

## **Campbell Of Kilmhor**

By J.A. Ferguson

### **CHARACTERS**

MARY STEWART MORAG CAMERON DUGALD STEWART  
CAPTAIN SANDEMAN ARCHIBALD CAMPBELL JAMES  
MACKENZIE

SCENE: *Interior of a lonely cottage on the road from Struan to Rannoch in North Perthshire.*

TIME: *After the Rising of 1745.*

MORAG *is restlessly moving backwards and forwards. The old woman is seated on a low stool beside the peat fire in the centre of the floor.*

*The room is scantily furnished and the women are poorly clad. MORAG is barefooted. At the back is the door that leads to the outside. On the left of the door is a small window. On the right side of the room there is a door that opens into a barn. MORAG stands for a moment at the window, looking out.*

MORAG. It is the wild night outside.

MARY STEWART. Is the snow still coming down?

MORAG. It is that, then--dancing and swirling with the wind too, and never stopping at all. Aye, and so black I cannot see the other side of the road.

MARY STEWART. That is good.

(MORAG moves across the floor and stops irresolutely. She is restless, expectant.)

MORAG. Will I be putting the light in the window?

MARY STEWART. Why should you be doing that? You have not heard his call (*turns eagerly*), have you?

MORAG (*with sign of head*). No, but the light in the window would show him all is well.

MARY STEWART. It would not, then! The light was to be put there *after* we had heard the signal.

MORAG. But on a night like this he may have been calling for long and we never hear him.

MARY STEWART. Do not be so anxious, Morag. Keep to what he says. Put more peat on the fire now and sit down.

MORAG (*with increasing excitement*). I canna, I canna! There is that in me that tells me something is going to befall us this night. Oh, that wind! Hear to it, sobbing round the house as if it brought some poor lost soul up to the door, and we refusing it shelter.

MARY STEWART. Do not be fretting yourself like that. Do as I bid you. Put more peats to the fire.

MORAG (*at the wicker peat-basket*). Never since I.... What was that?

(*Both listen for a moment.*)

MARY STEWART. It was just the wind; it is rising more. A sore night for them that are out in the heather.

(MORAG *puts peat on the fire without speaking.*)

MARY STEWART. Did you notice were there many people going by to-day?

MORAG. No. After daybreak the redcoats came by from Struan; and there was no more till nine, when an old man like the Catechist from Killichonan passed. At four o'clock, just when the dark was falling, a horseman with a lad holding to the stirrup, and running fast, went by towards Rannoch.

MARY STEWART. But no more redcoats?

MORAG (*shaking her head*). The road has been as quiet as the hills, and they as quiet as the grave. Do you think will he come?

MARY STEWART. Is it you think I have the gift, girl, that you ask me that? All I know is that it is five days since he was here for meat and drink for himself and for the others--five days and five nights, mind you; and little enough he took away; and those in hiding no' used to such sore lying, I'll be thinking. He must try to get through to-night. But that quietness, with no one to be seen from daylight till dark, I do not like it, Morag. They must know something. They must be watching.

(A sound is heard by both women. They stand listening.)

MARY STEWART. Haste you with the light, Morag.

MORAG. But it came from the back of the house--from the hillside.

MARY STEWART. Do as I tell you. The other side may be watched.

(*A candle is lit and placed in the window. Girl goes hurrying to the door.*)

MARY STEWART. Stop, stop! Would you be opening the door with a light like that shining from the house? A man would be seen against it in the doorway for a mile. And who knows what eyes may be watching? Put out the light now and cover the fire.

*(Room is reduced to semi-darkness, and the door unbarred. Someone enters.)*

MORAG. You are cold, Dugald!

*(STEWART, very exhausted, signs assent.)*

MORAG. And wet, oh, wet through and through!

STEWART. Erricht Brig was guarded, well guarded. I had to win across the water.

*(The old woman has now relit candle and taken away plaid from fire.)*

MARY STEWART. Erricht Brig--then--

STEWART *(nods)*. Yes--in a corrie, on the far side of Dearig, half-way up.

MARY STEWART. Himself is there then?

STEWART. Aye, and Keppoch as well, and another and a greater is with them.

MARY STEWART. Wheest! *(Glances at MORAG.)*

STEWART. Mother, is it that you can--

MARY STEWART. Yes, yes, Morag will bring out the food for ye to carry back. It is under the hay in the barn, well hid. Morag will bring it.--Go, Morag, and bring it.

(MORAG *enters other room or barn which opens on right.*)

STEWART. Mother, I wonder at ye; Morag would never tell--never.

MARY STEWART. Morag is only a lass yet. She has never been tried. And who knows what she might be made to tell.

STEWART. Well, well, it is no matter, for I was telling you where I left them, but not where I am to *find* them.

MARY STEWART. They are not where you said now?

STEWART. No; they left the corrie last night, and I am to find them (whispers) in a quiet part on Rannoch moor.

MARY STEWART. It is as well for a young lass not to be knowing. Do not tell her.

(*He sits down at table; the old woman ministers to his wants.*)

STEWART. A fire is a merry thing on a night like this; and a roof over the head is a great comfort.

MARY STEWART. Ye'll no' can stop the night?

STEWART. No. I must be many a mile from here before the day breaks on Ben Dearig.

(MORAG *reënters.*)

MORAG. It was hard to get through, Dugald?

STEWART. You may say that. I came down Erricht for three miles, and then when I reached low country I had to take to walking in the burns because of the snow that shows a man's steps and tells who he is to them that can read; and there's plenty can do that abroad, God knows.

MORAG. But none spied ye?

STEWART. Who can tell? Before dark came, from far up on the slopes of Dearig I saw soldiers about; and away towards the Rannoch Moor they were scattered all over the country like black flies on a white sheet. A wild cat or anything that couldna fly could never have got through. And men at every brig and ford and pass! I had to strike away up across the slopes again; and even so as I turned round the bend beyond Kilrain I ran straight into a sentry sheltering behind a great rock. But after that it was easy going.

MORAG. How could that be?

STEWART. Well, you see I took the boots off him, and then I had no need to mind who might see my steps in the snow.

MORAG. You took the boots off him!

STEWART (laughing). I did that same. Does that puzzle your bonny head? How does a lad take the boots off a redcoat? Find out the answer, my lass, while I will be finishing my meat.

MORAG. Maybe he was asleep?

STEWART. Asleep! Asleep! Well, well, he sleeps sound enough now, with the ten toes of him pointed to the sky.

*(The old woman has taken up dirk from table. She puts it down again. MORAG sees the action and pushes dirk away so that it rolls off the table and drops to the floor. She hides her face in her hands.)*

MARY STEWART. Morag, bring in the kebbuck o' cheese. Now that all is well and safe it is we that will look after his comfort to-night. *(MORAG goes into barn.)*--I mind well her mother saying to me--it was one day in the black winter that she died, when the frost took the land in its grip and the birds fell stiff from the trees, and the deer came down and put their noses to the door--I mind well her saying just before she died--

*(Loud knocking at the door.)*

A VOICE. In the King's name!

*(Both rise.)*

MARY STEWART. The hay in the barn, quick, my son.

*(Knocking continues.)*

A VOICE. Open in the King's name!

*(STEWART snatches up such articles as would reveal his presence and hurries into barn. He overlooks dirk on floor. The old woman goes towards door.)*

MARY STEWART. Who is there? What do you want?

A VOICE. Open, open.

*(MARY STEWART opens door and CAMPBELL OF KILMHOR follows CAPTAIN SANDEMAN into the house. Behind KILMHOR*

*comes a man carrying a leather wallet, JAMES MACKENZIE, his clerk. The rear is brought up by soldiers carrying arms.)*

SANDEMAN. Ha, the bird has flown.

CAMPBELL (who has struck dirk with his foot and picked it up). But the nest is warm; look at this.

SANDEMAN. It seems as if we had disturbed him at supper. Search the house, men.

MARY STEWART. I'm just a lonely old woman. You have been misguided. I was getting through my supper.

CAMPBELL (*holding up dirk*). And this was your toothpick, eh? Na! Na! We ken whaur we are, and wha we want, and by Cruachan, I think we've got him.

*(Sounds are heard from barn, and soldiers return with MORAG. She has stayed in hiding from fear, and she still holds the cheese in her hands.)*

SANDEMAN. What have we here?

CAMPBELL. A lass!

MARY STEWART. It's just my dead brother's daughter. She was getting me the cheese, as you can see.

CAMPBELL. On, men, again: the other turtle doo will no' be far away. (*Banteringly to the old woman*) Tut, tut, Mistress Stewart, and do ye have her wait upon ye while your leddyship dines alane! A grand way to treat your dead brother's daughter; fie, fie, upon ye!

*(Soldiers reappear with STEWART, whose arms are pinioned.)*



CAMPBELL. Did I no' tell ye! And this, Mrs. Stewart, will be your dead sister's son, I'm thinking; or aiblins your leddyship's butler! Weel, woman, I'll tell ye this: Pharaoh spared ae butler, but Erchie Campbell will no' spare anither. Na! na! Pharaoh's case is no' to be taken as forming ony preceedent. And so if he doesna answer certain questions we have to speir at him, before morning he'll hang as high as Haman.

(STEWART is placed before the table at which CAMPBELL *has seated himself*. Two soldiers guard STEWART. Another is behind CAMPBELL'S *chair and another is by the door*. The clerk, MACKENZIE, is seated at up corner of table. SANDEMAN *stands by the fire*.)

CAMPBELL (*to STEWART*). Weel, sir, it is within the cognizance of the law that you have knowledge and information of the place of harbor and concealment used by certain persons who are in a state of proscription. Furthermore, it is known that four days ago certain other proscribed persons did join with these, and that they are banded together in an endeavor to secure the escape from these dominions of His Majesty, King George, of certain persons who by their crimes and treasons lie open to the capital charge. What say ye?

(STEWART *makes no reply*.)

CAMPBELL. Ye admit this then?

(STEWART *as before*.)

CAMPBELL. Come, come, my lad. Ye stand in great jeopardy. Great affairs of state lie behind this which are beyond your simple understanding. Speak up and it will be the better for ye.

(STEWART *silent as before*.)

CAMPBELL. Look you. I'll be frank with you. No harm will befall you this night--and I wish all in this house to note my words--no harm will befall you this night if you supply the information required.

(STEWART *as before.*)

CAMPBELL (*with sudden passion*). Sandeman, put your sword to the carcass o' this muckle ass and see will it louse his tongue.

STEWART. It may be as well then, Mr. Campbell, that I should say a word to save your breath. It is this: Till you talk Rannoch Loch to the top of Schiehallion, ye'll no' talk me into a yea or nay.

CAMPBELL (*quietly*). Say ye so? Noo, I widna be so very sure if I were you. I've had a lairge experience o' life, and speaking out of it I would say that only fools and the dead never change their minds.

STEWART (*quietly too*). Then you'll be adding to your experience to-night, Mr. Campbell, and you'll have something to put on to the other side of it.

CAMPBELL (*tapping his snuff-box*). Very possibly, young sir, but what I would present for your consideration is this: While ye may be prepared to keep your mouth shut under the condition of a fool, are ye equally prepared to do so in the condition of a dead man?

(CAMPBELL waits expectantly. STEWART *silent as before.*)

CAMPBELL. Tut, tut, now, if it's afraid ye are, my lad, with my hand on my heart and on my word as a gentleman--

STEWART. Afraid!

(*He spits in contempt towards CAMPBELL.*)

CAMPBELL (*enraged*). Ye damned stubborn Hieland stot. (To SANDEMAN) Have him taken out. We'll get it another way.

(CAMPBELL *rises*. STEWART *is moved into barn by soldiers*.)

CAMPBELL (*walking*). Some puling eediots, Sandeman, would applaud this contumacy and call it constancy. Constancy! Now, I've had a lairge experience o' life, and I never saw yet a sensible man insensible to the touch of yellow metal. If there may be such a man, it is demonstrable that he is no sensible man. Fideelity! quotha, it's sheer obstinacy. They just see that ye want something oot o' them, and they're so damned selfish and thrawn they winna pairt. And with the natural inabeelity o' their brains to hold mair than one idea at a time they canna see that in return you could put something into their palms far more profitable. (*Sits again at table.*) Aweel, bring Mistress Stewart up.

(Old woman is placed before him where son had been.)

CAMPBELL (*more ingratiatingly*). Weel noo, Mistress Stewart, good woman, this is a sair predeecament for ye to be in. I would jist counsel ye to be candid. Doubtless yer mind is a' in a swirl. Ye kenna what way to turn. Maybe ye are like the Psalmist and say: "I lookit this way and that, and there was no man to peety me, or to have compassion upon my fatherless children." But, see now, ye would be wrong; and, if ye tell me a' ye ken, I'll stand freends wi' ye. Put your trust in Erchie Campbell.

MARY STEWART. I trust no Campbell.

CAMPBELL. Weel, weel noo, I'm no' jist that set up wi' them myself. There's but ae Campbell that I care muckle aboot, after a'. But, good wife, it's no' the Campbells we're trying the noo; so as time presses we'll jist "*birze yont*," as they say themselves. Noo then, speak up.

(MARY STEWART *is silent.*)

CAMPBELL (*beginning grimly and passing through astonishment, expostulation, and a feigned contempt for mother and pity for son, to a pretence of sadness which, except at the end, makes his words come haltingly*). Ah! ye also. I suppose ye understand, woman, how it will go wi' your son? (*To his clerk*) Here's a fine mother for ye, James! Would you believe it? She kens what would save her son--the very babe she nursed at her breast; but will she save him? Na! na! Sir, he may look after himself! A mother, a mother! Ha! ha!

(CAMPBELL *laughs*. MACKENZIE *titters foolishly*. CAMPBELL *pauses to watch effect of his words.*)

Aye, you would think, James, that she would remember the time when he was but little and afraid of all the terrors that walk in darkness, and how he looked up to her as to a tower of safety, and would run to her with outstretched hands, hiding his face from his fear, in her gown. The darkness! It is the dark night and a long journey before him now.

(*He pauses again.*)

You would think, James, that she would mind how she happit him from the cold of winter and sheltered him from the summer heats, and, when he began to find his footing, how she had an eye on a' the beasts of the field and on the water and the fire that were become her enemies--And to what purpose all this care?--tell me that, my man, to what good, if she is to leave him at the last to dangle from a tree at the end of a hempen rope--to see his flesh given to be meat for the fowls of the air--her son, her little son!

MARY STEWAET. My son is guilty of no crime!

CAMPBELL. Is he no'! Weel, mistress, as ye'll no' take my word for it, maybe ye'll list to Mr. Mackenzie here. What say ye, James?

MACKENZIE. He is guilty of aiding and abetting in the concealment of proscribed persons; likewise with being found in the possession of arms, contrary to statute, both very heinous crimes.

CAMPBELL. Very well said, James! Forby, between ourselves, Mrs. Stewart, the young man in my opeenion is guilty of another crime (*snuffs*)--he is guilty of the heinous crime of not knowing on which side his bread is buttered.--Come now--

MARY STEWART. Ye durst not lay a finger on the lad, ye durst not hang him.

MACKENZIE. And why should the gentleman not hang him if it pleasure him?

(CAMPBELL *taps snuff-box and takes pinch.*)

MARY STEWART (*with intensity*). Campbell of Kilmhor, lay but one finger on Dugald Stewart and the weight of Ben Cruachan will be light to the weight that will be laid on your soul. I will lay the curse of the seven rings upon your life: I will call up the fires of Ephron, the blue and the green and the gray fires, for the destruction of your soul: I will curse you in your homestead and in the wife it shelters and in the children that will never bear your name. Yea, and ye shall be cursed.

CAMPBELL. (*Startled--betrays agitation--the snuff is spilled from his trembling hand.*) Hoot toot, woman! ye're, ye're--(*Angrily*) Ye auld beldame, to say such things to me! I'll have ye first whippet and syne droont for a witch. Damn thae stubborn and supersteetious cattle! (To SANDEMAN) We should have come in here before him and listened in the barn, Sandeman!

SANDEMAN. Ah, listen behind the door you mean! Now I never thought of that!

CAMPBELL. Did ye not! Humph! Well, no doubt there are a good many things in the universe that yet wait for your thought upon them. What would be your objections, now?

SANDEMAN. There are two objections, Kilmhor, that you would understand.

CAMPBELL. Name them.

SANDEMAN. Well, in the first place, we have not wings like crows to fly--and the footsteps on the snow--Second point--the woman would have told him we were there.

CAMPBELL. Not if I told her I had power to clap her in Inverness jail.

MARY STEWART (*in contempt*). Yes, even if ye had told me ye had power to clap me in hell, Mr. Campbell.

CAMPBELL. Lift me that screeching Jezebel oot o' here; Sandeman, we'll mak' a quick finish o' this. (Soldiers take her towards barn.) No, not there; pitch the old girzie into the snow.

MARY STEWART. Ye'll never find him, Campbell, never, never!

CAMPBELL (*enraged*). Find him! Aye, by God I'll find him, if I have to keek under every stone on the mountains from the Boar of Badenoch to the Sow of Athole. (*Old woman and soldiers go outside.*) And now, Captain Sandeman, you an' me must have a word or two. I noted your objection to listening ahint doors and so on. Now, I make a' necessary allowances for youth and the grand and magneeficent

ideas commonly held, for a little while, in that period. I had them myself. But, man, gin ye had trod the floor of the Parliament Hoose in Edinburry as long as I did, wi' a pair o' thin hands at the bottom o' toom pockets, ye'd ha'e shed your fine notions, as I did. Noo, fine pernickety noansense will no' do in this business--

SANDEMAN. Sir!

CAMPBELL. Softly, softly, Captain Sandeman, and hear till what I have to say. I have noticed with regret several things in your remarks and bearing which are displeasing to me. I would say just one word in your ear; it is this. These things, Sandeman, are not conducive to advancement in His Majesty's service.

SANDEMAN. Kilmhor, I am a soldier, and if I speak out my mind, you must pardon me if my words are blunt. I do not like this work, but I loathe your methods.

CAMPBELL. Mislike the methods you may, but the work ye must do! Methods are my business. Let me tell you the true position. In ae word it is no more and no less than this. You and me are baith here to carry out the proveesions of the Act for the Pacification of the Highlands. That means the cleaning up of a very big mess, Sandeman, a very big mess. Now, what is your special office in this work? I'll tell ye, man; you and your men are just beesoms in the hands of the law-officers of the Crown. In this district, I order and ye soop! (*He indicates door of barn.*) Now soop, Captain Sandeman.

SANDEMAN (*in some agitation*). What is your purpose? What are you after? I would give something to see into your mind.

CAMPBELL. Ne'er fash about my mind: what has a soldier to do with ony mental operations? It's His Grace's orders that concern you. Oot wi' your man and set him up against the wa'.

SANDEMAN. Kilmhor, it is murder--murder, Kilmhor!

CAMPBELL. Hoots, awa', man, it's a thing o' nae special significance.

SANDEMAN. I must ask you for a warrant.

CAMPBELL. Quick then: Mackenzie will bring it out to you.

*(CLERK begins writing. SANDEMAN and soldiers lead STEWART outside, CAMPBELL sits till they are out. CLERK finishes, CAMPBELL signs warrant--and former goes. CAMPBELL is alone, save for MORAG CAMERON, who is sitting huddled up on stool by fire, and is unnoticed by CAMPBELL.)*

CAMPBELL (as one speaking his thoughts aloud). I've been beaten for a' that. A strange thing, noo. Beforehand I would ha'e said naething could be easier. And yet--and yet--there it is!... It would have been a grand stroke for me... Cluny--Keppoch--Lochiel, and maybe ... maybe--Hell! when I think of it! Just a whispered word--a mere pointed finger would ha'e telled a'. But no! their visions, their dreams beat me. "You'll be adding to your experience to-night, Mr. Campbell, and have something to put to the other side of it," says he; aye, and by God I have added something to it, and it is a thing I like but little--that a dream can be stronger than a strong man armed.--Here come I, Archibald Campbell of Kilmhor, invested with authority as law-officer of the Crown, bearing in my hand the power of life and death, fire and the sword, backed up by the visible authority of armed men, and yet I am powerless before the dreams of an old woman and a half-grown lad--soldiers and horses and the gallows and yellow gold are less than the wind blowing in their faces.--It is a strange thing that: it is a thing I do not understand.--It is a thing fit to sicken a man against the notion that there are probabeelities on this earth.--have been beaten for a' that. Aye, the pair o' them have beat me--though it's a matter of seconds till one of them be dead.



MORAG (*starting into upright position and staring at him; her voice is like an echo to his*). Dead!

CAMPBELL (*turning hastily*). What is that!

MORAG. Is he dead?

CAMPBELL (*grimly*). Not yet, but if ye'll look through this window (*he indicates window*) presently, ye'll see him gotten ready for death.

(*He begins to collect articles of personal property, hat, etc.*)

MORAG. I will tell you.

CAMPBELL (*astounded*). What!

MORAG. I will tell you all you are seeking to know.

CAMPBELL (*quietly*). Good God, and to think, to think I was on the very act--in the very act of--tell me--tell me at once.

MORAG. You will promise that he will not be hanged?

CAMPBELL. He will not. I swear it.

MORAG. You will give him back to me?

CAMPBELL. I will give him back unhung.

MORAG. Then (*CAMPBELL comes near*), in a corrie half-way up the far side of Dearig--God save me!

CAMPBELL. Dished after a'! I've clean dished them! Loard, Loard! once more I can believe in the rationality of Thy world. (*Gathers up*)

*again his cloak, hat, etc.)* And to think--to think--I was on the very act of going away like a beaten dog!

MORAG. He is safe from hanging now?

CAMPBELL (*chuckles and looks out at window before replying, and is at door when he speaks*). Very near it, very near it. Listen!

(He holds up his hand--a volley of musketry is heard. KILMHOR goes out, closing the door behind him. After a short interval of silence the old woman enters and advances a few steps.)

MARY STEWART. Did you hear, Morag Cameron, did you hear?

*(The girl is sobbing, her head on her arms.)*

MARY STEWART. Och! be quiet now; I would be listening till the last sound of it passes into the great hills and over all the wide world.-It is fitting for you to be crying, a child that cannot understand; but water shall never wet eye of mine for Dugald Stewart. Last night I was but the mother of a lad that herded sheep on the Athole hills: this morn it is I that am the mother of a man who is among the great ones of the earth. All over the land they will be telling of Dugald Stewart. Mothers will teach their children to be men by him. High will his name be with the teller of fine tales.--The great men came, they came in their pride, terrible like the storm they were, and cunning with words of guile were they. Death was with them.... He was but a lad, a young lad, with great length of days before him, and the grandeur of the world. But he put it all from him. "Speak," said they, "speak, and life and great riches will be for yourself." But he said no word at all! Loud was the swelling of their wrath! Let the heart of you rejoice, Morag Cameron, for the snow is red with his blood. There are things greater than death. Let them that are children shed the tears.

*(She comes forward and lays her hand on the girl's shoulder.)*

MARY STEWART. Let us go and lift him into the house, and not be leaving him lie out there alone.

[CURTAIN]