

Island for Sale

By O. Henry



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By Anne Collins

There are many islands in the sea near Scotland. This story is about one of these islands. The name of the island is Lana.

Lana isn't big, but it's very beautiful. It's very quiet, too. There are no houses or roads or cars on Lana. But there's a castle. The castle is very old.

A young Scotsman lives in the castle. The Scotsman's name is Duncan McTavish. Duncan lives in the castle with his dog, Jock.

Duncan is very happy on his island. He likes going for walks with Jock. He likes swimming and fishing in his little boat.



There are many big rooms in Duncan's castle. They have a lot of old things in them — pictures and heavy tables, chairs and beds.

In winter the castle is very cold and dark. Duncan puts on a lot of electric lights in all the rooms.

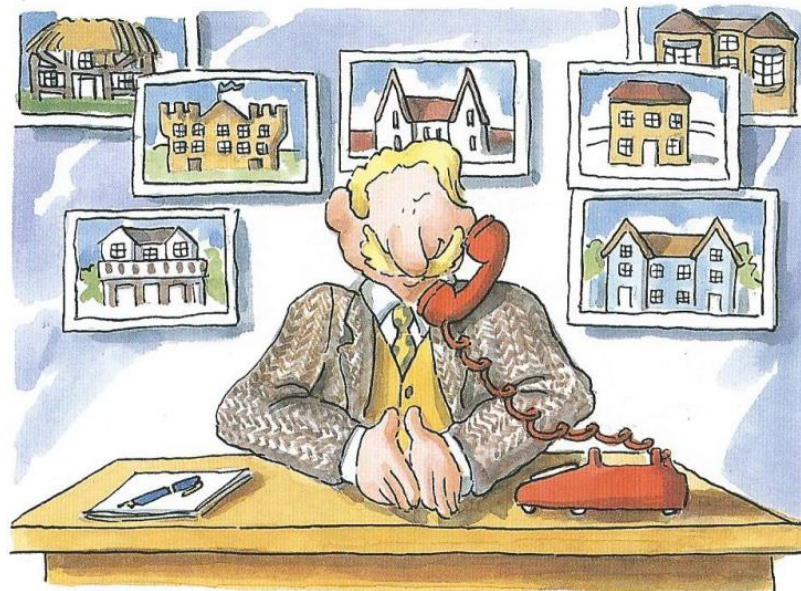
One Monday morning in April, Duncan gets a letter.

'What's this?' he asks.

He opens the letter. It's from the electricity company. Duncan reads,

Electricity from October to March: £5,000.

‘Oh,’ Duncan says. ‘I haven’t got £5,000. What can I do?’ He’s very unhappy.
‘I can do only one thing: sell my island and my castle.’



Duncan telephones a man in London. The man's name is Mr. Moneybags. Mr. Moneybags sells houses and castles.

'I want to sell my island and my castle,' Duncan says. 'OK,' Mr. Moneybags says.

Two days later, he telephones Duncan.

'Leaping Larry wants to buy your island,' he says. 'Leaping ... who?' Duncan asks.

'Leaping Larry. You know - the famous American rock star. He wants to buy your island for his girlfriend.'

'A rock star,' Duncan says. 'Oh.'

'He wants to see the island tomorrow afternoon,' Mr. Moneybags says. 'Is that OK?'

'Er ... yes,' Duncan says. 'Yes, of course.'



Leaping Larry and his girlfriend are coming to the island by helicopter. They're very late. Duncan and Jock wait a long time.

Then the helicopter arrives. A tall man with long dark hair gets down from it. He's about forty-five years old. There's a girl with him. She's about twenty and has long yellow hair. There's a small animal with her. The animal has long white hair.

'Hi,' the man says. 'I'm Leaping Larry. And this is my girlfriend, Roxanne.'

'Hi,' Roxanne says. 'This is my dog, Bobo.'

Larry looks at the castle.

'Look at that old castle, Roxanne,' he says. 'Don't you love it, honey?'

Roxanne doesn't smile. It's only an old castle.

Leaping Larry and Roxanne go into the castle. It's very dark. Leaping Larry can't see. He falls down.

'Where are the lights?' he asks.

'I'm sorry,' Duncan says. 'There isn't any light. The company stopped my electricity this morning.'

'I want some hot food,' Roxanne says.

'I'm sorry,' Duncan says, 'but I can't make hot food. I haven't got any electricity. But there is some cold food.'

'Cold food!' Roxanne says. 'No, thank you! I'm going to bed. But first I want a hot bath. And Bobo wants a bath, too.'





‘I’m very sorry,’ Duncan says. ‘But there’s no hot water.’

‘No lights! No food! No hot water!’ Roxanne says. ‘I don’t like this place!’

‘Now, honey ...’ Leaping Larry says.

‘Don’t call me “honey”!’ Roxanne says. ‘Let’s go, Bobo!’

Roxanne and Bobo go to bed. Larry and Duncan eat cold food and talk. Jock watches them.

Suddenly Roxanne screams. Duncan, Larry and Jock run to her room. Roxanne is in bed with Bobo.

‘Honey, what’s wrong?’ Larry asks.

‘There was a noise in the room,’ Roxanne says. ‘What was it?’

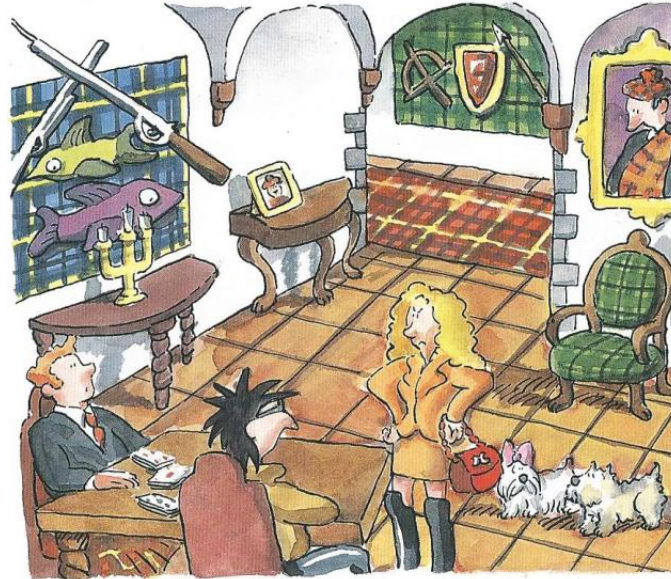
Duncan starts to smile.

‘Why are you smiling?’ Roxanne says. She’s very angry.

‘Look at Jock,’ Duncan says.

Jock is under the bed. He has a mouse in his mouth.

‘A mouse!’ Roxanne says. She screams again.



In the morning, Duncan and Leaping Larry are waiting. Roxanne and Bobo are late. They get up at eleven o'clock.

'Good morning,' Duncan says.

Roxanne doesn't answer. She says to Larry, 'Larry, I don't like this place. I want to go home.'

'But, honey ...' Larry says.

'Don't call me "honey"!' Roxanne says. 'This castle is old, dark and very cold. There's no electricity, no food and no hot water. And I don't like it. Do you understand?'

'Listen, honey,' Larry says. 'We can build a big new house here. Our friends from California can come and stay.'

Duncan looks at Jock. Jock looks at Duncan.

'Build a big new house!' they think. 'Oh, no!'



Leaping Larry says, 'We want to see the island.'

'OK,' Duncan says. 'We can go in my boat.'

Duncan, Larry and Roxanne get into Duncan's boat. Jock gets in, too. Bobo is with Roxanne.

It's a beautiful day, but Roxanne isn't happy.

'What do you do all day?' she asks Duncan.

'I go for walks,' Duncan says. 'Sometimes I swim. And sometimes I catch fish.'

'Oh,' Roxanne says. 'That isn't very interesting.'

'Listen, honey,' Larry says. 'We can make the island interesting. I know people with film companies. They can come here and make films. Hundreds of films!'

Duncan looks at Jock. Jock looks at Duncan.

'Film companies!' they think. 'Oh, no!'

Duncan is very unhappy. He doesn't want to sell his island and his castle to Larry. He doesn't want film companies or Larry's friends on the island.

But what can Duncan do? The electricity company wants £5,000. He has no money. He can't stay in his castle.

Duncan, Larry and Roxanne are all sitting in Duncan's boat. Jock and Bobo are with them. Suddenly, Jock sees a rabbit on the island. Jock loves catching rabbits. He jumps into the sea and starts to swim to the island.

Bobo thinks, 'This is interesting!' And he jumps in, too.

'Bobo is in the water!' Roxanne screams. 'Jump into the sea, Larry! Get Bobo!'



But Larry doesn't move.

'Why are you waiting?' Roxanne says. 'Jump in!'

'But, honey,' Larry says, 'I can't swim.'

'Can't swim!' Roxanne says. She is very angry.

'Look!' Duncan says. 'Bobo is OK. He's having a good time.'

Bobo is swimming in the water with Jock. But Roxanne is very angry with Larry.

'You don't love me!' she says.

'And you don't love me,' Larry says. 'You only love Bobo.'

'You're right,' Roxanne says.

She stands in the boat and starts to hit Larry.

'Don't do that!' Duncan says.

The boat moves. Roxanne falls into the water. She starts to scream.

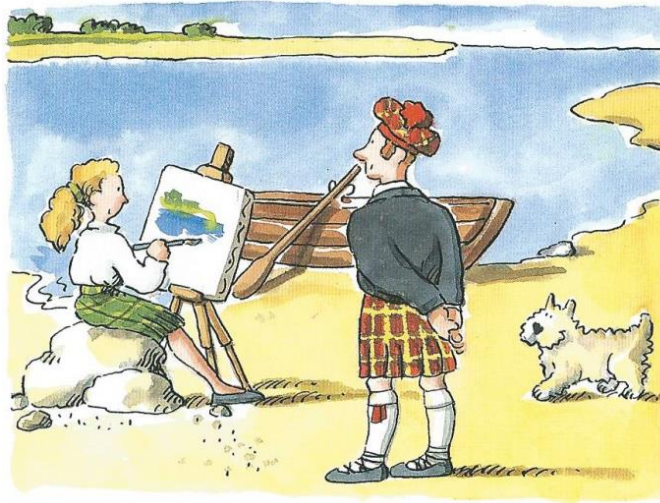
‘Take me back to California ... NOW!’ she says to Larry.



Later Larry, Roxanne and Bobo get into their helicopter. ‘Goodbye,’ Duncan says.

Larry and Roxanne don’t answer. The helicopter goes away. Duncan smiles at Jock. He’s very happy.

‘Leaping Larry isn’t going to buy our island,’ he says. ‘That’s good!’



But Duncan has big money problems.

Leaping Larry doesn’t want to buy the island. But where can Duncan get £5,000 for the electricity company?

Later, Duncan telephones Mr. Moneybags in London.

‘Leaping Larry telephoned me,’ Mr. Moneybags says. ‘He doesn’t like your island. He doesn’t want to buy it. And I’m not going to sell it for you now. It’s *your* problem. Goodbye.’

Duncan goes for a long walk with Jock. He’s very unhappy. They walk to a place across the island. And there Duncan sees a girl. She’s looking at the sea and she’s painting a picture. Near her is a small boat.

‘Good afternoon,’ Duncan says.

The girl looks at Duncan. She’s beautiful. He likes her.

‘Who are you?’ she asks. ‘What do you want?’

‘I’m Duncan McTavish,’ Duncan says. ‘I live here. Lana is my island. And this is my dog, Jock.’

Jock looks at the girl. He likes her, too.

‘Lana is your island?’ the girl says. ‘Oh. I’m Jean Stewart. I’m a teacher. I work in a school across the sea. Today is a holiday and the school is closed. I came here in my boat. I wanted to paint your island. The light is very good and the colours are very beautiful. I can paint good pictures here.’ Duncan looks at Jean’s picture.

‘Yes,’ he says. ‘Your picture is very good.’

‘Thank you,’ Jean says.



Duncan and Jean talk for a long time.

‘Where do you live?’ Jean asks.

‘I live in a castle,’ Duncan says. ‘Come and see it.’ Duncan, Jean and Jock go to the castle.

‘Your castle is beautiful,’ Jean says.

‘Yes,’ Duncan says. ‘But it’s very cold and dark. There’s no electricity. I have no money. I love my island very much. But I can’t make money from it.’

Jean looks at the castle. Suddenly she says, 'Yes, you can!' 'How?' Duncan asks.

'People can come here for holidays,' Jean says. 'They can paint pictures of your island. I can teach them. And they can stay in your castle. We can make a lot of money!'

Duncan looks at Jock. Jock looks at Duncan.

'You're right!' Duncan says.



Now McTavish Painting Holidays are very famous. Every year many visitors come to the island. They stay in the castle. They go for walks and paint beautiful pictures. They take their pictures back to their homes.

The rooms in the castle aren't cold and dark now. Duncan and Jean have a lot of money. There is no problem with the electricity company. And Jean makes very good food. The visitors are very happy.

Duncan and Jean are married now. They have two children - a boy and a girl. Jock loves playing with the children.

Duncan often sits in his little boat. Sometimes he catches a fish, but usually he sleeps. He's a happy man.

- THE END -