

Lorna Doone

The story takes place in the late 17th century. John Ridd, a young farmer's boy, has been exploring on Exmoor and finds himself on land owned by a powerful outlaw family, the Doones. He slips and knocks himself out, falling down a slope. In this scene, he is found by LORNA DOONE, the young granddaughter of the head of the family. She rubs John's forehead tenderly with a dock-leaf and handkerchief, as he wakes up.

LORNA: Oh, I am so glad. You *are* alive. Now you will try to be better, won't you? What is your name? How did you come here? What are these wet things in this great bag? (*Looking inside*) Why, they are only fish. (*Looking down at his feet*) But how your feet are bleeding! Oh, I must tie them up for you. (*Tearing off her kerchief from around her neck*) And no shoes nor stockings! Is your mother very poor? (*Trying to bandage his feet with the kerchief*) I cannot bear to see your feet. Oh do stop wriggling so much. I will bind them very carefully. I will just try not to look at them!

(*Pausing*) I'm sorry, I do ask a lot of questions, don't I? I had better introduce myself. My name is Lorna (*whispering*) Lorna Doone. I thought you must have known it.

(*She moves away from John and begins to cry softly*) Do you know what they would do to us, if they found you here with me? They would kill us both outright, and bury us here by the water.

(*Sadly*) You ask me why? Because you have found the way up here, and they would never believe it. Now, please go; oh, please go. They will kill us both in a moment. I like you very much – very much indeed, and I will call you John if you like – because I *think* that is your name. Only please go! Hush! I can hear shouting... and it's getting closer. They're calling my name... I can't come with you. I have to stay. I will tell you what to do.

They are only looking for *me*. Nobody knows you are here... yet. You see that hole over there? The one in the rocks, behind the waterfall, where you slipped. (*Pointing towards the rocks*) Look! look! There is a way out from the top of it; they would kill me if they knew that I had told anyone about it. Oh, here they come. Go... go on, quickly! (*Whispering*) And mind you don't come again. It's too dangerous.

(*John runs off as LORNA lies down on the grass and pretends to be asleep*)

by R D Blackmore, adapted by LAMDA