleep.

The next day, while Mr Rankeillor and I were having breakfast together, I talked to him about Alan.

‘Mr Thomson is still in danger,’ said the lawyer. ‘He must leave the country as soon as possible, and stay with his friends in France for a while. I’ll give you money to buy him a

STAGE 3 • 1000 HEADWORDS

... *should, may* – present perfect continuous – *used to* – past perfect –
causative – relative clauses – indirect statements ...

Of course, it was most important that no one should see Colin, Mary, or Dickon entering the secret garden. So Colin gave orders to the gardeners that they must all keep away from that part of the garden in future. *The Secret Garden*

STAGE 4 • 1400 HEADWORDS

... past perfect continuous – passive (simple forms) –
would conditional clauses – indirect questions –
relatives with *where/when* – gerunds after prepositions/phrases ...

I was glad. Now Hyde could not show his face to the world again. If he did, every honest man in London would be proud to report him to the police. *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*

STAGE 5 • 1800 HEADWORDS

... future continuous – future perfect –
passive (modals, continuous forms) –
would have conditional clauses – modals + perfect infinitive ...

If he had spoken Estella's name, I would have hit him. I was so angry with him, and so depressed about my future, that I could not eat the breakfast. Instead I went straight to the old house. *Great Expectations*

STAGE 6 • 2500 HEADWORDS

... passive (infinitives, gerunds) – advanced modal meanings –
clauses of concession, condition

When I stepped up to the piano, I was confident. It was as if I knew that the prodigy side of me really did exist. And when I started to play, I was so caught up in how lovely I looked that I didn't worry how I would sound. *The Joy Luck Club*

BOOKWORMS · THRILLER & ADVENTURE · STAGE 3

The Crown of Violet

GEOFFREY TREASE

Retold by John Escott

High up on a stone seat in the great open-air theatre of Athens, Alexis, son of Leon, watches the Festival of Plays – and dreams of seeing his own play on that famous Stage.

So, as the summer passes, Alexis writes his play for the next year's Festival. But then, with his friend Corinna, he learns that Athens has enemies – enemies who do not like Athenian democracy, and who are planning a revolution to end it . . .

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BOOKWORMS · TRUE STORIES · STAGE 3

Rabbit-Proof Fence

DORIS PILKINGTON GARIMARA

Retold by Jennifer Bassett

Fourteen-year-old Molly and her cousins Daisy and Gracie were mixed-race Aborigines. In 1931 they were taken away from their families and sent to a camp to be trained as good 'white' Australians. They were told to forget their mothers, their language, their home.

But Molly would not forget. She and her cousins escaped and walked back to Jigalong, 1600 kilometres away, following the rabbit-proof fence north across Western Australia to their desert home.

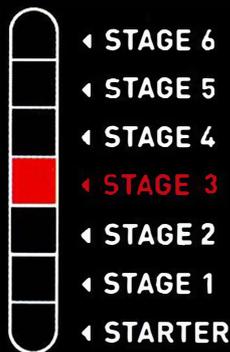
Rabbit-Proof Fence is the true story of that walk, told by Molly's daughter, Doris. It is also a prize-winning film.

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I ran to the side of the ship. "Help, help! Murder!" I screamed, and my uncle slowly turned to look at me. I did not see any more. Already strong hands were pulling me away. Then something hit my head; I saw a great flash of fire, and fell to the ground . . .

And so begin David Balfour's adventures. He is kidnapped, taken to sea, and meets many dangers. He also meets a friend, Alan Breck. But Alan is in danger himself, on the run from the English army across the wild Highlands of Scotland . . . (Word count 12,435)



- ◀ STAGE 6
- ◀ STAGE 5
- ◀ STAGE 4
- ◀ **STAGE 3**
- ◀ STAGE 2
- ◀ STAGE 1
- ◀ STARTER

 **THRILLER & ADVENTURE**

Text adaptation by Clare West
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