

The Heir of Ballantrae



The Heir of Ballantrae

OR

The Brothers

Dramatization of Robert Louis Stevenson's greatest novel

by Christian Lanciai (2001,
translated 2019)

Dramatis Personae:

Lord Durrisindeer
James Durie, his eldest son
Alison Graeme, his betrothed
Henry Durie, James' younger brother
Ephraim Mackellar, secretary
Tom MacMoreland
John Paul, doubtful servant
Macconochie, ready servant
Local visitors at the pub
The host at the pub
Colonel Francis Burke
Captain Edward Teach, better known as captain Blackbeard, a terrible pirate
his equally terrible pirates
a mate
Jessie Brown, a discarded slut
four smugglers
a doctor
Secundra Dass
a sepoy
the governor of New England
society people of New York
John Mountain
his gang of scoundrels
Captain Harris
Sir William Johnson
some of his expedition members

The action is in Scotland (Solway), at sea, in India (Bengal)
and in the state of New York in America about 1745-1765.

Copyright © Christian Lanciai 2001

The Heir of Ballantrae

Act I scene 1. Durrisdeer, inside the castle.

Lord Durrisdeer My children, we are facing a difficult problem. That's why I gathered you here for a serious conference, as it concerns the future and glory of our family.

James Come to the point, father, before we go to sleep.

Alison Let him finish speaking, James.

Durrisdeer Our nation is facing another civil war. It's our royal house of Scotland against the intruders from Germany of Hannover. It's our own Charles Edward against king George in London. For us like to most Scots the case appears simple. Bonnie Prince Charlie is a real Stuart, but king George is a German. But the situation is not so simple, and the hardest thing to see is who will be the victor.

James The case is simple, father. We fight for the right person and prevail.

Durrisdeer Who is then the right person? Can you answer that, my son?

James The house of Stuart of course. It's obvious.

Durrisdeer It's not, and at least not politically. Therefore I decided that one of you will remain here as a faithful citizen of king George's, while the other follows prince Charlie on his quest.

Henry As the younger son it's for me to take the risks. I follow the prince on his warfare while James will take care of the estate.

James That is out of the question. I am the adventurer in the family. You are more stable, Henry. Stay at home.

Durrisdeer Henry is right. The younger brother should sacrifice himself and take the risks, while the heir should have a good standing with the authorities.

James I protest.

Alison James, I am your betrothed. If you will go to war, we shall never get married.

James Let me follow my nature, and follow your own.

Henry James, it is my duty to cover you and the family.

James Let's toss a coin about it! Or else it will never be settled.

Henry I agree. Tails and I go.

James Right! (*tosses a coin*) It's heads.

Alison No! (*takes the coin and throws it straight through the family coat of arms on the window*) If you loved me as much as I love you, you would stay at home!

James Honour, Alison, always comes before love.

Alison Then I hope you will die! (*rushes out*)

Henry I hope you know what you are doing, James.

James I have always known what I was doing, especially when I risked my life for my honour.

Henry You have no honour. You have only sly calculation combined with foolhardy irresponsibility.

James Don't start that again! Leave morals to the priest!

Durrisdeer James, you have taken the initiative and your fate in your hand yourself. Whatever you do, do not disgrace the family.

James That's the last thing I would do. You know that, father.

Durrisdeer Farewell then, my precious son, and good luck! (*embraces him*)

Henry You force me to stay on here. Still I wish you the best of luck. (*takes his hand*)

James You will hear from me. Either the Stuarts will take power with my help, or I will fall for him in battle.

Henry No exaggerations, please.

Durrisdeer Alas, this is a difficult moment for all of us. I can't bear it. I had better get some rest.

James Mackellar, pack my bags. I will go off as soon as possible.

Mackellar Yes, master James. (*retires with the father*)

Henry What a trap! He goes to war alone while I am obliged to remain. If he gets killed I will get the blame, and if the Stuarts prevail I will be called an English traitor. It's just as bad whatever the outcome. It's just for me to keep a good countenance and make the best of it. (*leaves*)

Scene 2. The inn.

1 The war is going to blazes. I am just telling you.

2 For whom? For the king or Stuart?

3 For my part I would let it go to blazes for both.

4 War is war, and all go to blazes. No one ever won a war without irreparable losses.

1 You said it.

3 So let them all kill each other if only we may live.

2 That's the talk of a coward.

3 Aren't we cowards all?

4 Master James brought with him all our bravest boys into the war. Who can then remain?

1 And who comes back? No one!

3 Don't be such a pessimist. The war isn't over yet.

4 The dull Sir Henry remains as lord of Durrisdeer with only the dullest part of the local people.

3 But master James was good for nothing except gambling, an opportunist who only fawned on bonnie prince Charlie and told him what he wanted to hear and gave him bad advice. And Alison's daily letters to him he just let slip out of his pocket. He cared for no one but himself.

2 Yes, he was always like that, clever but just a gambler.

Tom MacMoreland (breaking in) Everything is lost! We lost at Culloden!

4 And bonnie prince Charlie?

Tom He escaped! He has left everything!

1 Then the war is lost.

2 It seems like it.

3 And master James? Will he be back?

Tom He fell in battle like so many others. He was seen fighting at the side of prince Charlie where the battle was hottest, and then he was seen no more. He is undoubtedly lost.

John Paul The family must know about this.

Tom The news is spreading like wildfire all over the country. All families are struck, no one is spared, it is a general total disaster!

4 Only the English are happy about it.

1 As always.

3 But we survived.

4 And now Henry will be lord of Durrisdeer.

2 We will never be rid of him.

John Paul He must be told at once. (*hurries out*)

Scene 3. Lord Durrisdeer, Henry and Alison at dinner

Lord No news from the war?

Henry We are all waiting for the final battle.

Alison My heart is already broken anyway. James should never have been allowed to go.

Henry He wanted it himself. He insisted on it.

Alison You let him toss a coin about it.

Henry He wanted it himself!

Lord Don't argue now, children. We have been through all this before.

Alison If he falls I will never forgive you.

John Paul (*enters panting and fuddled*)

Lord What is it, John Paul? Are you drunk now again?

John Paul I heard it at the inn! Everything is lost!

Henry What has happened?

John Paul The Prince has fallen at Culloden! And master James with him!

Henry It must not be true!

Lord Who told you this?

John Paul Tom MacMoreland, who was in it himself! He saw it happen!

Lord He probably exaggerates. The Prince probably came out of it alive, and James is not stupid enough to allow himself to fall.

John Paul But he is reported missing! With all the others! All our brave young boys!

Alison (*rises*)

Henry I didn't want this, Alison. I would rather have fallen myself than allowed him to die.

Alison If he is dead, Henry, you will now have everyone against you.
Henry Don't you think I am aware of it?
Lord It's not your fault, Henry.
Alison Convince people about that.
Henry If he is dead he will continue existing as a constant reproach to me.
Lord Don't take it so hard. You will now be Lord Durrisdeer after me. That was decided already when he insisted on going out to war.
Henry (upset) That only makes matters worse! *(leaves)*
Lord It's not his fault.
Alison Yes, it is, and that's why he is to be pitied. But James could have survived.
Lord We must live on that hope. John Paul, your news was not well received. Get out and get sober!
John Paul (ashamed) Yes, Sir. *(leaves)*
Alison I heard that James didn't care about my letters. Still I wrote to him almost every day, but I never had an answer. He broke all our hearts from the beginning.
Lord Yes, he did.
Alison Lord Durrisdeer, your son Henry will have a difficult time from now on. If you wish, I will marry him instead.
Lord You are generous, lady Alison.
Alison No, I only see my duty.
Lord You are also wise.
Alison We all must try to be, since James isn't.

Scene 4. The inn.

John Paul Let me tell you, that Henry is a bugger. He lives high on his brother's destruction. He will now be lord Durrisdeer with no right, while his brother's body will cry to us from the other side of the grave.
 1 What do you want, John Paul? Do you want revenge?
John Paul No, I am just telling you the truth, which everyone should know! Our late master James, the rightful heir of Ballantrae, was highly educated and a nice companion, almost a genius, who could make himself popular and always crack a good joke, while the pretender our squire Henry is a dullard who not even his wife Alison can suffer.
Macconochie (who has gradually entered and started to listen) What are you saying, you villain and traitor to the family you serve! James was an inhuman good-for-nothing who could only think of himself and always took advantage of others, a consummate egoist, who probably betrayed prince Charlie to the English to escape alive himself!
John Paul Don't listen to him. He doesn't know what he is saying.

Macconochie You don't know what you are saying when you backbite lord Henry, the only decent person in the family! He may be introverted and full of complexes in relation to his elder brother, but he is kind and polite and prudently manages his responsibilities more than well! The mean master James never bothered about that!

John Paul Yes, he is so kind that his wife has him under her slipper. She married him only for pity. She never loved him. She like her father-in-law always loved only master James.

Macconochie That idle cad! The cruel opportunist! The ruthless gambler!

John Paul He was brilliant! And now he is dead because lord Henry was too yellow to dare go to war.

Macconochie It's not true!

John Paul Shall we fight about it?

Macconochie I am ready!

1 Ten shillings on John Paul

2 Fifty on Macconochie.

3 I keep the account.

4 John Paul stands no chance to Macconochie.

1 But John Paul is stronger.

2 I doubt it.

5 A pound on Macconochie!

Burke Calm down! You don't know what you are fighting about.

5 Who is he?

2 I know him. He was with bonnie prince Charlie. He is Irish.

1 One of those!

3 I know you. You were with prince Chalie but let him down! You are Francis Burke, who harmed our cause more than anyone else!

Burke It doesn't matter who I am. But I have a message for the Duries.

John Paul What about?

Burke It only concerns them.

Macconochie I and John Paul are both grooms in their service. Who is the message from?

Burke The heir of Ballantrae.

John Paul (delighted) He lives! My golden boy is alive!

Macconochie What do you mean? James Durie is dead. He fell at Culloden.

Burke If he did, so did I.

3 I know him. Colonel Francis Burke. He was known as a loyalist when he sided with the Prince. Many were certain that he acted as an agent for the English.

2 And caused the downfall of the Prince?

3 Together with James Durie,

2 What the devil is he doing here then? Drive him out!

Macconochie Wait! Colonel Burke, what is your story?

Burke It only concerns the ears of the Durie family.

John Paul Where is he?

Burke Last time I saw him he was in America.

Macconochie Then at least he is at a safe distance.

John Paul Will he come home?

Burke I can't tell, because that I don't know anything about.

1 Join us for a drink! You bring after all good news.

Burke Thank you, but I will surely be invited by lord Durrisdeer. I could come back here afterwards.

Macconochie Let him bring his bad news to Sir Henry before anyone here slaughters him.

Burke Thanks for the advice. See you again, gentlemen! (*leaves*)

John Paul It will be a happy message to the whole family!

Macconochie Do you think so?

John Paul Of course!

Macconochie Yes, to the lord and mistress Alison, but not to us who only work hard for the best of the family. Master James was a wolf in sheep's clothing who only brought misfortune!

John Paul He was a genius, the only light of the family!

Macconochie Shall we fight about it?

John Paul Any time!

1 Don't start all over again. Master James is alive, which means Sir Henry is completely without guilt.

Macconochie Which thereby is a proven fact.

Host Go home now, boys. You can continue arguing tomorrow.

John Paul Yes, we will. After we have partied all night for master James being alive.

Macconochie I save my party until he is dead for real.

John Paul He never will be.

Macconochie We all will.

Host Get out and settle outside. I have to close up now.

2 I am for you, Macconochie.

5 John Paul is an empty braggart and knave.

(The continue discussing as they go out.)

Scene 5. Durrisdeer. By the fireplace.

Henry Could we never talk about anything else than James?

Alison But he is our dearest topic of conversation.

Henry But do you think it pleases me to constantly have to hear all his virtues praised only because he is dead?

Lord Don't remind us that he is dead. In our hearts he is still alive.

Henry Yes, he is the more alive only because he is dead!

Alison You never seem to have enough of that he is dead.

Henry Don't accuse me of his death all over again!

Alison No one accuses you. But if you had gone out to war instead of him he would still have been here with us.

Henry And I would have been dead. Yes, that would have been better.

Lord Don't be bitter, Henry.

Henry I am not bitter!

Mackellar I can bear witness to how hard Henry is working for us all just to keep the estate out of debt. Without master Henry the family would have been ruined.

Lord Yes, he is kind and efficient.

Alison But a bad father for our daughter.

Henry Alison, I never chose you for my wife. You chose me for your husband only because James was dead. Then don't expect more of me than just an ordinary hen-pecked husband.

Lord Please be gentle and kind now, Henry, as you always were.
(*There is a knock at the gate.*)

Henry Open to see who it is, Mackellar, and then join me at my office. We have some extra accounts to examine. (*Mackellar leaves.*)
I have had enough of your company, since your only real company is James. (*leaves*)

Alison It's just his complex.

Lord It is my fault. He grew up in the shadow of his brother, whom I always favoured and loved, although he never brought me any joy.

Alison He is dead now.

Lord Yes, alas, he is hopelessly dead forever. Why then does he pursue us as if he was still alive? (*Mackellar enters with Burke.*)

Mackellar A colonel Burke who says he brings some message.

Lord Colonel Burke from Ireland?

Burke At your service, Mylord. I bring some news.

Lord You were with the Prince, weren't you?

Burke And I was with your son until we deserted the Prince shortly after Culloden.

Lord (*deeply touched*) Can you tell me about how it happened?

Burke I can tell you more than that. I can tell you that he is alive.

Lord We already know that the Prince is alive.

Burke I mean your son.

Lord Is he alive?

Burke Yes, and in perfect health.

Lord Alison! Come into my arms! My son is alive!

Alison Mackellar, go and tell Henry. Tell us everything you know, colonel Burke.

Burke That's why I am here. But I have brought three letters for lord Durrisdeer, mistress Alison and master Henry. I must first of all deliver these.
(*delivers the letters to the lord and Alison. Enter Mackellar with Henry.*)

(*to Henry*) The heir of Ballantrae, I presume?

Henry I never accepted that title. But I am Henry Durie of Durrisdeer.

Burke Then I have a letter for you. (*delivers the letter*)

Alison (gives her letter to Henry) It's better for my husband to have his letter.

Burke You are pale, madam.

Lord We are all pale for natural reasons.

Henry Alison, you had better retire and read your letter in peace and quiet for yourself. May I help you to your room?

Alison Thank you, Henry. That's probably exactly what I need, since this is too much. *(Henry helps Alison out.)*

Lord Before I read the letter, colonel Burke, I would like to hear your own story about your association with my son. Where is he now?

Burke I assume that he is in Paris at dinner with some renowned lady of the highest society. In brief, he is well off. *(Henry returns.)*

Lord Did you hear, Henry? He is in Paris!

Henry Will he come home?

Burke Not in a hurry, if I know him correctly. But he will surely come when it suits him.

Henry That suits him all right. May we hear what you know?

Burke I will be glad to oblige.

Lord But try to be brief. I am old and tired.

Burke I understand. First of all I must beg to testify that your son is the most ingenious and skilful man I have ever known. The most difficult situations, that anyone else would have found himself lost or scared to death in, he handled with the most perfect and coolest balance of mind, as if mortal danger to him never even needed any special courage. In brief, of all brave men I have known he was number one.

Henry Come to the point. What happened?

Burke We abandoned the Prince as soon as he had abandoned his own cause himself and run away after Culloden. We agreed on a partnership and succeeded at getting on board a ship to America, which soon was taken by a pirate. It was the notorious captain Blackbeard, whom we were compelled to sail with all the way until we managed to escape in America. By James Durie's incredible cleverness we managed to capture the golden treasure of the pirates, which we brought with us escaping up the mountains to the wilderness, where we separated. I think he buried his gold while I brought my part down to the colonies. We met again at Fort St. Frederick, and he then told me he intended to go back to Europe to Paris. In all circumstances he appeared as the born leader who could make anyone follow him and who never hesitated to expose himself to danger if need be. I never knew a man less afraid of death than he.

Lord (rising) Thanks, my friend. Now I can go to bed and for the first time for very long be able to sleep well. I hope you will stay here for the night?

Burke I thank you and will be glad to accept.

Lord I am the one to thank you. Good night, my friend. Henry and Mackellar will show you your room. *(leaves with satisfaction)*

Henry (after he is gone) Now tell me the whole truth.

Burke What do you want to know?

Henry Details. Intimate details. An ordinary pirate would have cut your throats. He must have made friends with the pirates. How did it happen?

Burke Then I must get into details.

Henry That is what I am asking you.

(The scene shifts to on board a ship.)

Teach *(threatening with his sword)* You decrepit blockheads, do you think I have taken your ship only to nurse you, you miserable dried up dicks? Do you think I have any slightest use of you except as deck sweepers and scarecrows? You are not even fit for being hanged in the yard-arm! You would only disfigure and dishonour the impeccable sanctity of our jolly roger, you stillborn crybabies! You wouldn't even be able to rape your own mothers, your diarrhoea farting buggers and worthless stinking bedbugs! There is only one thing you are good for: walking the plank, unless you piss in your pants on the way and make a slip on the sauce and go to the sharks anyway! Only a very few of you are useful to me, and they then have to be able to whip the life out of sailors, kill and murder at random and never hesitate to set a ship on fire with all its crew pinioned on board! Well, any volunteers? One, two, three!

James Captain Teach, one word if I may.

Teach What do you want, you stillborn blackguard? Would you rather walk the plank all the same?

James I just wish to give you a piece of good advice.

Teach And who are you to dare give me, captain Blackbeard Teach, your last and greatest captain of pirates, the least hint of advice, you headless bastard?

James You will need a new quarter master. Your crew is getting drunk all the time on credit and doesn't know in their constant delirium what they are doing, so they start chasing warships...

Teach Warships? Have we started hunting a warship?

James Have a look for yourself in your spy-glass.

Teach *(immediately grabbing a spy-glass)* For all the devils in hell, what bungler of a saboteur was that who spied the blasted ghost ship and thought we could capture the deadly privateer? He must hang at once and be whipped to slices and scalped alive while we flay and castrate him!

(cannon shots at a distance)

By the devil, now they shoot off our dicks as well! Get me a pint of rum, or I will go berserk here on board at once and mutilate all unmangled unhung devils!

James Take care about the rum. If the crew is drunk they cannot aim.

Teach You are right, you bloody bungler! Cut his ropes! We need him! He will make a good pirate if only he wades through some dozen bloodbaths first!

James We have no chance against the warship. *(New cannon shots at some distance.)* You had better change your course.

Teach Would I run away from an ordinary regular ship without a jolly roger?

James You have no choice, for your cannons are misdirected, and your crew is too drunk to be able to either aim or shoot.

Teach Take over then, you accursed quarter master, while I go philosophizing over the situation with a well needed bottle of medicinal rum! The ship is yours, you impotent land-lubber! (*runs away to hiding*)

James Captain Teach has escaped into his galley. You had better lock the door.

Mate It's not necessary. If he goes in there for protection with his rum he will not come out again in three days. He is already dead drunk.

James That's what he always is.

Mate Not *that* dead drunk.

James So he is counted out. If we don't turn we will be shot to splinters by the warship at once and then be hanged. Burke, take the helm!

Burke Cut my ropes first.

James Cut his ropes! Sheet the sails! Steer hard to windward! Make ready for beating up against the wind! Get going, mates! We don't have all day! Steer hard to windward!

Mate At last we have a captain.

James No, I am only a quarter master. The captain is just indisposed and is recovering. In the meantime we have to take responsibility for the ship. How is the situation, Burke?

Burke (turning the helm) We can make it. We are doing nicely and leaving her behind. The warship is too heavily loaded. She is pitching, heaving and setting heavily.

Mate Be our captain, quarter master, and throw that besotted and absurd scarecrow in the galley over board.

James No, we need him. How could we get across the Atlantic without him? Aren't we a notorious pirate? Don't we have to plunder all ships on the way?

Mate That's the only thing we know.

James That's what I mean.

Burke So we are then pirates for real?

James Do we have any choice? How else could we manage this bloodthirsty crew, who knows nothing else than cutting the throats of innocents? We must keep it up. Or else they will cut our throats. Only when we reach land on the other side of the Atlantic could we start thinking of getting out of here, but it is vital that none of the pirates become aware of it.

(*back to Durrisdeer*)

Burke And that's how we made it. Each time we sighted a merchant ship we used Blackbeard Teach as a horror figurehead, and as such he was to put it mildly efficient with his swarthy complexion, his wild black burry hair, his red front ribbon and his extravagant pirate outfit. He was the classic pirate for all times and the last of his kind, and James and I enjoyed him thoroughly and appreciated his terrifying masquerade. But James completely manipulated him. And when we later escaped across the marshes of America he was the one who directed our departure. We incapacitated the whole crew not only with drink but also by mixing laudanum in their liquor. Teach was with us in it plus the mate, who had the keys to the treasure, whereupon we gagged Teach and tied him up by the mast and brought the mate

with us plus the entire treasure, which we shared in four. But the mate perished going down in the moors while Teach and the pirates were captured and instantly executed. They became an easy target for the pirate hunters.

Henry I find in James' letters that he needs money. What did he do with his share of the treasure?

Burke He buried it somewhere in the Catskill mountains.

Henry Were you not with him then?

Burke No, we had parted earlier.

Henry If he needs money, why doesn't he go to America and dig up his treasure?

Burke Sir Henry, we had many conversations on board the "Sarah", and his thoughts constantly returned to you. He gladly tells anyone over and over again that you usurped his position, that he as the elder is the rightful heir of Ballantrae and that you even have taken his betrothed.

Henry That villain! He wanted himself to go to war and leave me here! I was against it!

Burke He says that everything you own is his. Between ourselves I believe that he asks you for money only to mess with you.

Henry And if I don't send him money?

Burke Then he will come back here and make matters worse for you.

Henry That's what I suspected. Thank you, colonel Burke, for coming here. Thanks to you I now know the game.

Burke Your brother is the gambler. You are just a pawn for him.

Henry I know, but I am capable of resistance. Mackellar will show you to your room.

Burke Thank you.

Henry How can we reward you for your pains?

Burke All I can hope for is to improve my reputation. Perhaps you could help me with that?

Henry My own isn't better but possibly even worse. We are in the same boat and could therefore probably cooperate.

Burke Thank you. Good night. (*leaves with Mackellar*)

Henry Come back later, Mackellar!

So that's what we are facing: blackmail without limits. And only as long as we pay him he will keep away, the irresponsible rake and pirate! It's hard cheese, but there is no way out except through. And Alison? What does she think as the mother of my child but the one who always loved him most? I believe she will take a stand for the family against him. That's actually our only hope. (*Mackellar returns.*)

Mackellar, I assume you heard it all.

Mackellar Yes.

Henry What do you think of it?

Mackellar It will cost us much to keep James at a distance but even more if he gets home.

Henry How long do you think we can keep him away?

Mackellar To keep him supported abroad?

Henry Yes.

Mackellar There is a limit to all pains.

Henry One year? Two years?

Mackellar At most.

Henry I was afraid of that. But we have no choice. Perhaps nothing will happen in the meantime, while we have nothing else to do but to keep still, suffer and pay. (*sighs*)

Mackellar You are worn out, Sir Henry.

Henry No, I am just upset. Do you know what that scoundrel dares to write to me? He scorns me! He always did, but now he does it more insultingly than ever! (*walks restlessly about*) We must have some wine. Fetch some wine, Mackellar.

Mackellar It's completely against your habits, Sir.

Henry I know, but I need it. Fetch it! (*Mackellar leaves. Henry continues walking restlessly about while he sighs and dries his front.*)

Mackellar (*bringing the wine*) Still it's almost against my conscience.

Henry Thanks, Mackellar. (*empties a few glasses directly*) Listen to this: "My dear Jacob." "my dear Jacob," that's how he begins, as if I was he and in his place. "I called you that once, which you might remember. And now you have managed so well that you completely have put me out of order." What do you think about that, Mackellar? And that's from my only brother! Still I swear to God that I loved him! I was always loyal to him, and still he writes so scornfully, as if I was his life's arch traitor! It's not fair! More wine! (*drinks*) But I can't accept such insults! I am as good as he and probably better than he, since I in contrast to him always kept proper! He always gambled and wasted and caused father infinite sorrows in one-sided destructivity! I can't give him the exorbitant amount he is craving, and he knows how badly mortgaged the entire property is! But I will give him what I have, and that's more than he expects. I have endured this far too long. Here you will see what he further writes! Read for yourself! "I know that you are a greedy miser." A greedy miser? Me greedy? Is it true, Mackellar? Do you think I am mean? I actually thought he would beat me when he said it. Ah, I know that they all think like him. But you will see, and he shall see, and God will see! Even if I have to bring the property to ruin and be obliged to walk around barefoot, I will still feed that bloodsucker! Let him ask for anything, and he shall have it! He has the right to it all! I stole it all from him! Ah, how well I knew that this and worse things would happen when he didn't allow *me* to go out in the war! (*drinks*)

Mackellar (*lays his hand on Henry's arm with the wineglass*) Calm down, Sir Henry.

Henry (*collecting himself*) You are right, Mackellar. (*throws his glass into the fire*) Come. We have nothing else to do but to reckon the money so that colonel Burke could deliver it to that bloodsucker in Paris. He is still the real heir of Ballantrae. We might as well have it all done at once. I will not be able to sleep at all tonight anyway.

(*leaves with Mackellar*)

Act II scene 1. The Bastille in Paris.

(enter Burke with a guard who locks up the cell in which James is sitting.)

James (rises cordially, as Burke enters) Awfully decent of you to visit me, old partner of misfortune! Are you bringing me some news from Scotland?

Burke I stand in constant touch with both your brother and his faithful clerk, a certain Mackellar.

James Yes, I have got to know him by his correspondence. From his writing he appears dull and rather pedantic, and as such he fits well as an accountant in the service of my equally boring brother. But what news about him? He does continue sending me money, doesn't he?

Burke But how on earth did you end up in this prison, Jamie? You had reached the top and were at large! Were you betrayed?

James Of course. My noble ladies betrayed me. A '*lettre de cachet*'. Only one. Anyone can end up here for nothing. That's what the Bastille is for. But I will soon get out again. But how are the old folks at home? Does Alison still love my brother?

Burke It looks bad for you. You were well off when you arrived here in Paris and had a handsome veteran pension, but after the Bastille you have lost everything. And your family will not send you more money.

James What are you saying!

Burke I told them about your wish to go to India, and it would be the best thing for you to do also for them. In my latest letter I have tried to persuade them to finance your journey there. That's the last thing I can do.

James Then you have done more than what I asked for and deserved, old chum. I just hope you will succeed. But Henry is sensible. He must realize, that the only sensible thing to do is to send me as far away from him and Alison as possible. How is Alison's daughter doing?

Burke A nice girl, very much like her mother.

James Henry would have preferred a son, but he will probably have one as well. And Mr Mackellar?

Burke It's only thanks to him that the family may keep Durrisdeer and stay on and that their economy survives. They almost ruined themselves for your sake. Your brother is the essence of magnanimity.

James He owes me everything. I sold my birthright to him. That's why I jokingly call him Jacob.

Burke It should be about 8000 pounds you received during these years?

James Yes, it's just 8000 pounds and a little more. But I need more. This life in the Bastille demands expenses if you are to get out at all. Many never did.

Burke You still have friends. Trust us. You will be free within a month.

James Thank you, dear colleague, for safeguarding my interests. But my destiny is in Henry's hands.

Burke He is aware of it.

James Then it will probably be resolved. (*rises, giving Burke a friendly slap on his arm*) Thanks for the visit, chum! (*They shake hands.*) And welcome back.

Burke Let's hope with both freedom and money.

James I count on that.

(*Burke leaves, the guard locks the cell, and both leave with the guard's lantern and light.*)

James (*sings cheerfully in his cell the ballad of "Molly Malone".*)

Scene 2. Durrisdeer. At dinner.

Henry That trafficking of smugglers is increasingly growing a problem.

Lord How so? They always kept going and made their living independent on us. We always left them in peace, and they never bothered us.

Henry But they are just thieves and bandits and support the lawlessness around us.

Alison Do you always have to be such a pedantic and boring perfectionist, Henry? What's wrong with some smugglers? They just add to the general local charm. And where is Mackellar?

Henry He just went down to inspect a new contraband ship that just arrived.

Alison How exciting!

Lord We will never be rid of them. Leave them be, Henry.

Mackellar (*comes rushing in, panting*) He is here!

Henry Who is here?

Alison You know very well! You haven't sent him any money for half a year.

Lord My son! At last!

Henry (*to Alison*) You were the one to stop it.

Alison Yes, since it was my money.

James (*enters*) Here you sit like vultures at a feast of failure! Has anyone died? Is it because of me that you have attracted this funeral mood? Hasn't your faithful Mackellar announced my arrival?

Lord (*rising and trembling*) My son! Come into my arms, my boy! (*embraces him*)

James It gives me pleasure that you are still alive, father.

Lord There is not much left of me.

Henry (*rising*) I will not pretend that I am happy to see you, but you could have turned up both earlier and later.

James You knew that I would come sooner or later. The sooner, the better, eh, Henry? Or didn't Jacob want his Esau back? But I am sure that Alison wanted it. How are you, dear sister-in-law?

Alison You are welcome back, James, in spite of all the sorrows you have caused.

James How could I have caused you any sorrow as I am still alive? But that's maybe the grief I am constantly causing you, and when I die you will finally get happy...

Lord He is only pulling our legs.

James Of course. But I am hungry. Where is the food, Mackellar?

Henry Mackellar is no butler.

James No, since he is the administrator. It's he who makes sure that your elder brother is left without his inheritance abroad so that he languishes and must come home again just to torture you, eh, Henry?

Henry James, our house is on the verge of ruin because of you.

James I know I didn't make any successful career. Perhaps it would have been better for us if you had fallen in battle for bonnie prince Charlie than that I survived his failure.

Lord How he jests!

Alison Father-in-law, let me help you up to your room, to let the brothers talk their minds in peace all night if they want to. James will anyway stay at home now.

Lord It's true, James, isn't it? You won't leave us again?

James Not until Henry throws me out.

Henry You know I never will.

Lord He is only joking.

Alison Come now, father. *(leaves with the lord)*

Henry Well, James. You have come home. What will you do?

James Recuperate until I leave again. But is it all right that your faithful Mackellar may sit here and listen to our intimate conversation?

Henry He will do no harm as a witness.

James No, he will do no harm. Why did you stop sending me money, Henry? Didn't you want to keep me away any more?

Henry The money was finished. And it was Alison's money.

James Alison should have married me, and the money would have been mine, if I hadn't been bored here at home and gone to war instead of you, Henry.

Henry You tossed a coin about it.

James Yes, I did, because I love gambling about destiny. That keeps life exciting. It's also a way to scorn the most boring element of life, which is common sense. But to return to your question: the case is very simple. If you give me money I will go. If I will have none, I will stay.

Henry We have no money to give you, James, no matter how much we would like to.

James You are only mean. I know how it is. The family coffers are without bottom, but you are too lazy to dig them out.

Henry Let's not quarrel. You are tired and need to sleep.

James I am tired but never need to sleep. But you always get too little sleep. You look worn out, Henry. Go to bed. See you tomorrow. If you want to, I will stay here jesting with you until I implode from boredom.

Henry Well, James. Let's sleep on it. We can discuss your situation for many weeks.

James And months and years if you like.

Henry Mackellar will make a note of everything you cause around here.

James Much obliged. I regard it an honour to have a chronicler of my own.

Henry *(rising. Formally)* Goodnight, James.

James Sleep well, Henry. (*Henry leaves quickly.*)

He is angry with me for having come home. Are you also angry with me, Mackellar?

Mackellar I have no right to be angry with anyone.

James No, of course, you are employed here. Go to bed, Mackellar.

Mackellar (rising) As you wish, Sir. (*leaves*)

James Alone in my own house and freezed out by them all. It's not easy to be heir to a large fortune and not able to touch a penny of it. Well, it's just to survive anyway as well as possible. (*intimately, to the audience*) And it will be fun to torture my own family out of life. (*leaves*)

Scene 3. The Inn.

John Paul Well, what do you say to that, boys? The heir of Ballantrae was never dead, and now he is back!

1 How then did he save his life from the battle at Culloden?

2 He must simply have escaped.

John Paul But who dares report him to the authorities? Who would even think of betraying him? Nobody! He is sacred to us all as a Scottish patriot! We are all concerned about protecting him! That's what I call solidarity!

Macconochie Listen, you miserable braggart of a clown, don't you know that master James, the so called heir, was the King's special agent by bonnie prince Charlie and who helped the King to wreck the Stuart cause from within? And don't you know that master James '*secretly*' has been pardoned and given amnesty?

John Paul (bewildered) Amnesty?

Macconochie Mackellar found it all out, you imbecile dumbbell! Master James is just a parasite only good for wasting his family's money, and when he has ruined himself and his family he comes begging home to his brother, acting like a beggar! And he was never brave except as a traitor and deceiver who never served anyone without betraying him!

John Paul You traitor! Master James shall be informed that you are spreading such rumours and lies!

Macconochie Yes, inform him, by all means! Can he deny that they are true? No! Inform the family already today, so that they at last will get rid of him! All he wants and asks for is anyway just to get to India.

1 The sooner they send him there, the better.

2 Here he just keeps seducing lady Alison and harassing Jessie Brown.

3 She is here.

Jessie Brown (a discarded slut) Listen! He gave me a pub in Solway! Both he and Sir Henry have atoned for all their meanness!

2 Sir Henry also?

Jessie Yes, when master James was dead.

1 But now he is back.

2 He was just temporarily underground.

1 He is likely to return from India also, if he ever gets there.

John Paul There you are! The heir is a man of honour! And he even cares about making amends for such a one as Jessie Brown! (*laughs, and most laugh with him*)

Jessie What do you mean by such a one as Jessie Brown?

John Paul Such a one as you! What else? (*more laughter*)

Jessie Are you suggesting me not being decent? Who has a pub of her own in Solway?

John Paul Yes, and you drinking all the liquor yourself! (*more laughter*)

Jessie Now, damn it, you listen to me! Here you sit day in and day out ranting shit now about Sir Henry and now about master James, but both are damn it real gentlemen! Both have helped me out of my misfortune!

1 Yes, after master James first having caused it.

Jessie It wasn't his fault! He is like that! He couldn't help it! But both have done right! Which one of you would have helped me with even one single farthing?

Macconochie Jessie Brown is right. Both are gentlemen as noblemen. But master James is self-destructive and are dragging his whole family down with him, while Sir Henry wears himself out in trying to hem the constant bleeding.

1 They say they are always quarrelling at home. Is it true?

2 They say that master James constantly makes demands on lady Alison and that the brothers are on the constant brink of fighting a duel.

John Paul Who has told you that? Mackellar?

Macconochie Master James comes here himself occasionally and brags about it. He doesn't mind associating with locals like us. He even arrived here with the smugglers and always did business with them.

James (has suddenly arrived) Let's hope then that he also will be gone with the smugglers.

John Paul Master James!

James Yes, it's hardly my brother Jacob. May I offer you all a drink?

1 How is business, master James? Do you get anything out of your inheritance, so that you at last could go to India?

James I can provide you with the comfort, that even today Lord Durrisdeer, my father, signed a paper for the sale of a number of our properties, so that I can get lost in India. That would surely make you all happy? I am already on my way!

Macconochie Lord Durrisdeer would never do such a thing.

James He has already done it, persuaded by my brother.

1 Then we must wish you a happy journey, master James. When will you be off?

James Tomorrow, if I only get hold of my money first.

Macconochie Don't believe a word he is saying. Sir Henry has already given him thousands of pounds, which he transferred to France, and still he stays on.

James Is it forbidden for a true son to stay at home? My father is old and would mind my departure.

2 Is it lady Alison who keeps you here?

James My filial duties to my father, and the obligations I have towards my niece Catherine which her father always neglected.

John Paul It is true that master James dedicates more of his time and care to miss Catherine than her father does.

James Thanks, John Paul. You are my only defendant.

Jessie And I, master James.

James Jessie Brown! What are you doing here?

Jessie What do you think? Having a drink. What else?

James Don't you belong over there at Solway?

Jessie You can't always stick to your business.

1 Jessie Brown is now well off thanks to you.

Jessie And that was about time.

James Yes, yes, Jessie Brown, that's good. Good luck. (*leaves*)

2 What was the matter with him? What's his sudden hurry?

3 I suppose he has to see his smugglers.

Jessie Is he making business with them?

1 You must know about it. Now when he has got money the smugglers will probably get him unnoticed to India. There is after all a price on his head.

2 Wasn't he pardoned?

1 (*intimately*) In secret. He is still officially wanted. He must not lose his face, only his head.

2 A born gambler.

1 Yes, a divine gambler. He will never lose except his life.

2 But he never wins either.

1 No, that's the greatest charm of every gamble.

Jessie Cheers then, fellows! And welcome to Solway! (*leaves*)

1 What was Jessie Brown's connection with master James and Sir Henry?

Macconochie Don't you know? Jessie had a child with master James, and then he disappeared in the war. Sir Henry tried to make amends for it and gave her money, but she just returned all the time. Now they fixed a pub for her in Solway, but she still just can't keep away.

1 Old sins are never easily forgotten.

Macconochie No, they are as sticky as master James himself and all leeches.

John Paul Stop abusing master James!

Macconochie If you stop abusing Sir Henry.

John Paul Shall we settle the matter?

Macconochie I'll be glad to! (*tucks up his sleeves*)

3 Ten shillings on John Paul!

2 The double on Macconochie!

Host Outside, gentlemen, please, outside!
(*enthusiastic preparations for the fight while all withdraw outside.*)

Act III scene 1. Durrisdeer.
(*The family at a game of cards.*)

James You play unusually badly today, Henry.
Alison Maybe he is just tired.
Lord We are all tired.
James Yes, you are tired of me. But calm down. I *will* leave as soon as I can, since I have nothing here to do but play silly games of cards with impossible dummies for opponents.
Lord No one forces you out of here, James. We are only happy as long as you remain with us, aren't we, Henry?
Alison Henry consents by silence as always.
Lord Yes, he is all goodness.
James I can't imagine anything more impossible than Henry saying something mean.
Alison James, you are just provoking him by being so jeering.
James Yes, but that's the very intention.
Henry A card once played stays.
James Yes, now I was careless. I admit it. You brought home your first winnings today, Henry, your first in some weeks.
Lord I am tired. I let you young people continue. (*breaks up*)
Alison (rises) Let me follow you to your room, father-in-law.
Lord Thanks, my daughter. Goodnight, my sons.
James Goodnight, father. Aren't you wishing your father a good night, Henry?
Henry Good night, father.
James He didn't hear you.
Henry Yes he did.
James No, he didn't. Shout it out and let it be heard, Henry.
Henry You have been drinking too much.
James No, it's you, Henry, who has had too little. You are always dead sober and therefore so boring. Take Lord Durrisdeer's place, Mackellar. We need an extra dummy. It makes things even better if he also has a club foot.
Henry Jokes at the cost of others' deformities are never funny, James.
James But they are always efficient, especially with those who feel the deformity. They become aware that they are alive. And we get the pleasure of enjoying the pain of the touched. It's always amusing to see others blush, so that you don't have to do it yourself, isn't it so, Henry? Cut now.
Henry You have been drinking too much.
James It's only good for me. It would do you some good as well. It would even do some good to the club foot here, so that he might start stumbling a little better. Have some more, Club Foot.
Mackellar Thank you, but I am neither in the mood for drinking nor gambling.

James Then you missed something in your upbringing. Then you are not educated at all. Henry, you have employed an illiterate as administrator of the estate. No wonder then that your deficit constantly keeps getting worse.

Henry Mackellar does a great work. Or else we wouldn't be here today, and you would never have received your money.

James I don't get them anyway, since I have two professional misers against me.

Henry Three. And it's not just meanness. It is realism and common sense.

James Who is the third one? Daddy?

Henry The third one is Alison, from whose coffer you have got eight thousand pounds without deserving a single one of them.

James Yes, I know how you managed to turn her against me, although both she and her daughter love me much more than they love you,

Henry That's enough, James.

James No, it's never enough. You got my betrothed. You got my inheritance. And still you will not grant me even enough for me to be gone for good. Your greed is carrying you so far that you won't even pay me to get permanently rid of me.

Henry (trying desperately to control himself) It's all up to you, James, if and how long you remain here. We have given you what we could afford, and more than that we cannot afford.

James I would gladly stay here for good if you at least could give me Alison.

Henry That was below the belt, James.

James I know. It was intentional, since you are such a bloody bore. You just keep walking around in your sleep all the time. You can't even play cards with any attention. The mere sight of you causes despair. You can't even beget a son. You can't propagate the family, Henry! You don't care about your only daughter! Even I could do better with Jessie Brown!

Henry (rising) Enough!

James (rising) No, it's never enough! You can never get a son, Henry, and least of all with Alison! You are both incompetent and impotent! Ask Alison!

Henry (knocks James vehemently down, who falls backwards over the chairs)

James You hit me, Henry!

Henry Yes, I did!

James Do you know what that means?

Henry Of course I know what it means!

Mackellar (in despair) No, gentlemen, no, no!

James Shut up, Club Foot.

Henry You haven't insulted me as much as you have insulted Alison.

James I waited for this moment far too long. Let's have settlement once and for all!

Henry It was unavoidable the way you acted!

James I know you are good at foils, but what about swords? I real duel can only be fought with swords!

Henry I have Alison and my honour to defend. You have nothing except your own drunken malice!

James You are done for, Henry! Whatever the outcome, you will lose! If you die I take Alison and the estate and disappear with your family and the whole family fortune abroad! If I die you will have to live with it. What will you then tell father and Alison? How will you explain the murder of your brother, Henry?

Mackellar Gentlemen, don't let it go that far! Please, come to your senses!

James Listen to that Club Foot! He will be our only second. Show us out with the light, Mackellar. The house is too small for our settlement.

Mackellar No, gentlemen! I must protest! I refuse!

James (with his sword against Mackellar's throat) Refuse if you dare!

Mackellar (capitulating at once) No, no! Spare me!

James Carry out the candelabrum and light our path, you club-footed pultroun! Or else there will be two corpses out there!

Henry Do as he says, Mackellar. He insists on it himself.

(Mackellar shaking takes the candelabrum and shows them out. The walls glide apart, and the duellists stand outside with the shaking Mackellar holding the candelabrum.)

James (while they salute) Don't stand there like a ridiculous fool, Henry! Will you then do nothing? Shall I take the initiative as usual? Have you forgotten that Alison and I loved each other long before she even became aware of your existence?

Mackellar Gentlemen, for the last time, I beg of you to desist!

James The Club-foot begs us. What do you say, Henry? Shall we say a prayer for him or at last start fighting?

Henry You are drunk, James.

James So much the better! Then you can do without your handicap! Then we are equal!

Henry You have the lights in your eyes. Let's change sides. I am faster than you.

James So confident in the face of death? As you wish. You asked for the handicap yourself.

(They change sides so that Henry gets the lights in his eyes.)

Mackellar Gentlemen, I beseech you: Desist! This is madness. You are both out of your minds!

James No, Club-Foot, only I am drunk, Henry claims, but he brought the challenge. We have no choice. Alison and my love demand satisfaction.

Henry Let's get it over with.

(They start fencing exactly simultaneously. It is soon obvious that Henry has the upper hand.)

Mackellar Gentlemen, for the last time, stop, before there is an accident!

Henry The accident has already happened.

James Shut up, Club-Foot, and stick to your candelabrum! You are angry, Henry.

Henry No, James, only embittered. *(forces James backwards)*

(James becomes increasingly desperate and finally grabs Henry's sword in a desperate effort at a foul attack, but Henry directly reacts and avoids it, James' attack strikes thin air, he loses his foothold and gets pierced by Henry's immediate reflex thrust. James falls at once in a large pool of blood.)

Mackellar (in despair) No! No! (*rushes forth to examine the body*)

Henry (shocked) Is he... dead?

Mackellar Sir Henry! He can't be anything else! The sword pierced him right through!

Henry It must not be true! Don't wake me up! Tell me I am dreaming!

Mackellar Alas, Sir Henry, if only I could have averted this!

Henry It's my fault! (*runs away from the scene*)

Mackellar Sir Henry! (*runs after him*)

(*James is left alone motionless. Then enter the smugglers.*)

1 Damn, he was supposed to wait for us down there!

2 Dare we approach the house?

1 Damn, if he doesn't come we must fetch him! (*They enter.*)

2 Perhaps he changed his mind. It has happened before.

1 In that case he owes us an explanation. Quiet! Someone is lying here!

2 And someone has put a candelabrum by a murdered bloody body...

3 It looks as if a duel had been fought here.

1 By all bloody saints! It's Mister Bally himself!

2 Is he alive?

1 We have no time to examine him here. Bring the body, and we'll examine it later! We must sail now with the tide!

3 And he paid for his transport. What does it matter if he is alive or dead, if we only do what we've paid for?

1 You are right, pal. Bring him on.

2 Weigh ho! (*They lift James, four men, and carry him out.*)

3 Why are corpses always heavier than living bodies?

1 Because the living carry their own burdens.

2 When the dead no longer can support them.

4 Keep quiet and let us get away from here before anyone catches us as body snatchers!

(*They disappear.*)

Mackellar (outside) Sir Henry, pull yourself together! We can't just leave the body out in the garden!

Henry What have I done! What have I done!

Mackellar Drink this, for God's sake! (*enters with Henry, reeling with a bottle*)

Henry How could we tell this to my old father? (*drinks directly from the bottle*)

Mackellar (aside) Not that I believe in it myself, but... he might perhaps still be alive, Sir Henry! That's our only hope!

Henry (stops stunned at the blood pool and the candelabrum) He is not here.

Mackellar What do you mean?

Henry Are you sure, Mackellar, that this was not just a bad dream? My brother's body isn't here.

Mackellar But the blood! And the candelabrum! Someone has taken him away!

Henry We murder him, and others steal the body. What is this supposed to mean, Mackellar? This can't be reality, unless it plays tricks with us in the most infernal ways.

Mackellar Even the swords are left. We can't explain away reality, Sir Henry! (*the sound of oars is heard from a boat outside the scene*) The smugglers! It must be the smugglers!

Henry But why would the smugglers have stolen a dead body from us?

Mackellar He must have been alive! And he must have planned his departure just for tonight! That's why he was so rude today! He knew it was the last time!

Henry In that case we are saved. We could tell Alison and father that James suddenly departed. They would accept it.

Alison (has unnoticably come out in a big shawl) What would we have accepted, Henry? That you have murdered James?

Henry Alison! It was not intended! The whole duel was a mistake! But we were both inebriated! Oh, Alison! (*embraces her, crying*)

Mackellar What do you know and what do you think, lady Alison?

Alison (while soothing the crying Henry) I heard voices. I didn't dare to go down. I thought it was one of those quarrels. Then everything went dead quiet. Then I heard the clashes of swords here outside. Then I dared do even less. I went down into a corner for myself and cried and wept like a child with my hands to my ears, because I couldn't stand hearing what was going on. Then everything went dead quiet again. Then I heard the two of you coming up. Henry was all beside himself. Then I understood everything. Now I am here. But where is James?

Mackellar That's what we all are wondering.

Henry It's my fault, Alison! Everything is my fault!

Alison Stop torturing yourself like a child, Henry! James went too far and perhaps was taught an important lesson, if he survived. If the smugglers have taken care of him he must have survived.

Henry You give us hope, Alison.

Lord What is going on here? (*He has come out unnoticed, is magnificent in his perfect self control.*)

Mackellar Lord Durrisindeer, your sons have fought a duel after master James insulted Sir Henry's wife. Master James was badly wounded, and we thought he was dead, but now he has left. We believe that he misbehaved on purpose in creating an outrageous scene because he had planned to leave with the smugglers tonight.

Lord It fits. I believe you are right, Mr Mackellar. But we must eliminate all traces. This must not come out. We have the good standing and position of the family to think of.

Henry (turns to the Lord to cry his heart out) Can you forgive me, father?

Lord Henry, the way he went on, this was bound to happen sooner or later. There is a limit to all pains. We just have to hope that he survived and will manage.

Alison He has gambled with death before and won.

Mackellar Exactly.

Lord Come up to the house. We must wash out all traces of blood and tell the people that he suddenly went off. They will accept it.
Henry And Katherine?
Lord She never needs to know.
Alison Until James comes back.
Mackellar (stupidly) Comes back?
Alison Yes, he always comes back.
Henry Alison is right. We never got rid of him dead or alive. Even death itself has cheated us of him. He always comes back.
Lord Henry, you have done enough for today. Alison, take care of him.
Alison Think of the family, Henry, the ones you have to live for.
Henry Yes, Alison. (*lets Alison bring him out*)
Lord Come, Mackellar. (*leaves with Mackellar.*)
 (*Only the candelabrum is left by the blood.*)
Henry The lights! Don't leave the candelabrum by the grave!
Lord (to Alison) He is overwrought.
Alison Bring in the lights, Mackellar.
Henry We should have taken in the lights directly after we had killed him.
Lord He is not dead, Henry. He lives.
Henry Yes, that's what I am telling you! He cannot die, although I killed him, my own brother! (*breaks down again*)
Alison Come, Henry. You need to go to bed.
Mackellar He has a fever.
Alison No wonder.
Lord We all need to go to bed.
 (*They walk up with the sobbing and shaking Henry.*)

Scene 2. The Inn.

1 What do you think actually happened?
2 We shall never know what really happens in that family.
3 We only have what we know to stick to. The lord has lost his grain and is maybe dying. He has had a shock. Henry lies in bed in constant delirium and fever since more than a month and is occasionally deranged. He has had a shock. The heir has vanished without a trace, but there are whispers about traces of blood here and there.
1 Everything points to some violent settlement.
2 Here is John Paul.
3 He has been dejected ever since the heir disappeared.
1 What news, John Paul?
John Paul Nothing new.
2 How is Lord Durrisdeer and his son?

John Paul No change.

3 He has been like that ever since that night when the smugglers went off with the heir of Ballantrae's body.

John Paul (angry) He is not dead!

1 Don't provoke him.

3 No, everyone says so. Still he is hardly alive either. And the doctor says that he will probably never come back here alive.

2 The doctor knows more than most.

1 And much more than he dares to talk about. (*enter the doctor*)

3 Talking about ghosts...

1 Good morning, doctor! What news about the patients?

Doctor Nothing new.

2 What really happened that night?

Doctor Do you wish to know what I really think?

1 We are dying to hear it.

Doctor The heir went away.

2 Is that all?

Doctor Technically, yes. But there were complications. For some reason there was a row in the house, and the brothers started fighting. Perhaps the heir insulted Henry once too much. Perhaps they quarrelled about Alison. We shall never know. But the heir got away alive. I heard that from a secure source.

Jessie Brown (entering) Anyone buy me a drink?

Doctor Here is my secure source.

1 Certainly, Jessie Brown!

2 What will you have?

3 Gin, whisky or brandy?

Jessie Thank you, I can take all three.

1 What do you know about what happened that night, Jessie Brown?

Jessie Alack, I lost my golden boy! The smugglers took him away!

2 Alive or dead?

Jessie Alive of course! He almost bled to death!

3 How do you know?

Jessie I know the smugglers, damn it, don't I?

Doctor Tell us what you know, Jessie, and you will make the customers happy.

Jessie My golden boy was going away that night, but then he got into a fight. The smugglers found him bleeding to death in the garden. On board the ship he woke up and swore and was like mad. The smugglers wanted to know what had happened, but he refused to talk about it. He was just angry and mad, and so it was all the way to France.

1 Then we shall never know anything.

2 Until he comes back.

3 And he will come back.

Doctor He always comes back. That's what Henry repeats every day in his bed on Durrisdeer. No one is more certain of it than he.

Jessie Yes, he always comes back, but he will never more come back to me, the golden prince.

John Paul Don't be too sure of that. He always comes back to us all.

1 Dead or alive.

John Paul No, only alive.

1 Shall we bet on it?

John Paul I bet we shall never see him in a coffin here in Scotland.

1 That's another matter. He doesn't fit into a coffin.

John Paul Then there is no bet.

1 I bet that we shall both survive both the heir and his brother.

John Paul And who in that case will be the first to die?

1 Master James.

John Paul Sir Henry.

1 Done.

Jessie Master James will never die as long as he lives.

Doctor That hypothesis I don't think anyone of us will question, Jessie Brown.

Scene 3. Henry's bedroom.

Alison How is he?

Mackellar As usual.

Alison No change for the better?

Mackellar He isn't delirious any more and has started recognizing me.

Alison Then I must see him.

Mackellar I am afraid, lady Alison, that he will not recognize you.

Alison I will take that risk.

Mackellar He is very tense, and something has broken inside him, the doctor says. He should not be exposed to anything that could upset him.

Alison He was always over-sensitive. I know my husband, Mackellar. I am now his mother, and I will only touch him with silk and cotton gloves.

Mackellar Yes, lady. (*lets Alison in*)

Henry (in bed) How is my father, Mackellar?

Mackellar Better than you.

Alison Henry, I think the crisis is finally over.

Henry What crisis? What is she speaking of, Mackellar?

Mackellar Your own, I think. You can at last make conversation again.

Henry No, I will never get normal again, not as long as my brother lives. When he dies I will die, not before.

Alison Now he is delirious again.

Henry No, I am not at all delirious. Tell her that I am not delirious, Mackellar. I am just realistic. I have never been clearer in my mind. I am sorry, Alison, that I murdered your eternal lover!

Alison He was not my lover! And he is not dead!

Henry There, now I have done exactly what I didn't want to. I have hurt you. But I wanted to kill him, Alison! And I really regret that I didn't succeed in killing him, because now we shall never be rid of him!

Lord (coming in) How is the patient?

Alison At least he now recognizes us.

Lord Then he will recover.

Henry Father, forgive me for having murdered your favourite son!

Lord Henry, you are wandering in your mind. Take it easy. Don't talk rubbish. You must get well first of all.

Henry (to Mackellar) Then you must show me where he lies buried, so that I myself can believe he is dead.

Alison Pardon him, father. He doesn't know what he is saying. He is better, but he is still far from well.

Lord Yes, so I notice. I had better leave. *(stumbles out)*

Alison Help him, Mackellar.

Henry Mackellar, come back!

Alison (sits down with Henry and holds him) He is your only friend, Henry. I am now always on your side. We have learned everything about James' treason and double cross against prince Charlie. He was actually the one who staged the ultimate fall of the house of Stuart. He pretended to serve bonnie prince Charlie only to direct his defeat at Culloden. That's why he was pardoned by the King. But don't worry. We have destroyed all his letters. The family honour is saved. And there are more than you who regret that your brother didn't die when he should.

Henry Do you mean that you are on my side, Alison?

Alison I always was.

Henry Even against James?

Alison Yes, even against James.

Henry (hugs her closer to himself) Oh, Alison! At last I have won you!

Alison No, you did it long ago, but you haven't known about it.

Henry Then I could even get well with a clear conscience!

Alison Yes, Henry, you can. Live for our family. Become our own and live happily for your children and their mother.

Henry O, Alison! You make me cry of happiness!

Alison That's intended, my love. You need it.

(He cries out in her bosom. She is also touched and cries quietly.)

Scene 4. An odd house in India.

(James in Indian clothing and Secundra Dass sitting on the floor having tea, when some noise reaches them from outside to disturb them.)

James Someone is trying to get in.

Dass No. They are two.

James I think you are right.

Burke (outside) Where the devil are we now then?

His friend (sepoy) What does it matter? We got rid of our persecutors.

James I know that man's voice. He must not recognize me.

Dass Sahib don't know English.

James No, Sahib don't know English.

Sepoy (outside) I know that house. It belongs to an Englishman.

Burke An Englishman? God damn it! What luck! Then perhaps he will receive us.

Sepoy That remains to be seen. (They enter.)

Sorry for intruding, but my lord is an Englishman and would enjoy meeting a countryman.

Burke But by God, it's Ballantrae! What damned luck! Jamie Boy! How is it? Do you remember your old fellow soldier Francis Burke from the journey to America?

Dass (while James remains motionless) Sorry, but Sahib does not know English.

Burke He lies! What fake show is this? Don't you think I recognize another Scotsman in India? Colonel Francis Burke! Tell him that I am colonel Francis Burke!

Dass Sahib does not understand English. But he would like to know how you break into his garden.

Burke Ballantrae, are you impertinent enough to deny me to my face?

Dass (with a friendly smile) Sahib no speak English. But he would like to know how you came in his garden.

Burke Then tell him, that we are two of a hell honest soldiers who he never heard anything about who would be grateful for some food and a bed to sleep in, if he is honest enough to accept honest soldiers who fought under the same banner as he!

Dass (still patiently smiling) You not answer question. How you enter garden?

Burke So, he is asking for trouble, that haughty snob of a sahib! I will then make him confess his true colours! (draws his sword)

Dass (shows a loaded gun)(with the same friendly smile) Sahib like better you go away.

Sepoy (pulling Burke's arm) Come, colonel. We have no business here. If he fires a shot we will be hanged immediately.

Burke (angry) Tell your damned snob of a sahib that I thought better of him! Tell him, that he is no longer a decent fellow!

James (whispers with Dass)

Dass Sahib wonders if you are Irish.

Burke What the devil does he mean?

Dass He says that he has done with you. He asks you to greet your friend Mackellar.

Burke Ballantrae, what kind of a cursed Scottish joke is this? We know who we are, we shared everything in America, and then here you behave like a pig. What's the meaning?

James (whispers with Dass)

Dass He asks you to contact Mr Mackellar. Mr Mackellar knows everything. You know nothing. Sahib has done with you.

James (politely bowing to Burke as a farewell with his hands together for a greeting)

Burke Tell your masquerading sahib that I hope to see him next time unmasked! Come, comrade! We leave this lost Scotsman to his destiny! *(leaves with the sepoy)*

Dass (to James when they are gone) Who was he?

James An adventurer, a whiff of wind from the past, as soon gone as arrived and already forgotten.

Dass When do we go to England?

James Soon, Secundra Dass, soon.

Act IV scene 1. Durrisdeer.

(A cautious knock. John Paul sneaks through the house, looks several times about himself and then opens the door.)

James John Paul, I knew that I could trust you.

John Paul Hush, master James! If anyone knows that I opened for you I will get fired!

James I don't think so after your thirty years of service. That's why I wrote in good time and warned you, for I knew no one else would open to us. May I present Mr Secundra Dass, my Indian butler.

John Paul Pleased to meet you, Mr – Dass?

James He neither talks nor understands English.

John Paul But come in and make yourselves at home. I had better go back to bed, so that I will not be suspected.

James You only served your family, John Paul.

John Paul I know, but the lord is dead, and Sir Henry is lord now, and that's a different situation.

James Just leave it to us.

John Paul Thank you. Then I entrust the entire battlefield to you. *(retires and vanishes)*

James All our servants were always cowards, but John Paul actually risked his life for my sake this time. I hope he will survive. Well, Secundra Dass, we are at home. Make yourself at home. Lend your ears everywhere, follow everything that happens, guard all as your enemies, for there is no one here who wishes us well. I trust your absolute silence except with me, for remember, that no one must suspect that you know English. That's our only advantage.

Dass Yes, Sahib. (*Mackellar suddenly enters.*)

James What about that! The first one to welcome us back is even Mr Ephraim Mackellar!

Mackellar I felt some mischief in the air when I woke up today. No one welcomes you back, Ballantrae, and you know that very well. But what kind of a thoroughly covered lady is this?

James May I present my Indian butler Secundra Dass. He neither talks nor understands English but is the more faithful and efficient as a deafmute. It's the same deal that still counts, Mackellar. You will be rid of me as soon as I get money.

Mackellar You will have no money.

James Then we stay here.

Mackellar You have the right to do so as a son in the house. But you have no other rights.

James That's for my brother to decide.

Mackellar Yes.

Henry (opens the door) I heard voices.

James Welcome back I say in your place, Henry, for you will hardly say it.

Henry Two more covers for breakfast, Mackellar. Then I wish to speak with John Paul.

Mackellar He is asleep.

Henry No, he is not. (*Mackellar leaves.*)

You are welcome home to your father's house, James, but you have nothing here to get.

James Except money.

Henry You will have no money.

James Then I stay here.

Henry No one can stop you from that.

James But I haven't presented my butler Secundra Dass from India.

Henry Even he is welcome as your servant.

James How is Alison?

Henry Don't mention her name.

James I heard you had a son. He should be around nine now.

Henry Yes, almost ten, as many years as you have been away.

James I came back because I ran out of money.

Henry You should have kept them better.

Mackellar (in with John Paul) John Paul, Sir.

Henry That's good, Mackellar. Serve breakfast and let my brother and his ghost get something to eat. They have a long journey behind them.

Mackellar If you follow me, gentlemen. (*leaves with James and Secundra Dass.*)

Henry John Paul, you are dismissed.

John Paul After thirty years as servant in your father's house?

Henry You had no authority to let in my brother.

John Paul But he is your brother!

Henry Don't remind me of it! You are finished! You may continue having wages, but never come back to Durrisdeer!

John Paul (broken) Yes, Sir. *(leaves)*

Henry We can't stay here. We must get away. Or else I will break down. Is this what my life has turned into for the worse: a constant escape in terror of my monstrous brother? Yes, that's what I have been reduced to by his superiority and irresponsibility: a refugee from my own destiny. But it will only be a question of time before it catches up with me. *(leaves. James is heard laughing heartily from another room.)*

Scene 2. The Inn.

1 Well, John Paul, how does it feel to be thrown out? *(general merriment)*

2 What is your reward now for your long loyalty to the heir of Ballantrae?

3 Don't jest with him. He has happened to a calamity. *(general merriment)*

4 So the deceased came back once again, John Paul, for which time in order?

John Paul You may say whatever about them, but it's an honest family. I still get my wages although I am fired.

1 Let me then immediately apply for service, and I will quit tomorrow!

2 No, it isn't as funny as that. Remember that John Paul got the sack after thirty years!

3 Then at least he deserved the pension he now gets!

4 Well, John Paul, is master James still your idol although he is now prisoner in his own house without a penny left of his fortune?

John Paul The new lord Henry had a crackdown when the heir came home and moved abroad only a few weeks later just to get rid of his bad conscience for the heir's sake, but he will never escape it.

Macconochie You are lying as usual as the vain liar you are, John Paul! Lord Henry has left all Durrisdeer to master James and moved abroad only to be left in peace from him with his wife Alison and their two children! I should know, because I am still employed in the family's service!

John Paul You damned braggart and obsequious coward, who all your life only wagged your tail to Sir Henry and abused the only rightful heir!

Doctor You are wrong, both of you. The Durrisdeer family only moved abroad on account of lord Henry's health.

1 Where did you get that, doctor?

Doctor Stupid question. Am I not their family doctor? Didn't I deliver their children? Have I not kept an eye on lord Henry's fevers ever since he was a child? It was lady Alison who insisted on their moving abroad. Lord Henry was himself against it.

John Paul Where have they gone then?

Macconochie That you would really like to know, John Paul, so that you then could tell it to your heir, so that he then could go on persecuting his brother and his family until death!

Doctor No one knows where they have gone, not even I myself. It's a Scottish state secret.

1 Then no one will ever know about it.

2 Not even master James.

John Paul I am sure Mackellar knows.

Doctor Yes, and their lawyer Carlyle, but no one else. And they can keep secrets.

3 The spy then? That Hindu?

Macconochie I know everything about him. He is master James' butler, and he could never have got anyone more fitting. He neither knows nor understands English.

3 What is he doing here then?

1 Serving master James.

John Paul The story isn't over yet, gentlemen. The heir always comes back.

1 But you are gone.

2 For good.

3 Accept it, John Paul.

Macconochie While I am still here to help Mr Mackellar safeguard lord Henry's interests. And your heir soon has no teeth left, John Paul. He will soon be like a mummy himself.

John Paul Don't be so sure, Macconochie. No one ever underestimated the heir unpunished. A cat's claws are never consumed. (*leaves*)

1 John Paul is finished.

2 Yes, since he is on a pension.

3 But no happy pensioner.

1 He has to accept it.

Macconochie Now when he is gone, a drink to lord Henry!

Doctor Yes, wherever he is. (*shares*)

All (sharing) Cheers! Cheers! (*They drink.*)

Scene 3. Durrisdeer.

James Come now, Mackellar, and have a seat here by the fire with me and be a little social. Don't just stand there like a fool. I am not dangerous. Am I not just an ordinary mortal human being?

Mackellar There have been times when it was doubted, especially after your last disappearance.

James Yes, yes, a small incident. It didn't quite work out according to plans. I didn't get all my baggage with me, so that you could lay your hands on all my correspondence and show Alison and Henry what a villain I had been. It was most inconsiderate of me. You should never have known, because you would never have

understood it anyway. I am just a survivor, Mackellar. I am a born gambler, and I love taking risks, but I always survive. We have a good bottle of wine here tonight, Mackellar. Come now and sit down like a good host and take care of your unwelcome guest. There should be some more question marks for you to straighten out?

Mackellar (takes a seat) We tried afterwards to reconstruct how it all really happened that evening when you should have died. Correct me if I am wrong. You had planned your departure for that evening, but the unfortunate duel came between and didn't quite work out as you had planned.

James Quite correct. At most I had desired to hurt Henry. I never wanted to kill him.

Mackellar Still you tried to kill him. You grabbed hold of his sword and tried in a desperate attack to kill him. Your hand was bleeding on the inside afterwards. You can't deny it.

James I was hard pressed. Henry tried to kill me.

Mackellar By your dirty trick he almost succeeded. We thought he had succeeded.

James And he was quite beside himself afterwards and was ill for months, poor man, for my sake. Lucky for me that I went away.

Mackellar You take everything so easy.

James Nothing is serious in life, Mackellar. Everything is worthless rubbish. Everything is just a passing whiff of wind. You and Henry are pedants, and therefore you take everything so seriously and become such bores and don't see beyond the tips of your noses, while I have fought together with bonnie prince Charlie, lived with pirates, explored the unknown wilderness of America and enjoyed myself in India. What have you done? You have been sitting at home being afraid of me. Concerning America I believe you would like to follow me there. I reserved an extra ticket.

Mackellar America?

James Yes, New York. I thought of paying my brother a visit. Don't be shocked now, Mackellar. I was bound to find it out sooner or later. It took me longer time than expected, but I did have time to wait out your vain secrecy...

Mackellar Leave them alone, master James. They don't want to have you.

James I should think so, after all the worries I caused them and how they always treated me wrong. But I have business in America. What would be more proper than to pass them by on the way?

Mackellar Business in America? Will you start intriguing there like you acted intriguingly against bonnie prince Charlie behind his back?

James You only think the worst of me, Mackellar. Bonnie prince Charlie was an immature child who was lead by others to his own destruction.

Mackellar And you among them.

James No, I was just an observer taking part in the adventure. I helped him have some fun as long as he could. And since I knew Henry would be mean against me I assured myself of extra income from him. And since the crusade of the prince

was predestined to fail, I had as a survivor to achieve some good standing with the crown. It was all very simple.

Mackellar You always have an explanation to everything and therefore get away with everything.

James It's my skill and profession. And in America I have a treasure buried in the mountains. If I only find it, Henry will never again have to worry about my support.

Mackellar Then I hope you find it.

James I hope so too. That would be the best thing for all. Will you join us?

Mackellar Of course, to protect Sir Henry's interests.

James I thought so. Then you just have to start packing. We go tomorrow to Glasgow.

Mackellar Give me just a few days to straighten out the affairs of the estate.

James Of course, Mackellar, of course! (*Mackellar breaks up.*) And he had only one glass. What a bore! He really needs to get out in the world. (*drinks and contemplates the fire, just like the lord used to do.*)

Scene 4. On board the *Nonesuch*

(*Heavy seas in full storm. Enter Mackellar staggering and leaning over the rail in an unmistakable urge of nature.*)

James (*entering calmly, as if he had been a sailor all his life*) Take it easy, Mackellar. It will pass.

Mackellar It hasn't passed yet through all the voyage.

James You must have patience. Patience is everything, Mackellar. I thought you knew that. (*settles down peacefully on the most exposed part of the deck where the rail is missing.*)

Mackellar You shouldn't sit there on such a perilous spot, master James. You could get dipped.

James Thanks for your kind concern, Mackellar, but it is actually my own concern where I sit. If I get dipped it will be on my own responsibility and not on yours. Unlike ordinary mortals, I never had the slightest fear of death, strange enough. On the contrary, I laughed at it and challenged it. I know what you think, Mackellar. It's a great misfortune that I cannot die easily.

Mackellar I never had such godless thoughts, master James.

James Don't try to fool me and don't dissemble. Didn't you stand the other day praying loudly in your imagined loneliness to God that you and I would die here in the storm together just to allow Henry and his family a life in peace?

Mackellar You have been spying! You have been eavesdropping!

James Not at all. Don't you know the expression 'God sees and hears everything'? And aren't you godfearing and read the Bible? You shouldn't devote yourself to such impious prayers, Mackellar, if you fear God.

Mackellar Don't you ever fear God?

James I fear nothing, Mackellar. Fear, no matter of what kind, is always superstition – nothing else. I don't deny God's existence, but neither do I have any superstitious prayers to him. I leave him alone in peace, and in return he leaves me in peace. I call that rationalism. No one ever suffered from rationalism. On the contrary. But the ridiculous superstition called fear, Mackellar – there's the origin of all evil that there ever was in the world.

Mackellar If you leave God in peace, why can't you leave your brother in peace?

James Because my brother and I are involved in a game which none of us intends to give up until one of us or both are dead. We grew up together, and I was to inherit the estate and have Alison for a wife. It was actually decided beforehand, Mackellar, and the matter was obvious as a final settlement from the beginning. Then there was the problem with Bonnie Prince Charlie. All Scotland joined him although he had no chance, for the house of Stuart was the only legitimate royal house of England and Scotland. That was self-evident. But Prince Charlie's cause was doomed. I didn't want to sacrifice my brother on that altar. If he had joined the war as he wished he would have fallen as a hero, no one would have thanked him for it, and his life would have been wasted. I figured I had better chances to manage and survive, since I had resources of slyness and cleverness which Henry never had.

Mackellar You wished to sacrifice yourself for Henry?

James I wanted to save his life *and* manage my own rather than see Henry get lost. Was it wrong?

Mackellar Thereby you forfeited your position and Alison.

James Yes, but I won, for I managed, while Henry never would have managed. For having saved us both I desired some thanks for a compensation – some money to amuse myself and access to Alison and her family, that I had sacrificed. Was it wrong?

Mackellar You could talk the devil himself over to your side.

James That's not necessary. He is already on my side.

Mackellar Then you *are* the devil.

James No, Mackellar. I am only human. Hate me as much as you want, but let me at least be human.

Mackellar I could here and now kick you over board, and Henry's family would be saved.

James Why don't you do it?

Mackellar Fortunately it's a long way from thought to action. I can be slow in thoughts, but I never did anything improper in my service of the house of Durrisddeer.

James The incredible pedantry of your dried up faithfulness transcends all limits of your own boring dullness, Mackellar. Did you never enjoy yourself in your life?

Mackellar Lady Alison always used to call me an old maid.

James That's exactly what you are, Mackellar! Only the sex is missing. You never had any change in your mortally boring routines. I shall tell you something.

*(Suddenly the storm disappears, and everything grows still and quiet.
Suddenly the most terrifying pirates imaginable come entering over the rails
with captain "Blackbeard" Teach as their terrifying leader.)*

Teach Let's take them, boys, and scalp them all alive! Let those few who survive walk the plank! On to them and cut off the heads, all of them! Those who are stupid enough to survive may dance in the yard-arms!

James Quiet, captain Teach! The ship is already in our hands with all the money and cargo! Wouldn't it be wise to spare those who wish to join us? Our crew is not complete, and we would sail better and faster with a few extra qualified mates on board!

Teach By my lost soul if the cursed poisonous snake can't beat some sense into our heads! Stop the executions! Don't hang them high in the yard-arms yet!

Pirate 1 But how the devil could we trust slave sailors enlisted by force who only will plan revenge?

Pirate 2 Hang them in the yard-arms!

3 Let them all walk the plank!

4 The sea needs more meat for the sharks!

Teach (to James) What do you say to that, you sly fox of a devil? If they revenge themselves you will be the first to be hanged – by us!

James I will be responsible that they behave and remain loyal. They are all motivated to cooperate, for besides rescuing their lives they will be better paid than as sailors.

1 Would we share?

2 Never in my life!

3 He is trying to be smart! Throw him over board!

James (to the captured and bound sailors) Only you can save yourselves if you promise to cooperate.

Mate Only until we reach land.

1 Only until they reach land, he says! *(merriment)*

2 That means never! *(laughter)*

3 They have promised to cooperate – until they reach land! *(laughter)*

James Will you stand by your word – to loyally cooperate as long as we are at sea?

Mate (with the consent of the other sailors) Yes.

James Captain Teach, you have got an extra crew for nothing who can help you chase and plunder even warships. Do you accept this extra benefit or will you throw it overboard! The choice is yours.

Teach By all the devils in hell, this is the sliest of them all! And we have him on our side! We can loot all the Atlantic from the Caribbean to New York! No one will be safe from us! We will sink all ships sailing on the Atlantic except our own! The devil dressed here in Scottish nobility makes us invulnerable! He brings luck! To the next job! Now we will chase and plunder every armed ship that dares to show itself in our way! Let those who wish join us! Let all the others walk the plank! Execute at once! We have work to do!

(The pirates get active and swarm around in great commotion and loudness and then disappear.)

(We are back at the storm and heavy seas.)

James That was my career as quarter master under a pirate captain. Certainly we captured and plundered ships and were the worst killers of the Atlantic, but I tried to save all the lives I could and succeeded with a number. Every time I risked my own life. Well, Mackellar. What is right in this business according to you as a biblical moral expert? According to the law I should be hanged as a pirate. But I was never voluntarily a pirate, and as such I saved lives that otherwise would have been lost. But no law will take that in consideration. Is it fair? Could you really judge me?

Mackellar Not fair.

James No, that's the problem. Everything is both good and evil. The consistent justice is never fair in its onesidedness. *(touches his arm)* So wait to condemn me after I am dead.

Mackellar Still I once more beg you to leave lord Henry's family in peace.

James We are brothers. His family is my family. To exclude me from it is therefore cruel. I am only a human being and have no other family. Don't refuse me my human rights, Mackellar. Those are the only rights I have, because my brother took all the others.

Mackellar I should have pushed you overboard anyway for your own sake.

James Do it, Mackellar, do it! My brother would only be glad!

Mackellar You are impossible, master James. *(leaves)*

James (alone) I know. That's my destiny.

Scene 5. In Henry's garden in New England.

(Henry stands talking with the mayor and other high officials for New England, when Mackellar arrives.)

Henry Welcome, Mackellar! This is my most trusted friend and administrator in Scotland since many years, Ephraim Mackellar. Meet our mayor, Mackellar, and a few other leading men of New England.

Mackellar It's a pleasure to see lord Durrisdeer in so good company, gentlemen! But lord Henry, aren't you surprised to see me?

Henry Your reputation reached here before you, Mackellar. Many ships have passed *Nonesuch* on the way. I expected you long ago. We had actually ceased to believe that you would come, for *Nonesuch* was no good ship, and the Atlantic has been very stormy the last weeks.

Mackellar It would have been better if we had been lying on the bottom of the sea.

Henry Why so? I would rather still have you, Mackellar, even if it also imported my brother, than to have lost both of you. – But here he is now.

James (enters with dignity, well dressed with a promenade sword)

Henry What evil winds have brought you here, James? Your bad reputation has reached New England before you.

James (is taken aback by the unexpected attack) Mylord could at least show some politeness.

Henry I shall be absolutely frank with you, James. At home we could keep up appearances, but it's not possible here. I don't want to have anything to do with you. You have already ruined me and taken almost everything I had got, like you also ruined our father and broke his heart. Your crimes cannot be reached by the law, but my friend the governor here has promised to protect my family. If you are caught with one single word to anyone of my family the law will make you suffer for it.

James Your furious welcome greeting surprises me, Henry. I assume that the gentlemen here are completely ignorant of our history, that I am the right lord Durrisdeer, that you are just my younger brother and that you usurped my position without right. They don't know what a thief, perjurer and faithless brother you are.

Mackellar He lies, gentlemen, he lies! He is just bluffing! He is just a sly deceiver!

Governor I know who he is. He is just a wolf in sheep's clothing and a damned well dressed scoundrel! You have been here in America before, Mr Ballantrae, and on that path left behind a bloody track of vanished bodies. You left here a rich man but not with your own money. It's just by consideration of your relatives and my high esteem of my friend lord Durrisdeer here that I don't immediately proceed against you with law measures, Ballantrae.

James My brother, you seem to have poisoned the whole country in advance just to make way for me here.

Henry Don't pretend, James. I only want to protect myself against slander and my home against your intrusion. If you want to, I will immediately pay for your journey back to Scotland. If you prefer staying here, I will give you an allowance so that you can manage but not more. But my condition must then be that you will have no contact with any of us.

James You greet me with only improper insults, but I accept your alimony and will stay on here until your shameless spreading of rumours about me has been replaced by the truth.

Henry You can always become an honourable man if you start working with your hands.

James And you can never become an honourable man, Henry, since you can never work with your hands, since you usurped your title of lord. I apologize, gentlemen, that we accidentally happened to get you mixed up in our family differences. It wouldn't necessarily have happened if my brother had received me in a different way.

Governor You are a villain, Ballantrae, and all the world knows it.

James Only prejudice condemns someone to villainy without having taking all the evidence into consideration. No one is a villain all through without any redeeming features. Even the highest or worst devil once had angel's wings which he in spite of all was allowed to keep. Don't condemn me, gentlemen, but forbear with my younger brother's pitiable lack of self control. *(walks out)*

Governor A perfect villain, on my honour.

Henry He will have his maintenance. I stand by my word.
Mackellar All are on your side, lord Henry.
Henry I know. And I am the only one standing on his, and I will do so until I die. (*leaves*)
Governor A strange brotherly relationship. You seem to know a great deal about the matter, Mr Mackellar.
Mackellar I have it all carefully documented.
Governor You are welcome to tell us about it, so that we can be prepared, if it would evolve into an American civil war.
Mackellar No risk, gentlemen, but I will be glad to keep you informed about the main structure of this continuous drama of destiny.

Act V scene 1.

(*John Mountain with the band of rogues.*)

Mountain The set-up is clear, boys! We have the rich snob's assets like knit up in a sack! All we need to do is to hang along, keep smiling, fix him when he has fixed the treasure, bury him and grab the treasure!

Villain 1 John Mountain, you braggart, you are always so cocksure of your cause that you burst of self-complacency! What about the risks then? We have a winter ahead, and it's cold up there, and the Indians are loose and will take anyone's scalp as long as he is white.

Mountain That's why we are such a qualified gang, you bungler! If we only stick together nothing can harm us, not even scalp-crazy Indians, who only dare to steal upon one or other old lonely trapper! The enterprise is foolproof, if we only stick together!

Villain 2 What are your warrants?

Mountain We don't apply warrants, Gin-Sandy, and you know it very well! But we have odds, and they are overwhelming at our advantage! We have a vain fop for an expedition leader, a naïve and haughty Scotsman who has no idea of what we have in mind. He is entirely at our mercy.

Villain 3 What about his ghost companion, who follows him like a shadow?

Mountain A poor worthless Hindu, who doesn't even know English. The fact that he has such a servant tells everything about him: he couldn't have had anyone worse, and he never managed to get any better. But the best of all (*intimately*) is captain Harris.

The villains Captain Harris?

Mountain Yes, I got him here. He will explain himself the perfect set-up. Here he is. Welcome, captain Harris!

Harris (a wretched alcoholic of a failed captain) A pleasure to do business with you, gentlemen! We have practically secured the best deal in America. All we need to do is not to lose our grip.

1 Captain Harris, I know you. You are a criminal whiskey captain who would gladly commit any crimes if you can be sure of getting away with it. Just to have anything to do with you is to get mixed up in dirty business. What exactly is on your mind?

Harris We have a foolproof deal and two warrants of it, both rich as goblins and even brothers. They want to destroy each other. We let them do it and collect the loot.

2 Details, captain Harris, details!

Harris It's my honour to on John Mountain's invitation present the party. We have been unusually lucky. This is how it happened. Don't interrupt me now, Robber-Jack and Liquor-Paddy, but try to listen, so that you get the story! So, this fool from Scotland, who calls himself the heir of Ballantrae, starts looking for people for an expedition up the mountains. What bungler is organizing such foolery before winter? I ask myself. The answer was evident: he had no clean linen. He has been up the mountains before and done away with a lot of companions and buried a treasure after a weird career as a pirate. I added two and two. He wants to collect his treasure and be alone when he digs it up.

Then his brother enters the picture, the so called lord of Durrisdeer, mean like a miser, a Scotsman of the very worst kind, petty with a short fuse, who even yells at his own most trusted servant, a conceited idiot called Mackellar. You have to look out for him, for he is a regular vulture. Well, that whiskey lord comes to me with a bottle and asks me to fix that Ballantrae expedition, so that he never returns from it alive. He tells me everything about that treasure, which his brother will dig up. And he pays me to fix the expedition. So we get double pay, gentlemen, both from our employer Ballantrae and his brother to obstruct the enterprise and his life. For a reward we get the treasure. What about that? (*has a drink*)

Mountain Could it get better, boys? Robber-Jack? Gin-Sandy? Liquor-Paddy? Shotgun Willy? Strangling Stanley? Hale Morgan? Could anyone refuse?

Harris I only hear a silence of protests.

Villain 1 John Mountain and captain Harris, we are on. We take the risk with the weather, but no corpses need hiding up there. Whatever happens, the Indians will be blamed.

Mountain Then everyone is with us? (*general acclaim*)

Harris Then it is my honour to have you all for a drink. One round for all of you, gentlemen! To the death of our employer, and for his money!

(*All cheer and raise their glasses in unanimous agreement.*)

Scene 2.

Mackellar (wakes. Noise outside.) Now he is back home drunk again. However will this end?

Henry (outside, singing out of tune)

And over his dead and naked bones of yore
The cold eternal wind will blow for evermore.

(stumbles and falls)

Mackellar It's worse than usual today.

Henry (has evidently got on his feet and is singing again)

And over his dead and naked bones of yore
The cold eternal wind will blow for evermore.

(stumbles again. Reaches the door and enters with some difficulty.)

(talks thick) Mackellar, are you still up?

Mackellar For God's sake, mylord, control yourself and don't wake up the entire house! Lady Alison is asleep and the children too! Have you been with that captain Harris now again?

Henry Mackellar, I have killed him.

Mackellar Have you killed captain Harris?

Henry No, no, no, no, no! The other one!

Mackellar What other one?

Henry Ballantrae, my brother!

Mackellar You are lost in your mind, mylord.

Henry No, I have actually killed him. Nothing can save him any more, not even I.

Mackellar You haven't been yourself for weeks, mylord.

Henry I know. Nothing can turn to normal again.

Mackellar But what has happened? What has so brought you down the last month? You sat locked up in your room crying for a whole week in despair!

Henry Poor Mackellar. You are my nurse. Well, comfort me then if you can.

(takes out a crumpled article from his inner pocket)

Mackellar What is this?

Henry News from Scotland.

Mackellar No, this is just worthless gossip press!

Henry Read!

Mackellar (reads out) "It has come to our knowledge, that even the heir of Ballantrae will be restored to his title in spite of his notorious double play with shameful intrigues in both Scotland and France. But his brother lord Durrissdeer appears not to have been any better concerning political opportunism, and his son is now likely to lose his rights as heir of Ballantrae. In spite of the stinking affair a restoration like this is too remarkable to be allowed to pass unnoticed..." Do you really take this seriously. Lord Henry?

Henry It has completely shattered me! Everything I lived for is lost! My children and wife will be dishonoured for life! We can never show ourselves in public any more!

Mackellar This is pure gossip trash, and it wouldn't surprise me if your brother himself was guilty of the article, just to mess you up and upset you. Forget it, lord Henry. It is just an ordinary hoax or howler.

Henry I haven't been able to forget it.

Mackellar I sincerely hope you haven't made an affair of it?

Henry Yes, I have taken measures.

Mackellar Legal?

Henry No, illegal. I have arranged my brother's death.

Mackellar Lord Henry, what have you done!

Henry Still all might not be lost. We must save him, Mackellar. We must go after him and save him!

Mackellar Where?

Henry Up the Hudson river to Albany and the mountains north of there.

Mackellar The Adirondack mountains?

Henry Yes.

Mackellar But that is lawless country! It isn't even charted yet! There are only wild Indians!

Henry That's where my brother is heading to dig up his treasure in the company of a gang of rogues who will murder him as soon as he has dug up the treasure. And they are paid by me. I myself have betrayed my own brother.

Mackellar Not a word about this to anyone, lord Henry. We shall go after him and save his life. But not a word to Alison or your son.

Henry Always so rational in your common sense, Mackellar. You are my only true nanny.

Mackellar (sighs) We shall certainly untangle all this, lord Henry, like everything else. You had better go to bed now. *(helps him up and staggers out with him)*

Henry I have only one wish, Mackellar.

Mackellar What, lord Henry?

Henry If my brother dies up there as a result of my manoeuvres, I want to die there with him.

Mackellar Lord Henry, none of you must die.

Henry We must all die, the sooner, the better.

Mackellar That, lord Henry, I must contest and try to resist with all my powers.

Henry You are relentless, Mackellar. *(staggers out with him)*

Scene 3.

James Gentlemen, we have a long and difficult way ahead of us, and we will probably have to count on hard weather, but surely we can manage that, weathered veterans as we are, or aren't we, comrades?

1 But what is really our business here? (*2 thrusts him in the back*)

James Explore new frontiers and lay them under the plough of civilization, but the main thing is still that you get well paid and that we all survive in order to get our salary.

2 But the Indians are constantly on the warpath in these areas. They could come sneaking while we are sleeping and scalp us!

James That's why I engaged you, for us to stick together and not let us be surprised and disturbed by unwelcome guests. We must always be on our guard.

3 You mean "we", lord Ballantrae.

James Yes. That is what you are paid for.

4 And that picturesque turban gentleman in sheets – of what use could he be to us on an arduous journey to nowhere?

James He is my trusted servant. I need such a one.

1 Aren't we good enough?

James Gentlemen, I have known Secundra Dass for many years and trust him like a son. I could never leave him behind anywhere.

2 Just as long as we get paid...

Mountain Lord Ballantrae, we buy the pig in the sack but ask no questions. Is that alright?

James There is no pig in any sack. Our agreement is written and clear, and there is nothing to add.

3 All right, Sir, we are on.

Harris You can trust us as the reliable and experienced pioneers we are.

James I don't demand anything else. Come, Secundra Dass. We retire to our own tent. (*retires with Secundra Dass*)

1 Is it certain that he doesn't know English?

2 He is probably hired as a spy to crawl around in the bushes and listen in stealth to what we are saying.

Harris They only talk Hindustani together, but I understand Hindustani and can eavesdrop and spy on them.

3 Do that, captain Harris. We must watch them carefully.

4 That silently sneaking Hindu is surely somewhere in the bushes and eavesdropping on us now.

1 They must never suspect that we are after Ballantrae's treasure.

2 If he knew he was a dead man he would never go any further.

Mountain Shut up, you scum! Don't you see, that the looser your talk, the smaller our chances grow? We must keep quiet! Or else it will all go down the drain.

3 He is right.

4 So we may never even whisper anything about that we are only out for Bally's money and life.

3 No, exactly! So shut up then!

4 I didn't say anything.

Harris No, and keep doing so. Silence is our only warrant to get Bally's treasure and his bones spread for the winds in the wilderness.

Mountain Yes, that's how it is. Not a word more about it, I warn you! Go to your tents now and devote yourselves to your bottles and other important things instead!

1 Yes, and we could also do with a drink.

Harris Could some rum be to anyone's edification and refreshment?

2 It's captain Harris who saves the entire expedition.

3 Yes, he is our real leader. His rum never runs out.

Harris It's a sacred elixir of life, because the rum *must never* run out.

4 Come now, let's go now for another drink!

Mountain Yes, but don't forget to sober up afterwards! (*the boys disperse*)

Strange that Bally agreed to collect such a random bunch of crazy fools. But it's his business. He hasn't got all his linen clean himself. How could he then be expected to see through covert villainy? (*leaves*)

(*Secundra Dass emerges from under a bush and is quite upset and hurries into his master's tent.*)

Dass Sahib! Sahib!

James Yes, what is it, my friend?

Dass I just heard terrible things.

James What have you heard, my friend?

Dass They are all bandits. They all know about your treasure. They will just let you find it to then murder us and take it.

James So they know all about it? Then they must have been informed by my brother. That's bad news. That makes it more difficult. Hem! Do you have any suggestion, Secundra dass?

Mountain (*emerges from the shadows behind the tent*) Damn it! They know that we know! Well, then we are more equal. So that Secundra Dass knew English after all! God damn it! (*leaves*)

(*James and Dass continue discussing discreetly but intensively*)

Scene 4.

Henry (*singing melancholically*) And over his dead and naked bones of yore

The cold eternal wind will blow for evermore.

I can't get rid of that verse. It just goes on and on in my head. But there is nothing wrong with me. I am well and can take anything, but I am so terribly tired. Something tells me that this is my last journey.

Johnson How is he?

Mackellar He is very melancholy, but else there is nothing wrong with him.

Johnson Could he have been drinking too much?

Mackellar Before we left New York he drank recklessly. It has become better since we joined this expedition, but instead he is completely passive and melancholy, almost like paralysed.

Johnson Had I known about his condition I would never have allowed you to come along. This is an important expedition, my diplomatic mission to the Indians and French is of the utmost importance before the war starts burning again, and I cannot have anyone impeding my expedition just because he is not mentally fit for it.

Mackellar I assure you that he will probably manage.

Johnson It sounds convincing but is not enough.

Henry Sir William Johnson, I assure you there is nothing wrong with me, and my mission up the mountains is as important as yours although of a more private nature.

Johnson May I then ask what your mission is?

Henry I have a brother up there in the wilderness, and he is in danger. I am anxious to find him before anything happens.

Johnson What then could happen to him?

Henry He is in the hands of a ruthless gang of murderers!

Johnson That sounds rather careless of him. Or didn't he know about it himself?

Henry No, he didn't know about it himself.

Johnson And you want me to find him, dead or alive?

Henry It would be most desirable if we could do something for him before it is too late.

Johnson We will keep watch. If we meet with other white men in this area it has to be your brother's gang, for else there are only Indians. But what is your brother doing up here with a gang of murderers?

Henry Alas, it is all my fault! (*breaks down*)

Mackellar His nerves are on the verge of breaking. So far he is still wise, but he has no margins.

Johnson I hope indeed nothing will happen and that I don't have to regret bringing you along.

Mackellar I hope so too, Sir William.

Mountain (outside) Help! Help!

Johnson A lone voice calling from the wilderness. It sounds like a cry from the grave.

Mountain (like before) Help! Help! (*enters staggering in a state of exhaustion*)

Johnson It's John Mountain. I know him. A notorious rogue. Was he one of your brother's gang?

Henry (shocked) John Mountain! Where is captain Harris and the others?

Johnson Captain Harris! That blasted crook!

Mountain They are all dead! They are all dead!

Henry (upset) Dead! They must not be dead! (*shakes John Mountain*)

Johnson Control yourself, man! Let him speak! (*forces Henry away from Mountain*)

Mountain They are all dead! All except one!

Henry My brother!

Mountain No, Secundra Dass.

Johnson What kind of a strange name is that? Is he an Indian?

Mackellar No, Indian.

Johnson Isn't that the same thing?

Mackellar No, Secundra Dass is a real Hindu.

Johnson And what the devil is such a man doing in America? And in these parts? Is he lost?

Henry Do you mean that Secundra Dass is alive but my brother is dead?

Mountain Who the devil are you, and who is your brother?

Henry James Durie, the heir of Ballantrae.

Mountain Yes, he is dead. He was the first among us who died.

Henry Impossible! He can't be dead!

Mountain He is dead all right.

Henry No!

Mountain Yes!

Johnson Control yourself, man, and don't behave like a lunatic. This gentleman, who claims that your brother is dead, must have seen him later than you.

Henry He cannot be dead! He must not be dead! He cannot die!

Mountain He is mad.

Johnson Precisely my view.

Mountain But his madness is nothing to what we have been through.

Johnson Let's get some sense out of all this madness. What really happened, John Mountain? You must tell your story.

Mountain We followed Ballantrae up through the forests, but he fooled us all the time.

Henry Tell us everything, John Mountain! Conceal nothing! Your intention was to kill him!

Mountain Yes, captain Harris was commissioned to kill him, but captain Harris is dead. He was the first one to get scalped.

Johnson Scalped?

Mountain Yes, they were all scalped in the night, one by one.

Johnson Did you see any Indians?

Mountain No, we never saw them, which only made the situation more terrifying. We noticed nothing until we woke each other in the morning just to find one of us scalped, his head just a bloody gory sticky mess, every night another one, no matter how we tried to stay on guard... Usually it was the next one to keep watch who was scalped.

Johnson Yes, Indians are like that. They sneak out like worms without making a sound, they communicate with each other using the sounds of the animals so that you can't identify their voices, and they only strike when they are sure not to be detected. But you must have done something to provoke the Indians.

Mountain No, we did nothing. We had only problems with Bally and the Indian.

Henry Was my brother also scalped?

Mountain No, he was the only one who was not. He had a natural death.

Henry How?

Mountain Fever.

Henry I don't believe you! You are lying! (*will almost attack him*)

Johnson Calm yourself, lord Henry!

Mountain I am not lying at all. We buried him ourselves, and the Indian held endless dirges for him.

Henry I don't believe you until I see his grave.

Mountain Then follow the footsteps of the mad Indian. He turned to go back to the grave, probably to cry himself to death for his master there.

Henry I don't believe you! It doesn't fit!

Johnson So you came here alone without the Indian, while the Indian turned back to return to the grave the same way as you escaped?

Mountain Yes.

Johnson Then he was not afraid of the Indians.

Mountain And the track is easy to find. There is a corpse for every day's march.

Johnson Didn't you bury them?

Mountain No. We fled in panic. We were completely terrified. We lost each other in the wilderness and wandered astray and could not even find our bearings any longer, as we were driven mad by the terror. Finally there was only me left with the Hindu ghost. Then he turned back while I went on running away.

Johnson You are right, lord Henry. Something is not right about his story.

Henry That's what I am telling you! My brother can't be dead!

Johnson Take him to bed, Mackellar. Give him something to calm him down but no liquor. John Mountain, I wish to speak in private with you. I am sure there is plenty you haven't told us.

Mountain I only sketched the outline.

Johnson Now I want to hear the details. I don't think it could have been Indians who so methodically liquidated you, they content themselves with scaring the white man away, and lord Henry's brother's death must be confirmed, if not in any other way, then by inspection of the grave, to which only you can lead us.

Mountain Never in my life! I shall never return to that zone of terror!

Johnson Unlike you, we are a well equipped expedition with only honest intentions. Remember that you were spared. There must have been some intention by it.

Mountain That I would get back and tell the story?

Johnson Maybe that you should find us and get some help from us. In any case, we must get to the bottom of this mess.

Mountain Then you must get to the bottom of Ballantrae's grave.

Johnson If there is any bottom to it.

Henry (comes back) John Mountain, I am not satisfied.

Johnson Oh no, now he is coming back! Didn't you get him to bed, Mackellar?

Henry (obstinate) What did he pretend to die of?

Mountain I don't understand what you mean.

Henry I want to know the cause of his death. I should have a right to know as his brother, shouldn't I?

Mountain I already told you. Fever.

Henry I don't accept it!

Johnson Lord Henry, we are getting enough of your eccentric whims. It would be best for you to return to Albany with your servant Mackellar. I will gladly provide a boat at your disposal.

Henry Don't you understand! The man is not dead until he is proven dead! As long as he isn't proven dead my son's rights to his titles can be questioned!

Johnson Then I understand your situation. At last you are beginning to reason logically. I still suggest that you return to Albany.

Henry Not as long as I don't know whether my brother is dead or alive!

Johnson But he is buried, for sure.

Henry I don't believe it until I see it! How did he look like as dead? Did he look like as if he really *was* dead?

Mountain He was as pale as a corpse. He didn't stir. He didn't breathe. The Hindu stopped his nostrils. And I myself covered the grave.

Henry You don't get it! He has fooled you! He doesn't belong to this world, neither he nor that black devil who was his servant! I have myself pierced his body with my sword and felt his blood splurt in my face! I felt myself my sword strike his rib, but still he didn't die! Why should I then believe that he is dead now? I refuse to believe it until I have seen him for myself rotting away!

Johnson (*indicates to Mackellar and Mountain with a finger to his front and shakes his head. Mountain nods.*)

Henry You think I am raving mad, but Mackellar can testify to every word of mine being true! He has seen him buried before! Didn't we leave the corpse by the candelabrum, Mackellar? Didn't we see him bleed to death with our own eyes?

Mackellar It's true what lord Henry says as far, that we ascertained his death, but we were mistaken.

Henry We must not make the same mistake again! Do you understand? That other man is a serving spirit. My brother brought him from Coromandel. Why did he turn back if not to dig up my brother buried alive?

Mountain That's enough.

Johnson Lord Henry, we understand that you are upset, and we shall investigate the mystery, if not for other reasons so at least to save the Hindu from the Indians. But I must insist that you go home!

Mackellar That would make him mad for real.

Johnson In that case, Mackellar, you will have to take the consequences of his coming along.

Mackellar That's fair.

Johnson You go now and try to get some sleep, lord Henry, even if it is impossible.

Mountain I know how impossible it is.

Mackellar Come, lord Henry, for the sake of the others. (*leads out Henry*)

Mountain At last!

Johnson What do you really think, John Mountain?

Mountain I don't know what to believe, but would rather have nothing more to do with this mess of horrors.

Johnson I can only hope that we will meet with someone alive up there, whoever he is.

Mountain That I think is hoping for too much. You are over-optimistic.

Johnson You have reason to be so, if you eliminate all risks. I warrant you, that no one more will die under my leadership.

Mountain Don't be too sure. Don't you feel yourself how death steals around here in every bush? We are on the threshold to winter, and the silence is so pressing in the stifling quiet of its frost that you can hear leaves falling down at a distance of miles.

Johnson I love the silence of the wilderness. You miss it among humans.

Mountain But here it is the silence of death. It's death holding its breath in the depression of silence. It whispers in unheard of quiet, that all what we white men can expect here is death.

Johnson Do you really think your comrades were scalped by Indians?

Mountain Only Indians can do it so skilfully and unnoticeably, quietly and smoothly. And they are on the warpath. That's why you are here.

Johnson But why in that case did they spare you and that ghostly Indian?

Mountain I have dealt with Indians. Someone among them must have recognized me and therefore had me spared. And the Indian was mad. He went around speaking loudly for himself in Bengali and refused to do without the mattock he had buried his master with. Indians never touch a madman.

Johnson Your explanation makes sense.

Mountain But quiet! Do you hear?

Johnson (both sharpen their attention in acute tension of their minds) I only hear the silence.

Mountain I hear something else. A strange sound in this area. No, it's too ghostly.

Johnson What is it you hear?

Mountain Maybe I just imagined something. (listens again) No, it is unmistakable. Don't you hear anything? (Both listen intensively.)

(Only here the sound begins of a rhythmic digging in the earth. It starts at the lowest possible level but increases very slowly in clarity.)

Johnson (after some while) Yes, now I hear something.

Mountain What would you say it was?

Johnson It's someone digging.

Mountain Exactly. There could only be one person digging in these parts.

Johnson The Indian?

Mountain Yes.

Johnson But what would he dig for? Ballantrae's gold?

Mountain What else! That's why he never let go of his mattock! He knew all the time where the gold was buried! That's why he returned to the dead!

Johnson Your train of thought appears logic enough.
Mackellar (enters) Do you hear the sound?
Johnson We have already listened to it for some while. What do you think it is?
Mackellar It definitely sounds spooky.
Johnson We came to the same conclusion long ago.
Mountain It's the Hindu digging for Ballantrae's hold!
Mackellar Do you think so?
Mountain I know it! It's the only explanation!
Henry (enters, very excited) Do you hear that digging? It's my brother digging himself up from his grave!
Johnson Lord Henry, go to bed! Or do we have to tie you down?
Henry Will you not do something? Will you not find out what it is?
Johnson Of course we must do that.
Mountain We must do it at once before it stops!
Johnson A moonshine expedition at midnight?
Mountain That's all right with me.
Johnson You weren't so enthusiastic earlier before the gold was mentioned.
Mackellar You must allow us to come with you.
Johnson Can your lord manage it?
Nackellar He is his brother and closest of kin.
Johnson We break up immediately. But remember, Mackellar: the welfare of lord Henry is on your responsibility and conscience.
Mackellar I accept the responsibility.
Johnson Let's be off then as soon as we are ready.
(The digging has constantly increased in clarity so that it is almost obtrusive at the end of the scene. The digging continues in the next scene, which shows Secundra Dass alone in the moonlight digging at his master's grave by the rogues' camp, where there are still corpses lying about frozen among the ruins of a camp deserted in panic.)

Scene 5.

(enter Johnson with company)

Mountain It's Secundra Dass!
Johnson Is this the remains of your camp, John Mountain?
Mountain Yes, the first of them. The bodies are still there untouched and frozen.
Johnson But what is he digging for at the camp?
Mountain He is digging up his master's grave!
Henry (shrilly) What did I say!
Johnson Shut up, lord Henry! We must surround the place.
Mountain Too late.
(Dass has heard Henry's outcry and looks anxiously about.)
Johnson (steps forward) We wish you no harm, Secundra Dass. Can we help you digging?

Dass Yes, yes, help! Still not too late! All murderers! All murdered! (*sees Mountain, Henry and Mackellar coming forth*) There, all murderers! We alone against all murderers! All want to murder master! We try thousand ways of escape! Hopeless! We try one last way. Swallow tongue and bury alive. Good way in India. But here cold land and frost in earth. Not good. Hurry! Help!

Johnson Do you understand anything of this, John Mountain?

Mountain Yes, I am beginning to understand. An ingenious Indian trick which none of us could guess at.

Dass (*pointing out Mountain*) You murderer! You hired murderer! All hired murderers! (*points at Henry and Mackellar*) There principals! You two hire all murderers! All murderers dead but you! But my master lives! (*digs phrenetically*)

Johnson (*calls forth some men*) Help him, for God's sake!

(*Two other men starts helping.*)

1 Here is some fur.

Dass He is clothed in fur of bear! Careful! (*digs with his hands*)

2 We are getting him out. But he sure seems dead.

Dass Lift! Careful! Warm by the fire!

(*They carry the body to the fire, which has been made. Dass starts immediately working hard on the body, removing the stops in the ears and nostrils, artificial respiration, massage of heart and lungs, rubbing the skin, and so forth.*)

Mackellar Lord Henry, this isn't good for you.

Henry Let me see the supreme horror and then die.

Mackellar I advise you...

Henry (*yells*) Shut up, Mackellar! (*remains standing staring in super tension*)

Dass He must have more warmth. Earth is too cold. We must have much patience.

Johnson (*to Mountain*) Does he stand any chance?

Mountain I dare not say anything more about it. All I can feel is an unfathomable remorse...

Johnson The beard has grown considerably. How long has he been buried?

Mountain A week.

Johnson Yes, he has a week's growth of beard. So he was alive when you buried him.

Mountain This is too much! (*walks away and starts sobbing*)

Dass (*delighted*) He opens his eyes!

Johnson (*stunned*) He is actually alive.

Henry (*hysterically*) What did I say! What did I say!

Johnson (*sternly*) Shut up!

Dass (*coddles James like a mother, makes him sit up*) It's all over now, Sahib! We made it!

(*All hold their breaths while Ballantrae watches them one by one. Then his eyes finally find Mackellar.*)

James (*very faintly but very distinctly*) Hello, Mackellar! (*dies*)

Henry (*gives up a scream and consciousness, falling down to earth*)

Johnson Take care of lord Henry! (*hurries to help Secundra*)

Mackellar (*has immediately attended to Henry*) He is dead.

Johnson Ballantrae is also dead. For real this time. Secundra Dass, I am sorry.
Dass Earth too cold! Or else we had made it!
Johnson What kind of a man was this really, Mackellar?
Mackellar A great gambler who always challenged death. He could not win forever, and he knew it. We loved and admired him at the same time as we feared and hated him.
Johnson And lord Henry had the bad luck of being his younger brother?
Mackellar You could put it that way.
Johnson We'll stay here, for there is much for us to do here. There are many dead to be buried, and they must be buried here, for we can't bring them with us. Is that all right, Mackellar?
Mackellar We have no choice.
Johnson I will help you arrange a proper tombstone later.
(to Dass, who is still trying to enliven James) Secundra Dass, I am sorry, but it is all over.
Dass No, it's never all over. He will come back. *(leaves off his efforts and starts crying his heart out with his head to James' body)* I am so sorry, master! It was all my fault!
Mountain (has managed to collect himself) No, my friend, everybody's fault except yours. But we have all paid for it. Come, my friend, I will take care of you. *(takes care of Secundra Dass)*
Johnson Mackellar, I assume you have a long story to tell.
Mackellar Yes, Sir William, now it can be told, because now it has been completed.
Johnson Come.
(All leave the scene. Only Dass remains, who is still trying to rub some life into James, while John Mountain squats by his side.)

Curtain.

*(Athens 24.9.2001,
translated in November 2019)*