

# OpenTheo

## Kidnapped—Chapter 11: The Captain Knuckles Under

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For the Easter season, I am posting some rather different things on this channel, in addition to my regular output, as a little gift to my followers and supporters. This is the fourth book I am reading through: 'Kidnapped', by Robert Louis Stevenson. I hope that you all enjoy!

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<https://itunes.apple.com/gb/podcast/alastairs-adversaria/id1416351035?mt=2>.

### Transcript

Chapter 11. The Captain Knuckles Under. Alan and I sat down to breakfast about six of the clock.

The floor was covered with broken glass and in a horrid mess of blood, which took away my hunger. In all other ways we were in a situation not only agreeable but merry, having ousted the officers from their own cabin and having at command all the drink in the ship, both wine and spirits, and all the dainty part of what was eatable, such as the pickles and the fine sort of bread. This of itself was enough to set us in good humour.

But the richest part of it was this, that the two thirstiest men that had ever come out of Scotland, Mr Shewan being dead, were now shut in the forepart of the ship and condemned to what they hated most, cold water. And depend upon it, Alan said, we shall hear more of them ere long. You may keep a man from the fighting but never from his bottle.

We made good company for each other. Alan, indeed, expressed himself most lovingly, and taking a knife from the table cut me off one of the silver buttons from his coat. I had

them, says he, from my father Duncan Stewart, and now give ye one of them to be a keepsake for last night's work, and wherever ye go and show that button the friends of Alan Breck will come round you.

He said this as if he had been Charlemagne and commanded armies, and indeed much as I admired his courage I was always in danger of smiling at his vanity. In danger, I say, but had I not kept my countenance I would be afraid to think what a quarrel might have followed. As soon as we were through with our meal he rummaged in the captain's locker till he found a clothesbrush, and then taking off his coat began to visit his suit and brush away the stains, with such care and labour as I suppose to have been only usual with women.

To be sure he had no other, and besides, as he said, it belonged to a king, and so behoved to be royally looked after. For all that, when I saw what care he took to pluck out the threads where the button had been cut away, I put a higher value on his gift. He was still so engaged when we were hailed by Mr. Reack from the deck, asking for a polly, and I, climbing through the skylight and sitting on the edge of it, pistol in hand and with a bold front, though inwardly in fear of broken glass, hailed him back again and bade him speak out.

He came to the edge of the roundhouse, and stood on a coil of rope, so that his chin was on a level with the roof, and we looked at each other a while in silence. Mr. Reack, as I do not think he had been very forward in the battle, so he had got off with nothing worse than a blow upon the cheek, but he looked out of heart and very weary, having been up all night afoot, either standing watch or doctoring the wounded. "'This is a bad job,' said he at last, shaking his head.

"'It was none of our choosing,' said I. "'The captain,' says he, "'would like to speak with your friend. They might speak at the window.'" "And how do we know what treachery he means?" cried I. "'He means none, David,' returned Mr. Reack, "'and if he did, I'll tell ye the honest truth we could nay get the men to follow.'" "Is that so?" said I. "'I'll tell ye more than that,' said he. "'It's not only the men, it's me.

I'm frickened, Davy,' and he smiled across at me. "'No,' he continued, "'what we want is to be shut of him.'" Thereupon I consulted with Allan, and the parley was agreed to and parole given upon either side, but this was not the whole of Mr. Reack's business, and he now begged me for a dram with such instancy and such reminders of his former kindness, that at last I handed him a panikin with about a gill of brandy. He drank a part, and then carried the rest down upon the deck, to share it, I suppose, with his superior.

A little after, the captain came, as was agreed, to one of the windows, and stood there in the rain, with his arm in a sling, and looking stern and pale, and so old that my heart smote me for having fired upon him. Allan at once held a pistol in his face. "'Put that thing up,' said the captain.

"Have I not passed my word, sir? Or do ye seek to affront me?" "Captain," said Allan, "I doubt your word is a breakable. Last night ye haggled and argled-bargled like an apple-wife, and then passed me your word, and gave me your hand to back it, and ye ken very well what was the upshot. Be damned to your word," says he.

"Well, well, sir," said the captain. "Ye'll get little good by swearing," and truly that was a fault of which the captain was quite free. "But we have other things to speak," he continued bitterly.

"Ye've made a sore hash of my brig. I haven't hands enough left to work her, and my first officer, whom I could ill spare, has got your sword throughout his vitals, and passed without speech. There is nothing left me, sir, but to put back into the port of Glasgow after hands, and there, by your leave, ye will find them that are better able to talk to you." "Ay," said Allan.

"And faith I'll have a talk with them myself. Unless there's nobody speaks English in that town I have a bonny tale for them. Fifteen tarry sailors upon the one side, and a man and a halfling boy upon the other.

Oh, man, it's pitiful!" Hoseason flushed red. "No," continued Allan. "That'll no do.

You'll just have to set me ashore as we agreed." "Ay," says Hoseason. "But my first officer is dead. Ye ken best how.

There's none of the rest of us acquaint with this coast, sir, and it's one very dangerous to ships." "I give ye your choice," says Allan. "Set me on dry ground in Appen, or Ardgau, or in Morvan, or Arrasaig, or Mora, or in Briefe, where ye please, within thirty miles of my own country, except in the country of the Campbells. That's a broad target.

If ye miss that ye must be as feckless at the sailing as I have found ye at the fighting. Why, my poor country people and their bit cobbles pass from island to island in all weathers, ay, and by night too, for the matter of that." "A cobble's not a ship, sir," said the captain. "It has nay draught of water." "Well then, to Glasgow if ye list," says Allan.

"We'll have the laugh of ye at the least." "My mind runs little upon laughing," said the captain. "But all this will cost money, sir." "Well, sir," says Allan. "I am nay weathercock.

Thirty guineas if ye land me on the seaside, and sixty if ye put me in the linnylock." "But see, sir, where we lie, we are but a few hours' sail from Arden Amerken," said Hoseason. "Give me sixty and I'll set ye there." "And I'm to wear my brogues and run jeopardy of the redcoats to please you?" cries Allan. "No, sir.

If ye want sixty guineas, earn them, and set me in my own country." "It's to risk the brig, sir," said the captain. "And your own lives along with her." "Take it or want it," says Allan. "Could ye pilot us at all?" asked the captain, who was frowning to himself.

"Well, it's doubtful,' said Allan. "'I'm more of a fighting man, as ye have seen for yourself, than a sailor man. But I have been often enough picked up and set down upon this coast, and should ken something of the lie of it.' The captain shook his head, still frowning.

"If I had lost less money on this unchancy cruise,' says he, "'I would see you in a rope's end before I risked my brig, sir. But be it as you will. As soon as I get a slant of wind, and there's some coming, or I'm the more mistaken, I'll put it in hand.

But there's one thing more. We may meet in with a king's ship, and she may lay us aboard, sir, with no blame of mine. They keep the cruisers thick upon this coast, ye ken who fall.

Now, sir, if that was to befall, ye might leave the money.' "'Captain,' says Allan, "'if ye see a pennant, it shall be your part to run away. And now, as I hear you're a little short of brandy in the forepart, I'll offer ye a change. A bottle of brandy against two buckets of water.' That was the last clause of the treaty, and was duly executed on both sides, so that Allan and I could at last wash out the roundhouse and be quit of the memorials of those whom we had slain, and the Captain and Mr. Reac could be happy again in their own way, the name of which was Drink.