



The King's Swift Rider

Mollie Hunter

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"Are you there--the man they are hunting? Can you hear me? If you can, come quickly to the river, and I will save you."

Sixteen-year-old Martin Crawford succeeds in rescuing this fugitive--only to be surprised that the hunted man is none other than Robert the Bruce, rightful King of Scots. Hoping to lead a quiet life, Martin instead is asked by the king to commit himself to the war the Bruce is fighting to regain Scotland's freedom from the brutal rule imposed on it by the English.

The rebel campaign gathers bloody momentum. Martin impresses the Bruce with his resourcefulness and valor, and also learns the elements of espionage. He is proud then to be chosen as the king's swift rider--a vital link in the freedom army's scattered forces. And such is his daring and boldness in this dangerous position that the Bruce later appoints Martin the king's master of espionage.

Daily now, Martin must risk his life as he secretly gathers the information that will advance the rebel cause--and enable the Bruce to fight the climatic battle of Bannockburn. Defeat there will leave the Scots forever slaves. Victory will mean that longed-for-freedom.

Based on real events in Scotland's thirty-year War of Independence, *The King's Swift Rider* is a gripping tale of adventure into which Mollie Hunter weaves her own tribute in history, Robert the Bruce. Unblinkingly, she tells of the terrible bloodshed of that war, yet still makes her story's keynote one of courage, honor, and a people's determination to achieve freedom.

"Martin." the king told me, "I need a courier."

A courier? I stopped, wondering if this was a word from the French language spoken by the nobility.

"A swift rider," he explained. "One who carries messages--in this case, messages of great importance."

The king's swift rider...I liked this name, liked the ringing sound of it. "If you trust me to act as such, Sire," I told him, "I am waiting."

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Pablo Cook:

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