

HEINEMANN GUIDED READERS
INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

Scottish Adventure

RICHARD CHISHOLM

Walkabout

JAMES VANCE MARSHALL



HEINEMANN EDUCATIONAL BOOKS

Scottish Adventure

RICHARD CHISHOLM

Illustrated by Peter Edwards



HEINEMANN EDUCATIONAL BOOKS
LONDON

Heinemann Educational Books Ltd

LONDON EDINBURGH MELBOURNE AUCKLAND
HONG KONG SINGAPORE KUALA LUMPUR NEW DELHI
IBADAN NAIROBI JOHANNESBURG
EXETER (NH) KINGSTON PORT OF SPAIN

ISBN 0 435 27044 3

© Richard Chisholm 1977

First published 1977
Reprinted 1979, 1982

Cover by Chris Gilbert

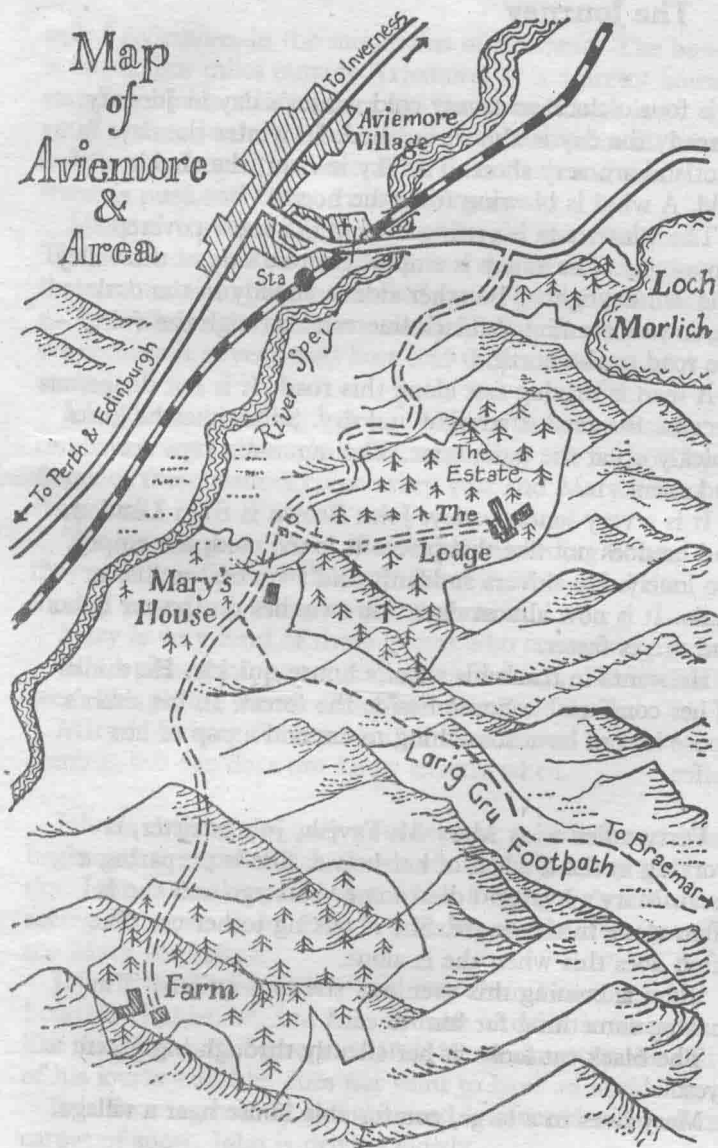
Published by
Heinemann Educational Books Ltd,
22 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3HH

Printed and bound by
Richard Clay (The Chaucer Press), Ltd,
Bungay, Suffolk

Contents

1. The Journey	2
2. A Strange Telephone Conversation	4
3. John's Arrival	7
4. Mary's Story	10
5. Mary's Cat	14
6. The Guests Arrive	17
7. Two Warnings	20
8. In the Garage	22
9. Chris's Plan	27
10. The Caledonian Hotel	29
11. Peter Cameron	34
12. The Path to Larig Gru	36
13. The Practice Run	41
14. In the Night	46
15. Braemar Research Centre	49
16. The Real Thing	52
17. The End	58
<i>Points for Understanding</i>	61
<i>Glossary</i>	65

Map of Aviemore & Area



1. The Journey

It is four o'clock on a very cold winter's day in January. Already the day is almost finished. In winter the days in Scotland are very short. The sky is clear, the air bitterly cold. A wind is blowing from the north.

The winter sun is setting behind the snow-covered mountains. The valley is empty. On one side of the valley it is still daylight. The other side is already in the dark shadow of evening. A black line runs through the valley – the road to the north.

A man is driving fast along this road. It is not dangerous because the road is straight and dry. Sometimes he looks quickly up at the mountains. The mountain tops are white and silent.

It is a very lonely valley. John Brown is from London, and he does not like this place. It is too cold, too empty, too lonely. He shivers suddenly and switches on his car radio. It is now almost dark. He switches on the car lights and drives faster.

He wants to reach his sister's house quickly. He thinks of her comfortable house beside the forest. In his sister's house he can have something to eat and a cup of hot coffee.

Forty miles away Mary McTavish, John's sister, is working in the kitchen of her house. She is preparing a meal. Mary's husband died some years ago and she is often alone in the house. She is talking to her cat. She often does this when she is alone.

'John is coming this evening,' she says quietly. 'I'm making something for him to eat.'

The black cat looks at her silently through big green eyes.

Mary lives in a large, comfortable house near a village

called Aviemore, in the mountains of Scotland. The house is about four miles outside Aviemore. It is a pretty house, standing beside a huge, very old forest and there is a small stream in the garden. There are mountains all round.

It is very beautiful there. The air is fresh and the water is pure and clean. It is very quiet too.

Many city people like to come here for their holidays. They can escape from the noise and dirt of the city. In these mountains, people can find peace. In summer, they go for walks in the mountains and valleys. In winter, they ski because it is very cold here and there is always a lot of snow.

Mary has a boarding house¹. Visitors from the cities come and stay in Mary's house when they are on holiday. Some of these visitors come every year and Mary knows them well.

'We always go to Mary McTavish's boarding house,' they tell their friends. 'It's comfortable, clean, and the food is very good. Also, it isn't expensive.'

Mary is very fond of these guests who come every year.

'It's a pleasure to see them,' she often says. 'They don't seem like paying guests. They're more like friends.'

Mary is waiting for her brother. She knows he is coming, but she does not know exactly when.

John is driving carefully now because it is dark and it is beginning to snow. Black clouds are moving across the sky. John is thinking of Mary. He is looking forward to seeing her again. John lives in London and he does not see Mary very often.

John is tired now. It is a long way from London to the Scottish Highlands², and it is difficult to drive in weather like this. He must be very careful. He is almost at the end of his journey and he does not want to have an accident.

It is snowing heavily and the road is covered with a thin carpet of snow. John is driving slowly.

Soon he sees lights. He drives across a bridge and enters the village of Newtonmore. John knows this village well. It is the last village before Aviemore.

The main road runs through the centre of the village. There are hotels, bars, restaurants and shops on each side of the road. Many tourists come here both in summer and winter.

Although the weather is so bad, the village is busy. The pavements are full of people. Some are walking, laughing and talking. Others are looking in shop windows, or waving and shouting to friends across the road. Everyone is wearing thick, warm clothes. They are on holiday and they are enjoying themselves.

John is driving down the street, looking at the crowds. He is thirsty, and wants a drink. In the middle of the village, on the right, he sees a big, old hotel. He knows this hotel. The large sign on the pavement says 'Welcome to Pinetrees Hotel. 2 Bars, 2 Restaurants. Dancing every night. Open 7 Days a Week'.

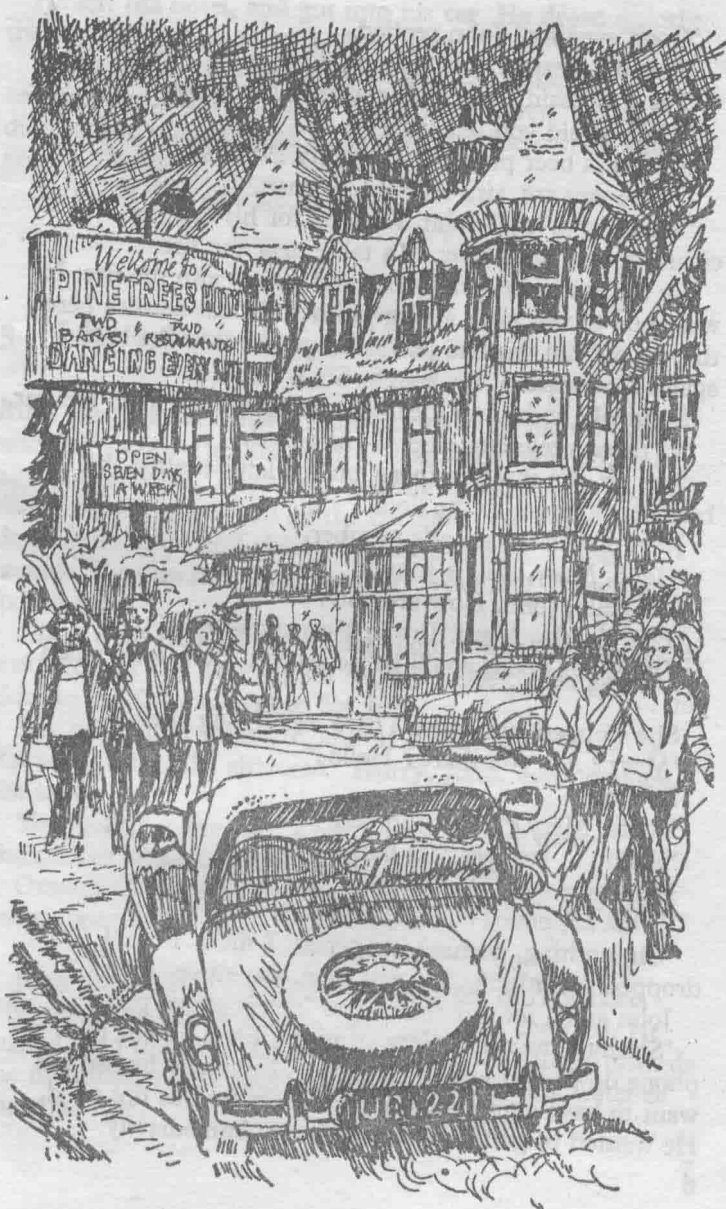
He turns off the road and into the hotel car park. He stops the engine and sits for a minute or two, looking at the falling snow. Then he opens the door and gets out. He shivers in the cold night air as he walks through the new snow to the hotel entrance.

2. A Strange Telephone Conversation

John liked this bar because it was old and comfortable. That evening he was tired. He wanted to sit quietly in a soft armchair. There were not many people in the bar - people did not usually come in until later in the evening.

John went up to the bar.

'Good evening, sir,' said the barman.



'Good evening,' John replied.

'Terrible weather this evening, isn't it?'

'Yes it is,' said John. 'It's snowing hard now.'

'What would you like, sir?'

'I'd like a beer please, and twenty Players.'

'There you are, sir,' said the barman.

'Thank you,' said John. He paid for his beer and cigarettes and went over to a table near the fire.

He sat down, lit a cigarette, and stared into the fire. It was good to rest after a long journey. It was so nice here that he did not want to leave and go out into the cold again. He looked at his watch. Six o'clock.

Suddenly he had an idea. He got up and went to the bar.

'Is there a telephone here?' he asked.

'Yes sir, it's through there, on the left,' replied the barman, pointing to the door.

John dialled his sister's number.

'Hello, Mary, this is John.'

'Oh hello, John. How are you?'

'Fine thanks, Mary. I'm in Newtonmore.'

'Oh, that's good, you'll be here soon. Be careful when you ...'

She stopped suddenly. There was a long silence.

'Mary? Are you there? Hello?'

Silence.

'Hello, Mary?' John shouted.

'Hello ... yes, yes I'm here.'

Her voice was different now.

'What happened?' asked John.

'Oh, nothing, nothing happened. I mean I ... I dropped something. See you soon. Goodbye, John.'

John stood for a moment and looked at the phone.

'Strange,' he said. 'Very strange.' Then he put the phone down and went to the door. Suddenly he did not want to have another drink. Suddenly he was not tired. He wanted to go to his sister's house immediately.

He left the hotel, and got into his car. He drove quickly through the village towards Aviemore.

As he drove, he thought about the telephone conversation. He repeated it in his head. Every time he did that, he remembered Mary's words: 'Be careful when you ...'

And why that strange silence?

3. John's Arrival

Mary was nervous. She walked through the silent house, smoking a cigarette. She went upstairs and looked round all the bedrooms. There was nothing there. She locked all the windows and closed all the curtains. She went downstairs again and checked the front door. It was locked. She checked the downstairs windows. They were locked too.

Mary went back to the sitting-room where the telephone was. Her cat was sleeping on the sofa. She pulled a chair close to the fire and waited for John.

She lit another cigarette, and looked at the window for the tenth time. She shivered. 'Hurry, John, don't be long,' she said.

She looked at the cat. 'I need a dog in this house,' she said to herself. 'I need a big, fierce dog.'

Outside, the wind blew through the tall trees and the snow continued to fall.

John drove along the snowy main street of Aviemore. The road was almost empty, the pavements deserted. He turned onto the road that led away from the village towards the mountains. The road crossed the deep, black water of the river Spey.

Not far from the river, a railway line ran across the road. John saw the red lights of the level-crossing⁴; the barrier was down.

John stopped and waited.

The evening train from Edinburgh moved slowly across the road. The train passed and the night was black again. The barrier went up and John continued on the last part of his journey. There was very little traffic, only three cars passed him on their way to Aviemore.

It was difficult to see the road through the falling snow, and he drove very slowly. He turned onto a side road and ten minutes later he saw the lights of Mary's house.

John was very tired now. He was glad to reach the house before the weather got worse.

The house was on the left, near the road. He stopped beside the garden gate and switched off the engine. He took his two suitcases from the car and walked up the garden path.

As he reached the house, the door opened.

'Hello, John,' said Mary, smiling.

'Hello, Mary, nice to see you.'

He kissed her.

'How nice to see you again,' she said happily. 'Come in and sit down.'

They went into the sitting-room.

'Do you want to eat now?' she asked. 'Supper's ready.'

'Good,' said John. 'I'm hungry.'

'Sit down while I fetch it,' said Mary, and went to the kitchen.

John sat down by the fire and looked round the room. It was large and comfortable. Mary's cat lay sleeping on the sofa.

Mary came back into the room carrying a tray. She put it on a small table beside John and sat down opposite him.

'How was your journey?' she asked.

'Very good,' he said. 'No problems at all.'



Mary lit a cigarette while John ate.

'Aren't you eating?' he asked.

'I'm not hungry,' she said quickly. 'How's life in London these days?'

'Oh, not too bad. How about you? Everything OK here?'

'I'm fine. Everything's ...' she hesitated.

'... everything's fine.'

John looked at his sister.

'Mary, is anything the matter?' he asked quietly.

She shook her head.

'Mary,' he said gently. 'When we talked on the phone, something happened. What was it?'

She said nothing.

'Can't you tell me about it?' he asked.

Mary nodded slowly.

'You're right,' she said. 'There is something wrong. Something very strange is happening here. I don't know what to do.'

4. Mary's Story

Mary pointed to the window.

'While we were talking on the telephone, a man came to that window. It wasn't the first time - it happened twice last week. It's always the same: a man comes to the window and looks into the room. As soon as I see him, he disappears. You know the old Lodge?'

'You mean the big house about a mile away?'

The Lodge was a large, old house in the middle of a big estate, with fields, a forest and a lake. It belonged to a very rich family. Some years ago the family had left the Lodge and had gone to live in Edinburgh. The Lodge



was empty for a long time.

'Three months ago a man bought the estate and the Lodge,' Mary continued. 'His name is Carter - Major Carter. He came with some men. They repaired the Lodge and now it's called the Aviemore Climbing Club. A few weeks ago Major Carter came to visit me. He wanted to buy this house.'

'This house?' said John.

'Yes, he wanted to buy this house. Of course I refused. I don't want to sell it. He seemed quite angry when I said no. He tried to persuade me, but I still refused. Then last week a man started looking in my window. Tonight was the third time.'

'Did you see the man's face?' asked John.

'No, he was wearing a ski hat and goggles⁶. He was from the Lodge, of course. Carter sent him.'

'What!'

'I'm sure Carter sent him,' Mary said again. 'Carter wants this house. He and his men are trying to frighten me. They want me to leave.'

'But why?' asked John.

'Because the Lodge *isn't* a Climbing Club. Something very strange is happening there. They want this house because it's near the estate. From here I can see every car that goes into the estate. I can see all the people who visit the Lodge. That's why they are trying to get rid⁷ of me!'

She stood up.

'Come on, I want to show you something.'

They went through to the kitchen. Mary opened the back door and they looked out into the garden. She pointed to the garden gate.

'That gate leads into the estate,' she said. 'That's how the man got into the garden.'

She closed the door.

'Well,' said John. 'It is very strange. But I'm here now. I don't think the man will come again.'

Late that evening, John lay in bed and listened to the wind in the trees outside. He thought about Mary's story. John was worried. He and Mary were alone, in the middle of winter, near a mysterious Lodge. There were strange men there – perhaps dangerous men. John lay thinking for a long time before he fell asleep.

When John got up next morning, Mary was busy in the kitchen.

'What are we doing today?' he asked as they ate breakfast.

'Anything you like' she answered.

'Why don't we go for a drive?' said John. 'It's such a lovely day.'

'Good idea. Let's have lunch in a hotel – I know a marvellous place.'

When they left the house, the sky was blue and the sun was shining on the snow. It was a perfect winter's day. They drove slowly along the road, looking at the beautiful countryside.

'I forgot to tell you last night,' said Mary. 'Two guests are coming tomorrow.'

'Oh?'

'One is from Manchester, he's an electronics engineer⁸. His name is Chris Hilton. The other is a doctor from Edinburgh. She was here last year. Her name's Cathy.'

Soon they came to a small village of white cottages. Mary pointed to a hotel by the roadside.

'That's the hotel I told you about.'

They went into the hotel dining-room. They had lunch by the window, and afterwards sat talking. Presently they left the hotel and drove home. The sun was setting when they got back.

Later they had supper by the fire.

'That was a lovely day,' said Mary.

'Yes, I enjoyed it too,' said John.