

The Rescue  
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The landgirl cried hup! and the big gray mare heaved between the shafts and, with a great creaking of harness. she 'hupped' too far, as usual. Chrissie resumed her task of throwing turnips into the cart, from a considerable distance this time. As she turned to go back to the steading with the load, which was an important item in the feeding of the milk cows while they wintered in the byre, she heard the drone of the Swordfish, at least that is what the evacuee said it was. He had an avid interest in planes.

They flew over regularly and dipped their wings to wave to the toilers in the fields. Young learner flyers from the nearby aerodrome. She waved and they swooped away seawards. Soon they would be on the big planes, flying over enemy territory. The landgirl sighed, war was a senseless rotten thing, Dad was a soldier in the first world war, never talked of his experiences, till this war started. Will they never learn? he said. Remembering the sad waste of life, the mud of the trenches. dead comrades no one had time to bury. Supposed to be the war to end wars, some hope! Now this, she was glad that her only brother, still at school, was too young to be taken to war. But there was the evacuee, the same age hoping to wear the airforce blue when he came of age. Surely this war would be over before then. Her thoughts were interrupted by a great shouting and commotion from the shore end of the of the field. It was the farmer, waving his stick, swearing in the Gaelic, the sheep had found a break in the fence and were playing follow my leader, skipping though in single file. Spot the collie darted here and there, encouraged by the boss's voluble comments, and he soon had them back on the shore field.

The sheep belonged to the hill farmer, they had an arrangement that Glenburn took some of his sheep in winter and he let them bring their young cattle to graze on the hill leaving more grass for the milk cows. It was an agreement that suited both farmers, but the sheep gave the boss a bit of bother sometimes. Chrissie watched this with amusement. She led the patient mare towards the steading. Now they had to cross the big ditch, more like a raging river today, after yesterday's torrential rain. Chrissie was having a conversation with the old mare. Why? she asked, do farmers make gates and bridges almost the exact width of carts. She always breathed a sigh of relief when they had negotiated the wooden bridge without mishap, thanks to steady old Fanny, floundering feet and all. The landgirl and patted her pal and they rested, heads together for a moment. A loud bleating echoed in the quiet scene, it was one of the sheep. Tangled in some nettles and bushes on the embankment, his hind legs in the water as he struggled to get free. y feet and all. The landgirl Chrissie produced her trusty penknife, a present from wee brother, and quickly began to cut the frantic animal free. Not an easy task, as the creature heaved wildly and almost threw her in the water. She had a sudden understanding of the farmer's impatience with his charges. With a final breenge the frightened animal scabbled up the embankment and fled towards the shore. Chrissie clambered on to safe ground and stood picking nettles out of her hand. She emitted a few of the choice Gaelic swear words she had learned from the boss. It was later, during milking time that the hand was louping! Jenny the other landgirl noticed that her friend was in difficulty handling the milking

machines. What's wrong with your hand? Let me see, she examined the younger girl's hand. Why didn't you tell us? she said. Your finger is swollen and all discolored, you must have got thorns down your nail when you rescued that daft sheep.

We are nearly finished here, I'll get Archie to help, you go into the house and let mistress see this. Archie,! Jenny called, and the evacuee emerged from the shed where the calves were bawling to be fed. They were his special charges. He wasn't too pleased to learn that he had to help out in the byre, but when he saw Chrissie's hand, which looked really bad now, he was shocked and full of sympathy. the boy and the landgirls had lived on the farm for three years and were like family. Janet, the farmer's wife was standing by the big black shiny range preparing the evening meal for her family. She had no children of her own but she mothered the young folk in her care. The two young men who had helped to work the farm had been called away to the war. Alick was left, the young ploughman. A boy, taking over a man's job, the farmer's right hand man. Well, there was a war on. She smiled as she thought of the evacuee and the land girls, They were doing fine and they were a family working together. in summer. She was concerned at the sight of Chrissie's swollen hand. You've staved your thumb as well by the look of it. Janet bathed the injured hand and applied a poultice before gently wrapping the bandage. If this isn't any better in the morning, we will go to the surgery.

Chrissie woke at midnight. The pain in her hand was excruciating! She just had to get out of bed. Slipping quietly out of the room so as not to disturb Jenny she dressed , with some difficulty out on the landing, corduroy breeches and warm green jersey. In the lobby down stairs she struggled into her wellies. Outside in the yard she felt better, the pain was still there, throbbing away, but the sick feeling was not so bad. Spot came out of the byre and watched as she paced round the yard, his head to one side, puzzled. He joined her in the parade , back and forth and out on to the glen road, looking towards the shore. It was a calm clear night, so quiet, but what was that? Faintly from a distance, a cry for help. Help, help! came the cry again. She hurried down the path till she had a better view of the rocky shore. There they were, out on Seal Rock, two men supporting a third who seemed to be injured. He was shocked and full of sympathy.

She stood on the edge of the brae that led down to the shore and shouted and waved, before turning to race back to the steading to rouse the folks. They soon were in action, Jenny sped away on her bike to the 'big hoose'. home of Macduff the laird. the only one with a phone, apart from Dr Thomson. The alarm was raised and the boatman in the next village answered the call. Big Macduff also contacted the Observation post in the village. They had seen the small plane come down and alerted folks at the base. Farm folk stood along the edge of the field above the shore some carrying lanterns, shouting encouragement and joking with the beleaguered airmen. It's doubtful if they could follow what was being said from that distance, but it would be a comfort seeing folk there and knowing the boat was coming to their rescue.

Faintly came the cry from across the water, 'How long will the boat be? 'Eighteen feet,! roared Macduff, who had a voice like a foghorn, laughing heartily at his own joke. Eventually Dougie's boat hove in sight and everyone raised a cheer. The men were taken aboard and they chugged shoreward, manoeuvring between the rocks , coming as close as they dare. Willing hands were there to help, they waded into the

water to carry the wounded man ashore and assist the others on to dry land. They were soaked to the skin and cold after their long sojourn on the rock. The young ploughman and the evacuee had brought a cart down to the water's edge and they laid the injured man down gently in the straw bed and one of his comrades sat with him as they trundled up to the steading. As the others walked behind the cart, Jenny recalled the storm last week. They had gone down to the shore to collect some drift wood, the scene was amazing and scary to the girls, as they followed the boss with the cart near the water's edge. Great waves crashed on the rocks and balls of foam floated around their heads. Seal Rock was out of sight among white tipped mountains of water.

The young airman, walking with them behind the cart, looked back towards the calm sea, at the rock on which he and his comrades had clung for what seemed like hours. Aye, said the evacuee. It's lucky for you that our Chrissie was doing a walkab towards the calm sea, at the out with her sair haun. The landgirl was unusually quiet the sair haun was loupin'

As they turned into the yard, a cavalcade of vehicles came down the farm road. The doctor rolled into the yard first followed by an ambulance, a jeep and a official-looking black car. 'Well,' remarked Macduff, the airforce, don't waste time. The injured man was moved from cart to ambulance promptly and his two mates joined him, calling a thank you to their rescuers. Janet asked everyone in to share the tea and sandwiches she had prepared. Well my services were not required after all, remarked doctor. My would be patients were wheeched away pronto! You have a patient here Doctor, when you've had your tea maybe you could have a look at our Chrissie's hand.

My goodness! how did you do this? Apart from the injured finger you seem to have staved your thumb. This was the thanks I got for cutting one of our daft sheep out of the nettles at the big ditch, explained Chrissie. Well, we shall have to lance this finger and get this thorn from under the nail. I'm going to the cottage hospital tomorrow, I have to see a patient. I'll take you in, be ready at eight. He turned to Janet, I have given her something to help her sleep. I'll bid you all goodnight.

Milking and breakfast was over before eight and Chrissie sat in her green and fawn uniform waiting for doctor. Jenny looked the wellies with doubt. Chrissie you'd best wear your shoes, so the wellies were eased off and the patient was laced into the brown shoes. The pain killer had long since worn off, and the victim was past caring what she wore. At the hospital they soon dealt with the problem and she sat in the recovery room waiting for doctor to finish his rounds. A smiling young nurse came to say she had a visitor. It was the wounded airman, they had kept him in overnight. He limped into the room on crutches. 'How is the sair haun'? he asked. It's fine now, she smiled. What about you? Well the leg was broken, unfortunately I was the only one who could swim. So if you had not been doing a midnight walkabout we might have been longer perched on the Seal Rock. Doctor Thomson had arrived to take his patient home. Ah well, said, you know what they say, It's an ill wind...'