

The Legend Begins

The Legend of Chip

The Legend Begins



STANLEY CAMPBELL

LEGEND WRITER PUBLICATIONS

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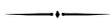
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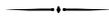
I dedicate this book to anyone who has ever struggled with anything in their life and wondered why. For those who have never struggled with anything in their life, please pass this book to someone else, as it isn't for you.

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The Legend Begins



PROLOGUE

Christopher MacDougall was sitting near the fireplace, reading his father's favorite book, when a sudden booming ripped him from his thoughts. He turned to see his wife Mary sitting at the table looking alert, her eyes focused upon their cottage door. Christopher rose quickly, wondering who might come calling at this late hour. He opened the door to see his friend, Marcus Brown, looking quite alarmed.

“Marcus, what be the trouble?”

“Chip, ye must come with me at oncel! The reds hath Gow in the square, accused of treason!”

“Latch the door until I return.”

Mary gasped as Christopher fetched his coat and hat.

“Should ye take yer father's sword?”

Christopher glanced at the claymore which rested on the mantle above the fireplace. “Nay, me love. The reds shall slay any Scot bearing the blade.”

Christopher kissed his wife goodbye before joining Marcus outside, snatching a torch from the porch as he went. They passed

through the outer pastures to save time, arriving to find most of the men already assembled in the square. English soldiers had formed a circle, keeping the townsfolk from reaching the center.

Christopher's heart pounded as his eyes fell upon the face of his friend, Andrew Gow, standing atop the gallows, bound and gagged with a noose about his neck. The fear on Gow's face sent sparks of anger through him.

An English soldier addressed the growing crowd, reading from a scroll of parchment. "People of Balloch! On this, the eighteenth day of September, in the year of our Lord seventeen hundred and forty-two, this man has been found guilty of treason to the crown."

The gathered townsfolk roared their disapproval, shouting obscenities at the soldiers who brandished their riffles threateningly.

"Where be yer proof?" Marcus shouted over the commotion.

The soldier glared at Marcus. "He was found fashioning swords within his shop. A practice which has been banned by the King. The punishment for anyone caught conspiring—"

The roar of the crowd drowned out the red's final words. None gathered there needed hear any more. Any moment, the normally peaceful townsfolk of Balloch would become a raging mob.

"Audience with yer commander!" Christopher shouted, his words lost among the turmoil.

Two soldiers fired shots into the air, silencing the crowd.

“We shall have order!” The soldier shouted, climbing to the top of the gallows platform. “This man has been found guilty of treason and shall be hanged by the neck until dead.”

Without warning, the soldier grabbed hold of the lever and pulled. The trap door beneath Gow’s feet swung open and the night descended into chaos. The crowd pushed forward, attempting to reach the gallows, but the soldiers held their ground. The enraged mob began swinging torches and tossing rocks.

Using their rifles like batons, the soldiers retaliated, striking Christopher and several other townsfolk. Christopher fell to one knee, pain spreading through his midsection. Eyes watering, he looked up in time to block a blow to his head with his forearm.

In a fit of rage, one of the soldiers took hold of a torch and tossed it into the blacksmith shop. Fire engulfed the building, quickly spreading to nearby stores. Horror set in as Christopher realized what was happening. Marcus’s cobbler shop, his bakery and all the other shops which lined the square would burn. The crowd erupted as more shots were fired into the air.

In a moment of confusion, a dozen men, including Marcus, broke past the line of reds. Christopher tried to follow, but was shoved back.

“Halt or we’ll fire!”

He saw the soldiers raise their rifles, then heard the blasts.

“Marcus!” His heart failed to beat as he watched Marcus fall to the ground.

The thunder of hooves pounding the ground filled the air as he looked up to see several soldiers on horseback riding into the square.

“What’s going on here!”

“Commander!” The soldier shouted from the platform, addressing the lead rider. “The local blacksmith was found guilty of treason. The townsfolk—”

“We are here to maintain order!” the commanding soldier boomed. “We’re not here to punish or execute!”

Seizing the opportunity, he ran forward past the reds, sliding to the ground to avoid being shot, and cradled his friend in his arms.

“Chip ... me friend,” Marcus breathed, his voice ragged.

All other sounds about them became muffled. “Hold to me, Marcus!”

“Listen to me, Chip. Me time hath come.”

Christopher could see a dark shadow forming on Marcus’s coat. “Nay, Marcus! Ye hold to me!”

Marcus held his chest, coughing violently. “Tell little Marcus and Anna their uncle Marcus loves them.”

“Ye shall tell them.”

He stared down into the eyes of his best friend, as a thousand unspoken words passed between them. Then, as the glow from the growing fire filled his eyes, he felt his friend slip away. Shaking with rage, he held his friend close.

The commanding soldier addressed the square. “Disperse back to your homes. There shall be no more violence this night.”

The square continued to burn, but the reinforcements of additional soldiers had extinguished the fury of the raging crowd. Several men eased forward and collected the bodies of their fallen townsfolk, while another retrieved Gow’s body from the gallows. The rest of the crowd continued to shout obscenities at the soldiers, but had focused their attentions to gaining control of the fire which burned in the square. Christopher could see flames etching away at his bakery. What had stood for nearly a hundred years was disappearing in smoke and ash.

“Be this what ye call order?!” Christopher shouted, glaring up into the eyes of the soldier before him. “Burning the square? The slaying of innocent men?”

The soldier looked down at Christopher, who continued to hold his friend’s lifeless body. “Sir, this is not what I call order. The actions of my soldiers tonight shall be addressed.”

Christopher began to push himself to his feet when a pair of hands pressed down upon him. “Time to go home, son,” his father-in-law’s thick accent whispered from behind. “Marcus be gone and the bakery be lost. Let there not be another loss to mourn tonight.”

Christopher focused his rage into strength as he scooped up his friend, rising to his feet. His father-in-law guided him as he carried the man he had called brother away.

“We shall fetch a cart for Marcus.”

Christopher shook his head, unable speak.

“Christopher, ye need not carry—”

“Leave him be.”

“Bobby, please let us help.”

“Nay, Jamison,” his father-in-law replied. “This be something me son needs to do.”

The men nodded, bowing their heads as Christopher passed. He walked without knowing or feeling. His mind couldn't grasp the calamity the night had brought. Not even when Marcus's father cried out at the sight of his fallen son, did he feel the weight of all which had transpired. It wasn't until he beheld Mary's face, did the fire of vengeance finally fade from his chest.

Mary tore her eyes from Christopher's face to see the same sorrow filled expression reflected in her father's. “What hath happened?”

Christopher fell to one knee. “Marcus. Dead.” was all he could muster.

The night's events began to crash against him like waves against the shores of Loch Tay. Every time he closed his eyes he could see Marcus's face staring up at him. Mary dropped down, wrapping her arms about him as silence filled the small cottage. Only the crackling of the fireplace could be heard. No words were said. No words were needed. Christopher was thankful the children were in bed, fast asleep.

When he finally regained his composure, he recounted the events of the night as Mary listened, too overwhelmed to speak.

Bobby McKinney lingered on, standing sentinel near the door. Christopher knew he wouldn't leave until he was sure his son-in-law wouldn't rush back out into the night seeking revenge.

Once his legs had returned, Christopher pushed himself back to his feet. He reached up and took hold of his father's claymore before turning to Mary's father. "One day this shall be young Marcus's. Until then, keep it from me. For the day I hold it again, an Englishman shall lose his life."

Mary's father accepted the sword from Christopher. "I shall keep it safe. Ye hath made the right decision, son."

Christopher nodded before collapsing into the chair nearest the fireplace. He covered his face with his hand, sorrow suddenly consuming him like the fire had his future. He felt his wife's arms surround him once more. He could hear his father's voice, telling him to prepare for tomorrow. At that moment though, tomorrow was beyond what he could fathom. All he knew was he would never forget the night Balloch burned.

ONE



THE DOCKER

It was a quiet evening as Christopher headed home from the wharf, where he worked as a docker. Tossing his haversack over his shoulder, he stopped to peer out over the harbor waters at the burning red sunset. While admiring the shades of color that reflected off the now calm surface, he contemplated how his life had changed. Even after three years living in Edinburgh and working in Leith, his teeth still ground at the thought of what he'd lost.

“No mermaids a comin’ today, Chip!” A young red-headed man said, slapping Christopher on the back.

“Ye never know,” Chip chuckled at the notion, “one might swim me way right this moment with a chest full of treasure!”

Both men laughed, staring out over the waters. Chip was the name Christopher had gone by ever since he and his family moved to Edinburgh. The subtle reminder was like having his friend and brother with him, helping him in a way he could never explain.

Chip sighed, “Ah, just numbering the waves before heading

THE DOCKER

home, Jonah. There be days I feel as though I live here and visiting me wife and children when I be home.”

“Aye, I know the feelin’. Join me in givin’ the bottle a black eye before headin’ on?”

Chip shook his head. “Nay. Every sixpence be needed for food.”

“Then keep yer bender and hath a pint on me.” A bearded bear of a man slapped Chip on the shoulder.

“Nothing doing, sir. I be owing ye enough as it be.”

“Ye be a good lad who works hard and takes care of his family,” the man said. “Nothin’ wrong in acceptin’ a little generosity.”

“I’d take it. Ol’ Malone never shows any generosity on the wharf, so best be takin’ it as a bit of measure.”

Malone growled, “I never give ye any generosity, Jonah McCullah, cause ye never be earnin’ it! What Chip here doth in a single day takes ye a fortnight.”

“Not be so hard on him, sir. Jonah be a carpenter. They be known to be perfectionists.”

“That’s right,” Jonah said proudly. “We be known for our skill, not our speed.”

Malone huffed loudly, “Show me some skill and I be showin’ ye some copper. Now,” he lifted his eyes and looked farther down the way, “I be in search of perfection in the form of the new wench at O’Gills.”

Chip sighed, “Alas, maybe tomorrow. By now I be certain

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me whither shall hath the stew on the fire.”

“Very well, Chip, me lad. But tomorrow, ye shall not be gettin’ away.”

The men bid Chip farewell and he headed for home. While home wasn’t a cottage amongst the open fields along the shores of Loch Tay, like the one where he’d once lived, it was a pleasant enough clay bungalow on the outskirts of Edinburgh with enough room for Chip, his wife Mary, and their two children, Anna and Marcus. The house served its purpose. It kept them warm during the winter and sheltered during the summer. They were far more fortunate than Jonah, who lived in overcrowded housing near the wharf.

After a thirty-minute hike across Edinburgh, Chip reached his modest abode, and breathed in the aroma of the stew his loving wife had prepared for them.

“Mary, I be home, me love!” Chip announced, tossing his haversack into the corner.

“Papa!” Anna and Marcus shouted, running forward to greet their father.

Chip sank low, taking both of them into his arms before standing and swaying them back and forth. As fast as they were growing, he would not be able to do that much longer. Anna, with her strawberry-blond hair pulled back into pigtails and brilliant blue eyes, would soon be six. While Marcus, a stout lad with coal black hair and dark blue eyes, would be eight in only two weeks’ time.

“He still needs to wrestle some wood in for the fire before

THE DOCKER

ye two tire him out,” Mary said, wiping her hands on her apron.

Mary was beautiful with soft brown hair that laid delicately at her shoulders and warm chestnut eyes that glowed in the firelight. Her slight stature and tender disposition led most to believe her easy-going, but Chip knew firsthand how fiercely strong-willed the woman who stood before him, the woman he’d fallen hopelessly in love with, could be.

“Good to hear me chores still be waiting.” Chip lowered his children to the floor, both of them groaning in disappointment.

“John McClure stopped by today.” Mary set the stew on the table and waited for him to erupt.

Chip growled, “What did the blaggard want?”

“Language, Christopher, language.”

“Then doth not be mentioning his name in front of the children,” Chip retorted, hanging his coat up to take a seat at the table.

“I shall remember that.” Mary narrowed her gaze at her husband, while setting out the bowls and spoons. “He stopped in to inform us that a new occupancy tax levy was passed by parliament.”

“That be the third new tax this month!” Chip pounded his fist upon the table. “How doth they expect us to eat? Be we dogs they shall kick whenever it pleases them?”

“We shan’t speak of this anymore tonight,” Mary said sharply. “Children, supper be ready.”

Chip blessed the meal before Mary ladled the stew into their bowls. The burden of a new tax continued to weigh on his mind.

THE LEGEND OF CHIP

Any new tax, no matter the amount, was too much. There were no more hours to be had at the wharf, and today's round of stew marked the third portion of potato, merely flavored with leftover beef broth.

Mary finally broke the strained silence. "Where be William today, Marcus? He did not come by to play after his chores."

"Gone." Marcus stared down at the table.

"His family left for America aboard the *Perth*," Chip said, not looking up from his stew.

"Smuggled?" Mary covered her mouth with her hand.

"They had not a sixpence to their name, and William's father could not find any honest labor."

"Aye, Chip, but shall they survive the voyage?"

"Which be better, Mary? To meet the reaper in the streets of Edinburgh or in the belly of the *Perth*?" Chip stared at his wife, waiting for her response.

"Be we going to die, Papa?" Anna's face filled with fear.

"Course not," Mary snapped, before softening her tone. "Yer father hath work, and we hath food to eat."

"Suppose something happens, Mama? Like before?"

Chip stood up, unable to take much more. He strode to the fireplace, pounding his fist against the mantle before covering his eyes with the palm of his hand. He felt the soft form of his wife's hand close upon his shoulder.

"Christopher, come back to the table," she said softly. "Ye supper be getting cold."

THE DOCKER

“Mary, I shan’t.” Chip refused to look at her. “We spend every copper we hath as it be. How shall we afford another tax?”

“Starvation shall not help. Ye need yer strength.”

“I need to know me family be safe. They shall not take all we hath. Not again.”

Not wanting to see the look in her eyes, Chip crossed the room in a single stride, pulled on his coat then placed his cap upon his head.

“Christopher James MacDougall! What in the name of all that be holy be ye contemplating?”

“I must speak with Malone.”

“Speak to him in the morn.” Mary crossed her arms while glaring at him.

“This shall not wait till morn.”

Without another word, Chip headed out into the wintry night. His focus set on finding some way to assure his family’s well-being. He would work twenty hours a day if it meant that his wife and children had food and a place to call home.

The trip back through town seemed longer this time, the weight of the world pressing down upon him. When Chip reached O’Gill’s pub he hesitated, gazing through the large stain-glass window at the shadows dancing beneath the shimmering lights. The tavern drew crowds from Leith and Edinburgh, being positioned perfectly between the two. From wharf workers to nearby shop owners, all walks of life could be seen there sharing a pint and a story from the day. Breathing deeply, he pushed open the door.

THE LEGEND OF CHIP

“Well now, look who decided to make a pease-kill!” came Malone’s deep voice over the laughter and noise.

Malone motioned for Chip to join him at the bar. Chip made his way past a band of pub goers, as they began to sing something that sounded like, “Bonny Sweet Lassie.” Malone patted the stool next to him. Chip felt as though a bucket full of nails lay upon his chest as he sat down.

“Did no’ come back for that pint, did ye?”

Chip stared at the bar, his heart lodged in his throat.

“McClure stopped by me home today.”

Malone sighed, “What did the blaggard want?”

“Parliament passed another tax levy.”

“Aye, I heard wind of this new levy.”

“Bleedin’ Britons believe we be made of benders!” Jonah interjected, joining the two at the bar.

“Aye. Yet I hath not one sixpence to spare as it be. Sir,”

Chip breathed deeply to steady his resolve, “I need more hours.”

“There be none to give.” Malone wiped his face with his hand. “I wish I could, but trade hath slowed.”

Jonah sat his pint down on the bar. “Sir, give a portion of me wages to Chip.”

“Jonah McCullah! Ye shall not such a thing!”

“Listen, I know how ye feel,” Jonah said seriously, “but I hath only me self and me whither to care for. Should it not hath been for ye, ol’ Malone here would hath never a-kept me. In that I owe ye. Repay me later, should ye be stubborn about it.”

THE DOCKER

Chip swallowed hard. While he hadn't known Jonah nearly as long as others he had called mate back in Balloch, Chip was sure he had found a faithful friend he could depend upon.

"I shall repay ye. That I so swear," Chip said as he stood and shook Jonah's hand.

"Now that be settled, how 'bout that pint?"

Chip conceded to a pint before heading back home. Though he now bore the burden of repaying his friend, his shoulders felt much lighter. As one pint became two, the conversation shifted away from the woes of the day.

"Tell me, Chip, what doth ye think of this new game where ye run while carrying a ball?" Jonah asked, sipping on his pint.

"Hath not seen it played?"

"It be a right foul game," Malone interjected. "Carrying a football. Where be the challenge in that?"

"It looks to be quite difficult. Players be allowed to hit one another."

"Doth ye play in teams?" Chip asked.

"Aye. I've seen it played with as many as twenty on a team!"

"I'll gladly play supposing the other team be full of Britons," Malone said.

Two hours, several more pints and many laughs later, Chip said goodnight. He pulled his coat tight, preparing for the brisk night air and was almost to the door when he heard a man call to him.

"Excuse me, lad," the scratchy voice of an older gentleman

THE LEGEND OF CHIP

called out.

Chip turned back to see a stately fellow, who sat in a booth nearest the entrance to the pub. His appearance spoke of one not accustomed to hard labor.

“Sir, did ye call to me?”

“Aye, I did, lad. And what manners. Someone raised you well.”

“Thank me mother for that.” Chip nodded, smiling as he accepted the compliment.

“Would you join me for a short spell? What I ask shall not take long. I see that you are traveling with haste.”

Chip took a seat across from the old man, wiping his eyes as the effects of one too many pints began to set in. “What might I for thee?”

“Forgive me. I could not help overhearing your conversation, as I fetched a pint from the bar. Are you in search of work?”

Chip shook his head. “Nay, sir. I hath work, just not enough. Making preparations for the new tax levy parliament passed.”

“Good, lad. Always be prepared.”

Chip was familiar with most in and about the area, but could not recall seeing the man before.

“Forgive my rudeness,” the old man said. “I have not formally introduced myself. My name is Phosphorus Prose.”

Chip shook the older gentleman’s hand without hesitation.

THE DOCKER

“Mr. Prose, I be Christopher, Christopher MacDougall. Though most call me Chip.”

“MacDougall,” Mr. Prose repeated, rubbing his hands together slowly. “You would not happen to be relative to the MacDougalls of Balloch, would you now?”

“One and the same, sir.” Chip’s eyes widened, amazed anyone would know of his family. “Moved me family to Edinburgh not long after the—”

“The fire. Yes, I remember. It was truly dreadful. Consumed the entire town square, including your father’s bakery.”

Mr. Prose leaned back, folded his hands in his lap, and smiled. Chip frowned as he contemplated the man before him and the memories he rekindled. He could not ever remember the name Prose in or around the town of Balloch.

“It is Greek.”

“What be, sir?”

“My name. You were wondering about my name. My father was from the Mediterranean.”

Chip stared in disbelief, raising his eyebrows. “How did ye—”

“Expressions, Mr. MacDougall. Besides, I am used to answering the question by now.”

“Pardon me, sir, but what might I for thee?”

“Mr. MacDougall, I have a task here in Edinburgh. However, I must take journey before its completion. Therefore, I came here tonight in search of someone to perform said task.”

THE LEGEND OF CHIP

Chip leaned forward, his curiosity piqued. “What be this task?”

“I’d rather not discuss the task or terms here,” Mr. Prose countered. “Be of the sensitive nature.”

“Be it legal?”

“Absolutely, Mr. MacDougall. All that I do is perfectly legal and binding.”

Chip studied the gentleman before him. “Might I ask how long it would be before I receive pay for this task, should I agree to it, sir?”

“The cautious lad,” Mr. Prose said appreciatively. “Good to be as such in these times. Should you agree to assist me, you shall receive pay in three weeks’ time, however, I did overhear your plight and am willing to pay you twelve shillings in good faith that you shall meet me tomorrow evening. Should you choose to accept the task, I shall deduct the good faith from your final pay. Should you choose not to accept my task, you may keep the shillings for your time.”

Chip whispered, “Sir, that be a week’s wages!”

“Then best not spend it in a single day. Now, do you agree to meet me tomorrow evening at the end of the wharf?”

“Ye hath me word, sir, and any here might be witness.”

Chip waved his hand, pointing to the men still sitting at the bar.

Mr. Prose shook his head. “No need, lad. I take you at your word, because I see it in your eyes.”

Chip could have danced around the pub and all the way

THE DOCKER

home. He shook Mr. Prose's hand vigorously. They stood together and made their way out to the street. Mr. Prose handed Chip a leather pouch. Chip glanced inside, and his heart leapt for joy.

"Ye shall not be disappointed, sir."

"I am sure of that, Mr. MacDougall. I shall see you at sunset."

Chip shook Mr. Prose's hand once more before tipping his cap to him, then he bounded down the street like a child headed to the schoolyard. When Chip turned to tip his cap once more to Mr. Prose, he was nowhere to be seen. "*Moves fast for an older gent,*" thought Chip, as he stuffed the pouch inside his coat, patted the bulge it caused, and turned to begin the trip home.



"Twelve shillings!" Mary shrieked before covering her mouth, glancing around at their sleeping children. "Whatever it be it shan't be honest labor."

"Should the work not be honest, or he not be forthcoming, I shall repay him and decline," Chip said reassuringly, rubbing her shoulders as he stared into her eyes. "Now, be there any stew left?"

Mary glanced over her shoulder. "I left ye a bit over the fire. I knew ye would still be hungry."

Chip kissed her on the forehead as he embraced her lovingly before fetching his stew and sitting down at the table to eat. Mary fetched a bowl and spoon then joined him. As he ate,

THE LEGEND OF CHIP

Chip told Mary all that had happened. He could tell that Mary was still uneasy about this, and she had good reason. Edinburgh and Leith were full of con-men, looking to take advantage of an unsuspecting bloke down on his luck. The trouble was, Chip could not see Mr. Prose as a con-man, for what could he possibly gain from Chip that was worth twelve shillings.

Though it wasn't the custom, Chip held Mary close that night as he drifted off to sleep. To preserve wood, they only lit the one fireplace nearest the children, Chip and Mary sleeping closer to the door. That night, Chip dreamed of what it would be like to not have to worry again as to whether tomorrow would bring starvation or something worse for his family.

TWO



THE TASK

Filled with excitement, Chip rose early the next morning. Dressing for another day at the wharf, he picked up the pouch of coppers and stuffed it back into his coat pocket. The fire, that was hope, was rekindled inside his belly.

After a breakfast of grain and goat milk, Chip bid his family farewell and headed out into the bitterly freezing morning air to make his ritual trek to the wharf. His mind was so engrossed with what this Mr. Prose might have for him to do, that he was shocked at how quickly he arrived at the wharf.

Once at work, he did his best to focus upon the job at hand, but the day dragged and when the noon whistle sounded Chip swore loudly in disbelief. After midday break, Chip buried himself in his work, determined to not to think about the evening. Driven to escape his own thoughts, he accomplished his loads earlier than anyone else.

“Taken me praise a bit too far.” Malone laughed, slapping Chip hard on the back.

Chip smirked, “Hath much on me mind.”

THE LEGEND OF CHIP

“Best take a kip in an empty crate till shift’s end, lest the wharf master see ye standing about and cuts yer hours.”

Chip nodded before searching out an empty crate large enough and tucking himself inside till the evening whistle blew.



The light dimmed in the western sky as Chip headed toward the end of the wharf. Brisk winds ripped across the pier as storm clouds rolled in, blanketing the waters and churning the sea. Chip tugged up his collar as he gazed across the harbor at Edinburgh Castle, set above Edinburgh and Leith, a symbol of Scottish pride.

“It is a magnificent structure.”

Chip turned, startled to see Mr. Prose standing behind him holding a small cage in one hand and a walking cane in the other. He was dressed for traveling in a black tricorne hat, waistcoat, white ruffled long sleeve shirt, black breeches, red stockings, and black leather shoes with gold buckles.

“Aye, I look at it often, sir. I hope I hath not kept ye waiting.” Chip said, wondering how he hadn’t heard Mr. Prose approaching.

“Not at all, Mr. MacDougall.” Mr. Prose waved his hand dismissively. “It is I who have kept you waiting. Please accept my apology. I was detained by a previous engagement. I suppose you are curious as to what my task might be.”

Chip nodded. “Indeed, I am, sir.”

THE TASK

“Good, lad. I believe you shall complete my task.”

Chip frowned, contemplating the man before him. “Sir, how be ye certain? Ye hath not even told me what it be.”

“I paid you a portion in advance and still you showed,” Mr. Prose explained. “Most would have fled with the coppers.”

“I would never pay me debt with the topsail.”

“Which is exactly why I am being certain that you shall complete my task. Now, let us discuss the task at hand before we are stifled by the west winds.”

Chip nodded then waited to hear the task which required such secrecy.

“Alas Mr. MacDougall, I must leave Britain immediately, and I shall be traveling deep into the heart of Europe. Because of this, I have two requests to make of thee. My first request pertains to my rat.”

Mr. Prose held up the cage so that Chip could see the creature within, which looked to be sleeping.

“Plague and disease torture Europe and animals, such as my rat, have been banned. Should you would watch over him until I return, I would be most pleased.”

While having a pet rodent wasn't a widespread practice, it wasn't unheard of either. Chip considered the task a bit odd to ask of a stranger, but listened on.

“He be old and doth not require more than to be fed and watered. Should he pass while I be gone, all I ask is a proper burial, lest he be tossed with the rubbish. As for my second request.”

THE LEGEND OF CHIP

Here it be, Chip thought. The true reason he be wishing to speak in private.

“There is land that I would be selling to an Englishman in three weeks’ time. I shall be gone, and I wish for you to represent me in my stead. I do not trust my counting house to make the transaction without scavenging a portion for themselves in my absence.”

Chip stared at him in astonishment. “Sir, I know nothing of land trade. I hath not years of schooling. How shall I know that the Englishman not make a paper skull of me?”

“I trust the Englishman, Mr. MacDougall, and shall accept whatever he offers. My counting house doth not know you and shall be leery to swindle thee. I trust you because you have everything to gain from fair trade and nothing to lose.”

“It be a risk ye be taking in me,” Chip said, trying to understand the older gentleman’s reasons.

“No risk, Mr. MacDougall. Think of yourself as the trade overseer. Only my counting house be able to seal the trade in my absence. Take six shillings of the good faith and purchase a proper formal Scottish attire. Present this contract with my seal at the bottom to the counting house as to verify that you represent me.”

Mr. Prose withdrew a scroll of parchment and handed it to him. Chip unrolled the parchment, glancing over tight scrawl. The parchment bore a seal at the bottom, with the likeness of a serpent at its center.

“You shall take one third the value of the land as payment

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for your time and for caring for my pet in my absence.”

“Sir, I doth not know what the land be worth, yet ye be too generous. One tenth would be more than enough!”

Mr. Prose grinned, “Too late, lad. The portion be already set in the contract.”

Chip considered the tasks. The rat would be easy to care for and he only needed to be a witness to the land trade.

“Sir, it would be me honor.”

“Thank you, lad. I be most grateful, knowing my old friend shall be cared for.” Mr. Prose handed the cage to Chip. “Now, I must be on my way. You shall find the address of the counting house and the date in which you must meet the Englishman at the bottom of the parchment. Come, let us make haste, for I have a ship to board and you need to be getting home.”

Chip and Mr. Prose walked side-by-side, up the wharf and away from the harbor. When they reached the edge of town, Mr. Prose stopped.

“This is where we part ways, Mr. MacDougall. My way is to the south while your way is to the west.” Mr. Prose turned to face him and placed a hand upon Chip’s left shoulder. “We shall see each other again soon.”

“Sir, I shall not fail ye.”

“Fare-thee-well, Mr. MacDougall. Until we meet again.”

Chip watched as Mr. Prose headed south, walking with poise. Chip then turned and headed west towards his home as he pondered the task set before him. He sheltered the cage under his

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coat against the brisk wind, lest the tiny animal froze to death before he reached his destination.

When he arrived home, Chip was greeted by Marcus and Anna in the usual fashion. Marcus immediately spotted the rat and began to ask a thousand questions. Mary also spied the rat and looked upon it with distaste. When the children finally settled down, Chip sat at the dinner table and explained what had happened.

“We shall be paid in three weeks’ time and the rodent shall stay with us until Mr. Prose returns,” Chip said, trying to decipher the look in Mary’s eyes.

“And nothing seemed a wee bit off?”

“Nay, me love. I thought it through and not found a thing. Hath ye spied something amiss?”

“It be just that ye hath never held such a post,” Mary said, biting her lower lip. “Suppose ye doth something wrong? Shall this Mr. Prose expect ye to pay him back?”

“All things he said be in this here contract.” Chip handed her the parchment. “Ol’ Malone knows agreements quite well and I trust him. I shall hath him look it over tomorrow.”

“Ye best make sure he reads the whole of it, Christopher MacDougall.” Her eyes fixed upon his. “Lest we be left with the devil dancing in our pockets.”

“Aye, love, I shall.”

Chip understood Mary’s reservations. He would only be lying to himself if he said he had none. There were too many

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swindlers about those days. Being leery was being wise.

“We doth not hath to eat the rat?” Anna asked, staring at the small rodent in the cage.

Chip turned to face his daughter. “Oh, come now, Anna. Doth ye think yer father would feed ye a rat?”

“Ye hath brought strange things home for food before,” Mary interjected playfully.

Marcus scrunched his nose. “There not be enough of him to season soup!”

Chip and Mary laughed at the look on their children’s faces. He watched the small rat open its eyes, curled its tail beneath itself, then go back to sleep. As he did, his mind drifted back to the contract. *Was he being taken a fool?*

The next day at noon break, Chip showed the contract to Malone. Malone read over the parchment several times, before rolling it back up and handing it back.

“Chip, me lad, all be in order.” Malone slapped Chip on the back. “Mr. Overseer, I pray ye deed brings three hundred pounds for ye client and a hundred pounds for thee.”

“A hundred pounds!” Chip hissed, his eyebrows traveling up his forehead. “What would I with such?”

“Purchase a small cottage of ye own and save the rest. That be what I would.”

“Surely, it not be worth much lest he would hath stayed.”

Malone shrugged his massive shoulders. “Must be worth somethin’, lad. Why else would he be needin’ an overseer.”

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“All I ask sir, be that ye keep this matter between us.”

“Course, lad! This be none other’s business but ye own. All I ask be that ye spot me a pint at O’Gills when ye be around, seein’ I be yer official adviser.”

“Aye, sir!” Chip exclaimed, grinning broadly. “Ten-fold!”

That evening, Chip stopped by a local shreds he passed every day on his trip to and from the wharf. The tailor measured and fitted him according to Mr. Prose’s request. Chip paid the tailor three shillings in advance before continuing on his way. The tailor assured him his garments would be ready in three days’ time.



The first two weeks crept by. The children became quite fond of the small rat, while Mary was still reserved about feeding a rodent in her home. Chip became accustomed to having the small creature around. Marcus pointed out that the rat always perked up whenever his father was there. He didn’t know if Mr. Prose’s pet had ever been given a name, however Anna named him Tiny upon the second day of his arrival.

The morning of his appointment, Chip was a bundle of nerves. He hadn’t slept much the night before and fidgeted constantly while Mary helped him dress, the new attire being a snug fit. Chip stood before a long piece of reflective metal he had salvaged from the destroyed blacksmith’s shop in Balloch and did not recognize the man staring back at him. He hadn’t worn his

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formal attire since the day he tried it on at the shreds. He wore a soft brown hat, white ruffled shirt, black coat with red threads, Clan MacDougall tartan kilt, leather sporran pouch, kilt stockings, and brown leather shoes with clasps.

“Ye be a handsome sight, Christopher MacDougall,” Mary said, straightening his collar.

Chip tugged at his sleeves. “I feel like a mule wearing breeks.”

“Oh Chip, me love.” Mary caressed his cheek and hugged him tightly. “Ye shall be fine.”

“I would ask for a wish of good fortune, but ye hath given it to me already.” Chip kissed her then said goodbye to Marcus and Anna.

Malone was covering for Chip today, having claimed he was ill. Chip arrived at the address on the parchment and tugged a few more times on his sleeves before entering. He was greeted by a middle-aged man in similar attire, sporting the tartan of Clan Wallace.

“How might I assist thee, sir?”

Chip breathed deeply, mustering all of his confidence. “I be here to oversee a trade on behalf of Mr. Prose.”

“Aye. Ye be early. Right this way, sir.”

The man did not introduce himself, but motioned for Chip to follow him into a back room. “Please wait here, sir.” The man motioned for Chip to one of the four high back chairs which sat in front of an ornate looking desk. “Mr. Moor, Mr. Prose’s

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accountant, shall join ye shortly once Mr. Tomlin arrives.”

Once the man left the room, Chip reached out and ran his fingers along the grain of the desk. It was made of a wood that Chip did not recognize, and it was covered by pictures of animals that had been painstakingly carved into its side. The chair that Chip sat in was softer than anything he had ever sat upon before and the room was what he imagined one of the rooms in Edinburgh Castle would look like. The creaking of the door drew him from his musings.

“Well good morning,” a man greeted Chip with a strong Highland accent.

Chip rose at once to greet the newcomer. He was another middle-aged man of similar attire, sporting the tartan of Clan Campbell.

“Me name be Jeffrey Moor,” the man said as he shook Chip’s hand.

“Mr. Moor, I be Christopher MacDougall. I be here today to represent Mr. Prose.”

“Excellent, Mr. MacDougall. It be a pleasure to meet ye. Mr. Tomlin, the Englishman, hath just arrived and shall be joining us in a moment. I be glad to see a fellow Scot to represent Mr. Prose. He be ... dare I say, odd sometimes.”

Chip knew not what to say. He did not know Mr. Prose well enough to comment on the man’s behavior. The door opened again and in walked a man in a long black waistcoat and ghostly white breeches, wearing a tricorne hat.

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Mr. Moor inclined his head to the newcomer. “Mr. Tomlin, please allow me to introduce Mr. MacDougall. He shall be representing Mr. Prose in his absence.”

As Chip shook Mr. Tomlin’s hand, he noticed the man had an odd scar on his wrist in the shape of a star, as though someone had etched it into his skin.

Mr. Moor gestured to the chairs in front of his desk. “Gentleman, shall we begin?”

Mr. Tomlin and Chip each took a seat while Mr. Moor walked around the desk, placing a pair of reading spectacles on the bridge of his nose. He picked up several stacks of parchment from his desk, which he began to sort through.

“Now, to begin we must revisit the deeds that be a part of today’s transaction.”

Chip stared blankly at Mr. Moor for a moment, as he processed what had been said. There was more than one deed to be sold. When Mr. Prose said land, Chip presumed it would be only one deed and not many.

“Ah, here be the deeds,” said Mr. Moor, snapping Chip back to the present. “There be seven in all. Would ye care to look over the deeds, Mr. MacDougall?”

Chip took the deeds, not certain what to do. His reading and writing skills were not the best, but he could read a little. He skimmed over each parchment. None of the deeds were for large plots, though he did notice that they were spread out across Scotland.

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“Everything be in order, Mr. MacDougall?” Mr. Moor stared at Chip over the top of his spectacles.

Chip felt as though his throat was filled with sawdust. “Everything seems to be as needed.”

“I must say, Mr. MacDougall, as pleasant as you be, I had hoped to meet Mr. Prose.”

“Had Mr. Prose not been committed in Europe on business, I be sure that he would be here,” Chip said stiffly, mimicking the memories of his wharf master.

Mr. Tomlin nodded. “Another time then. As for the deeds. What does Mr. Prose wish for them?”

“What doth ye wish to pay for them?”

At first Mr. Tomlin looked cross, but then his face broke into a small smile. He leaned forward, placing a hand on the desk and looking between Mr. Moor and Chip.

“Very well. I shall pay twenty for the lot.”

Chip felt crestfallen. Twenty pounds was far less than he had dreamed, but one third of twenty pounds was more than enough for him. Mr. Moor raised an eyebrow, staring at him.

“Doth ye accept Mr. Tomlin’s offer, Mr. MacDougall?”

Before Chip could answer, Mr. Tomlin interjected, “Twenty and four, but I shall pay no more!”

Chip glanced at Mr. Moor, whose eyebrows had disappeared completely into his hairline. He knew his response had been noticed and completely misunderstood.

“On behalf of Mr. Prose, I accept yer offer for the seven

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deeds.” Chip shook Mr. Tomlin’s hand.

“Excellent.” Mr. Moor picked up a quill from his desk and scratched something onto a parchment in front of him. “Mr. Tomlin, please sign here, accepting the terms. I shall be needing a note from thee authorizing the transfer of funds.”

Mr. Moor passed the parchment and quill to Mr. Tomlin, who signed the bottom. Mr. Moor passed him a note for the authorization of the transfer of funds. Once all the parchments were in order and signed by Chip, Mr. Moor and Mr. Tomlin, the latter shook Chip’s hand once more then left the office, his receipts of trade in hand. Once they heard the outer door shut, Mr. Moor broke the silence.

“I be thinking Mr. Tomlin changed his mind about ye being pleasant!” Mr. Moor laughed, pounding his fist upon the desk.

“I be going to accept the twenty, but Mr. Tomlin not give me the chance.”

Mr. Moor looked as though he might get up and dance. “Course ye were, but the look upon yer face was brilliant! Mr. Prose had advised me to accept no less than eighteen, but to get an extra two and four! He sure be selecting the right man for the post!”

Guilt churned inside Chip’s stomach. He was told to accept whatever the Englishman offered, yet something just didn’t feel quite right.

“Mr. Prose not advise me how much to accept. I doth not wish to leave a man-a-hanging.”

Mr. Moor sighed, “Doth ye wish to search out Mr. Tomlin

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and inform him ye shall accept less? I shall tell ye now, it would be to eat yer nails.”

“Nay,” Chip replied, ignoring the continual nagging feeling.

“Good, good.” Mr. Moor tossed his reading spectacles onto the desk, looking thoroughly relieved. “Now, doth ye have an account with the Bank of Scotland?”

“Nay, sir.”

Chip barely registered his own response. He was still contemplating what had just transpired. He could hear Mary’s warning ringing in his head. *What was he missing? Surely these men knew their craft.*

“Then ye shall be needing one. Let us see. Ye be to receive one-third, as payment for this and another unspecified task. That shall be six and eight.”

Mr. Moor rang a small bell that sat on his desk. As he filled in another note, the office door opened once more.

“Ye rang, sir?” asked the middle-aged man who greeted Chip earlier.

“Aye, I did. Please take these notes to the Bank of Scotland. Tell them the first be transferred to Mr. Prose’s account, while the second be for transfer into a new account under Mr. MacDougall’s name. Also tell them that Mr. MacDougall shall be by later to complete the necessary parchments.”

“Right away, sir.” The man took the notes from Mr. Moor then left the room with haste.

Chip frowned at Mr. Prose’s accountant. “I could hath

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taken the note with me and saved ye the trouble.”

“Mr. MacDougall, this counting house hath been here for many a year, because we doth not leave anything to chance. Now, here be yer receipt. Hold it tight for ye shall need to present it to the bank.”

Chip glanced down and his mind became as empty as a church on Monday. The receipt nearly slipped from his hand as he slouched. The note within his grasp marked the sum of six thousand, eight hundred pounds sterling to be paid to one Christopher MacDougall.

Mr. Moor chuckled, “Just now be hitting ye, aye?”

“I doth not understand.”

“Doth not be questioning me abilities with numbers, Mr. MacDougall,” Mr. Moor said sternly. “I hath been in a counting house since me youth, and besides, it be easy to comprehend a third of twenty thousand and four hundred pounds sterling be six thousand and eight hundred pounds sterling.”

“Nay sir, I not be questioning ye concerning ye trade. It be just that I wasn’t expecting ... I mean, six thousand, it be far more than—”

“Ah, so ye thought it be fiddler’s money that ye be negotiating!” Mr. Moor interrupted, laughing in good spirit. “Lad, I did wonder why ye were so crestfallen. I for one was ready break out me fiddle and dance the side.”

“Why would Mr. Prose agree then to pay me such a lumping pennyworth?” Chip’s concern etching his face.

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Mr. Moor became still as death, staring at him for a long moment.

“Lad, Mr. Prose be a topping man. Being he made such an investment in ye, then he shall be expecting a lumping pennyworth in return.”

Chip leaned back into his chair. “There be another task that I be performing for Mr. Prose.”

“None of me business, Mr. MacDougall, but whatever ye be doing for him must be important. Now, might I be so bold as to request that ye consider this counting house for any financial needs ye might have in the future?”

“It would be me honor.”

Mr. Moor rose to his feet, as did Chip.

“Now then, Mr. MacDougall, ye need be off to the bank to secure yer funds. I shall be sending a message to Mr. Prose to inform him that the trade be successful.”

Chip smiled and shook Mr. Moor’s hand before bidding him farewell, then left the counting house for the bank. As he exited onto the street, that the air smelt fresher and the day looked brighter. While he still could not comprehend how his life had just changed, he knew it had.

Chip had passed the Bank of Scotland many times since he’d come to live in Edinburgh. Until then, the building had never earned more than a passing thought. Now, standing before it, the massive structure was quite intimidating. He decided that the best thing to do was to follow a gentleman entering the bank and go

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wherever he went. This was a mistake, as the gentleman turned out to be a teller.

“What doth ye think ye be doing?” an officer of the bank demanded.

“I be here to open an account, sir.” Chip could feel his face begin to burn.

“Why were ye following me teller?”

“I knew not where to go, sir. This be me first visit.”

“Aye. Follow me then.”

The officer led him into a room and asked him to wait. Chip was sure they were fetching the constable, thinking him an impostor, but moments later, a man entered the room wearing a long blue waistcoat and brown breeches.

“Mr. MacDougall, me name be Jefferson Wallace, and I am the bank manager. Me apologies for yer wait.” The man shook Chip’s hand. “Mr. Prose informed me before his departure that ye and he would be conducting a substantial land trade, which would require ye opening an account here.”

“Mr. Prose be a thorough man, indeed.”

Mr. Wallace nodded in agreement. “Aye, Mr. Prose never be missing a detail. Now, we have several matters to cover this fine morning, however before we begin Mr. Prose asked me to ask ye one question. Doth ye believe that the trade and the payment be fair?”

Chip considered the question for a moment, as the same nagging feeling in his chest returned. While the payment was more

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than fair, the thought of costing Mr. Tomlin that much money bothered him. Then Chip thought of his family and what this meant for them. His eyes dropped to the floor. "Aye."

"Very good, indeed, Mr. MacDougall. I shall send a message to Mr. Prose informing him that ye were satisfied with the trade and payment."

"I believe Mr. Moor be sending one as well."

"Again, Mr. Prose never be missing a detail. Now, on to the business at hand."

Mr. Wallace guided Chip through all the necessary proceedings to establish his account and the many ways he could access his funds for purchases, including a seal that was assigned to him. He could use the seal to approve transfers of substantial amounts without having to be present at the bank. All transfers from then on would require both his signature and his seal.

Chip was fitted with a leather money belt that sat snugly under his waistcoat and kilt before leaving the bank. The belt alone contained more money than he had ever possessed at one time in his life. As he left, he turned to stare up at the impressive structure. The thought that six thousand pounds sat in the bank at his disposal was more than he could fathom. He swore then and there that he would one day find a way to repay Mr. Prose for what he had done and make things right with Mr. Tomlin.

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Mr. Wallace was looking over some papers at his desk, remembering how he once loathed the endless stacks of parchment he sorted as a young teller, when there was a knock at his office door.

“Enter,” commanded Mr. Wallace.

The door crept open, and one of the younger bank tellers entered the room.

“Sir, yer next appointment hath arrived.”

“Very good. Please send him in.”

“Right away, sir.” The young man nodded, excusing himself from the room.

Mr. Wallace rose to his feet then made his way over to a small elegant liquor cabinet to pour himself a glass of Scotch. He breathed in the aroma of the vintage amber liquid as he uncorked the bottle. It was a scent that reminded him how far he had come. He returned to his desk, just as there was another knock at his office door.

“Enter,” commanded Mr. Wallace yet again.

A man in a long waistcoat, carrying a tricorne hat pressed between his left arm and his torso entered the room, closing the door. The man inclined his head and Mr. Wallace returned the gesture.

“Evening, Mr. Tomlin.” Mr. Wallace lifted his glass and motioned to the liquor cabinet. “Please, indulge yer self.”

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Mr. Tomlin smiled then poured himself a glass as well before seating himself in one of the chairs in front of Mr. Wallace's desk.

"Thank you, Mr. Wallace." Mr. Tomlin lifted the glass to his nose and inhaled deeply. "Fine year."

"I take it ye had no trouble with Mr. MacDougall?"

"No trouble whatsoever. You believe the wharf rat actually had the courage to hold out for more?"

"I believe there be more to this Mr. MacDougall than we see." Mr. Wallace silently contemplated the man who had visited his office. "For today, it matters not. A toast ... to Mr. MacDougall and to another successful deal."

The two men reached across the desk to clink their glasses together, laughing as they did.

"I do wonder ... what interest does Mr. Prose have in the wharf rat?"

From the dark shadowy corner of the room, behind Mr. Wallace's desk, stepped a figure into the light.

"What I wish with Mr. MacDougall is my business, Mr. Tomlin," said Mr. Prose sternly, his eyes hard and focused.

Mr. Wallace stiffened, and the sound of Mr. Tomlin's glass shattering on the hard floor echoed throughout the room.