

GEORDIE

DAVID WALKER

Abridged and edited by Norah Woollard

Collins English Library

Series editors: K R Cripwell and Lewis Jones

A library of graded readers for students of English as a second or foreign language, and for reluctant native readers. The books are graded in six levels of difficulty. Structure, vocabulary, idiom and sentence length are all controlled according to principles laid down in detail in *A Guide to Collins English Library*. A list of the books follows. Numbers after each title indicate the level at which the book is written: 1 has a basic vocabulary of 300 words and appropriate structures, 2 : 600 words, 3 : 1000 words, 4 : 1500 words, 5 : 2000 words and 6 : 2500 words.

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Collins English Library Level 5

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DAVID WALKER

Abridged and edited by Norah Woollard

Collins: London and Glasgow

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Second Impression 1979

Third impression 1979

Geordie

This is a story about the Olympic Games in the 1950's. In those days, the Games were smaller and friendlier than they are today. You read the results in the newspaper, or heard them — faintly — over a radio. There was no television and no politics in those days.

Geordie is also a romantic story about the Scottish Highlands. There, on a smaller scale, various Highland Games take place. At these events, young Highland men test their strength and speed against competitors from other villages.

Chapter One

It was half past eight on a Saturday morning. Geordie took the path which ran behind the Big House. He was wearing his heavy nailed boots but the path was grassy, so the boots made hardly any noise. He moved softly between the trees like a Red Indian. Perhaps not a Red Indian; he was fourteen and too old to play wee boys' games. Still, this was good practice. "You never know," thought Geordie. "Sometimes a man might need to move as quietly as a hunting cat."

He saw Jean from a good way off. She was sitting on the stone wall looking across the loch. The water of the loch shone in the sun.

Geordie moved like a shadow from tree to tree. He'd be very close to her in a minute and she hadn't noticed him.

"Hello wee Geordie," she said, without turning. Everyone called him wee because he was so small.

"Hallo wee Jean," said Geordie, though she wasn't small really.

"I'm bigger than you."



Geordie didn't answer that. It was true, she was taller. And she was only thirteen.

"Did you bring a sandwich?"

"Ay," said Jean. "Mine's cheese. What's yours?"

"Mine's meat," said Geordie. "Come away then!"

Geordie climbed over the wall and they set off along the path beside the stream. It was warm for May, not a breath of wind and the morning cloud still hung on the high hill-tops.

"Did you tell your dad where we're going?"

Geordie shook his head. "He didn't ask so I didn't say anything."

"You're a clever wee laddie."

"Don't call me wee," said Geordie. Twice was too much.

"Och, sorry Geordie."

Jean was only a lassie but she was as good as another boy. She could think twice as fast as Geordie. So he was slower and smaller than she was, but he was one year older and that made them equal. They were good friends growing up in a place which had few folk.

They walked fast up the path between the trees and came out onto the open moor where the heather grew. They were going to the eagle's nest at the top of the valley where the stream came out of the rocks. Geordie's dad was paid to look after the eagles and their chicks. That was why Geordie hadn't told him.

"Will there be any chicks yet, Geordie?"

"I don't know. Eagles sit on their eggs for a

long time.”

They walked for another hour before they saw one of the golden eagles flying high over the hill. It was still far away, but even at that distance the bird looked big.

“Are you sure that’s an eagle?” asked Jean.

“Of course I’m sure!”

Geordie’s dad was a keeper. He looked after the birds and animals that lived on the open moor-land. So of course Geordie knew about the eagles. In the same way, Jean knew about flowers and growing things because her dad was a gardener.

The moor was behind them now and the stream was much smaller. But the noise of the water was still in their ears. They reached the grey rocks at the top of the valley where the sun didn’t shine and the heather didn’t grow.

“There’s the nest,” said Geordie, pointing up. There was a steep slope of loose stones and above that a broken cliff. They could see part of the nest — a pile of sticks at the top of the cliff.

The eagle came very fast from nowhere. They both saw him dive low across the rocks with a rabbit in his feet. He spread all the feathers of his wings against the air like broad fingers and he landed at the nest.

“They must have some chicks,” said Geordie. “That rabbit is for the chicks’ dinner.”

Then the eagle flew again and his mate too. They both flew round, above the nest, calling all the time.

“Come on,” said Geordie. “We’ll just take a

wee look and then come away.”

So he began to climb up the loose stones with Jean behind him. The two eagles went on circling in the air above them. They looked terribly big and dark and fierce, but Geordie wanted to see the young ones in the nest. That was what he had come for. And even the eagle's loud, angry cries were not going to stop him. Anyway, dad said a small hen was fiercer at the nest than an eagle.

“Still,” Geordie thought, “a hen isn't strong enough to tear your head off.” But he went on. Dad said, “Even if you're a wee laddie, Geordie, you have lots of determination.”

Soon he reached the top of the slope. He stopped a minute to see which was the best way. The nest wasn't far above, ten metres perhaps. And only the last big rock below the nest looked difficult.

One of the eagles dived down so it passed below Geordie. He could hear the sound of its wings and he could see the fierce head turn to watch him. Geordie waved his stick at the bird.

Now he was just under the big rock below the nest and Jean was still close behind him. He could hear the young ones crying and fighting over their dinner. The big eagles were flying closer. This was the difficult bit, but Geordie could see the way. You had to go along a very narrow part and hold on to the rock above your head. There was a drop below but it was all right if the eagles didn't attack you and if you were tall enough to reach to the top of the rock.



"Watch out, Geordie!" shouted Jean. This time the eagle passed very close. Geordie tied his handkerchief onto his stick and gave it to Jean.

"Wave that," he said.

He moved carefully onto the narrow part and stood there, reaching up with his hands. But he couldn't reach the top. Geordie tried again standing on his toes, again and again. But he couldn't get to the nest. It was an awfully bad feeling. He'd had the idea in his head for so many weeks. He sat down beside Jean.

"I'm going, Geordie," said Jean. He could see in her face that she was determined to go up to the nest. He said nothing; just took the stick from her. Jean stood up and reached up with her thin arms. Then she had her fingers on the top of the rock and she began to go along sideways, slowly, carefully.

"She's a brave lassie," Geordie thought and he felt disappointed that it was her and not him. But he felt proud of her too. He kept swinging the stick with the handkerchief on it. The eagles were really angry now. They dived and flew round and round with loud, fierce cries. Geordie had to shout to keep them away.

Jean had reached the nest. "There are two great big chicks with feathers on them, Geordie."

"Come away down, Jean," he called. She paused for a moment, looking down at the drop below. Then she looked over her shoulder at the angry birds in the sky.

"Keep your eyes on the rock!" said Geordie

sharply. She musn't get frightened now.

Then she came back and stood safely beside him. They went downhill over the loose stones until they reached the stream. There they sat in the sunlight and shared their sandwiches without speaking. The eagles were flying high again over the hill.

Geordie looked at Jean. "You're braw," he said. It was the highest praise he had inside him and he had to give it to her. He felt terrible that a lassie could do what he could not do. He ate the meat sandwich first.

Jean's cheeks blushed bright red. "So are you, Geordie. You're braw too," she said. She ate the cheese first.

Jean was his friend and he knew that she wouldn't tell folk. But Geordie couldn't forget that she was a year younger and that he was too wee. The disappointment stayed with him all the way down, and so they walked without speaking.

They stopped where the paths separated. Jean stood there. "Thanks, Geordie," she said. She looked shy and there was trouble in her grey eyes. She turned to go and then turned back. "Everybody can't be big, Geordie," she said and went off down the hill.

When Geordie got home he went round to the woodpile for some logs for his mum. That was one of his jobs. He took one load and went back for another. Mum was in the kitchen when he carried in his second heavy load.

"You're a good wee lad, Geordie," she said.

Chapter Two

Geordie went straight out of the kitchen and upstairs to his own room. He looked at himself in the mirror. He felt so bad that he thought it must show on his face. But there was no difference. He saw the same awful red face and the same carrotty hair. That was wee Geordie in the mirror; too wee to climb where a lassie could climb.

There were some old magazines in the corner of the room. Geordie had read them all before, but he needed something to take his mind off his troubles. He picked one up and lay on his bed. His favourite story was about a boy asleep at night. He wakes up suddenly and hears noises in the house. "Please turn to page 46," it said when the story was just getting exciting.

Geordie turned over the pages quickly. Here was page 46 and. . . But Geordie stopped. He was seeing something he had never noticed before. Quite suddenly, he forgot all about the boy in the dark house.

... use most anxious to be on the best terms with whoever happened
just upon the scene. Indeed it have come from these once-despised organisations. Remember all the

THE SAMSON WAY...

