Introduction

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After the death of her mother, 23-year-old Mary Yellan is invited to live with her mother's sister, Aunt Patience, who lives in a place called Jamaica Inn, high up on the Cornish moors. There is something about the coldness of the language in Aunt Patience's letter that puzzles Mary. 'There have been changes with us that you will not know about,' the letter says. Aunt Patience used to be a warm, cheerful, affectionate young woman, but there is a strange lack of warmth and comfort in her letter. Mary wonders about the nature of these mysterious changes even more as she approaches her destination. The driver tells her that Jamaica Inn is no place for respectable people, especially young women like her, but he is afraid to say more. What is the secret of Jamaica Inn? Why are people afraid to go there? And why was Aunt Patience's letter so distant and unfriendly?

When Mary steps through the door of Jamaica Inn, she enters a world even darker and more shadowy than the wild, lonely moorland outside. Why does Aunt Patience – now a weak, frightened old woman – stay with such an evil, violent, drunken

man as her husband, Joss? What are the strange noises in the middle of the night? What crimes are being committed, and why does the law do nothing to stop them? Mary is by nature an optimistic and courageous young woman; she does not easily lose hope and is not easily frightened. She stays at Jamaica Inn in the hope of rescuing her aunt from the misery of her existence, but discovers that she herself has become a prisoner without a friend in the world, with no hope of escape . . .

The events in *Jamaica Inn* take place at the beginning of the nineteenth century on Bodmin Moor, a cold and lonely place in the south-west corner of Britain. The setting is very important as the events in the story could only take place in an area where there are few human beings to witness what is happening. The people who do live there are as cold and hard as their surroundings. When Mary arrives at the inn, she cannot stop herself comparing the unwelcoming emptiness of the moor with the warmth of the village of Helford, forty miles away, that she has just left.

The history of Cornwall is full of sea stories involving smugglers and wreckers. Smugglers often became romantic figures, more respected than the representatives of the law who were trying to catch them. Wreckers, however, were frightening figures who, as their name suggests, led ships onto the rocks around the coast. During storms, they shone lights out to sea from the rocks, which ships mistook for the lights of a safe harbour. When the ships broke up, the wreckers stole the goods that floated to the shore. But they did not just steal; they always made sure that no one stayed alive to report what had happened.

The central character, Mary Yellan, gains our respect by her courage in the face of evil. When we first meet her, she is an inexperienced girl who has lived in the same place for twenty-three years. She is alone after her mother's death, and appears a weak, defenceless creature. However, as the story develops, she

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fights back against the difficult situation that she finds herself in. She is not afraid to do what she believes to be right, even when this means putting her own life in danger. She is attracted by a certain amount of risk and danger, and falls in love with a man who seems to represent the possibility of both.

'I was born on May 13, 1907, into a world of make-believe and imagination,' wrote Daphne du Maurier, the author of *Jamaica Inn*. Her father, Sir Gerald du Maurier, was the leading actor and manager at Wyndham's Theatre in London. Her mother, Muriel, was an actress and her grandfather, George du Maurier, was an artist and writer. Daphne and her two sisters, therefore, grew up in an exciting world of writers and actors. She was educated at home, apart from six months spent in France when she was eighteen, and she read widely in English and French. Her first poems and short stories were written while she was still a child: 'I was always pretending to be someone else.'

In 1926, Daphne travelled with her mother and sisters to Fowey, a small port in Cornwall. This was an important moment in her life. She fell in love with the place and its people, and was moved to write her first novel, *The Loving Spirit*. This romantic story was an immediate success, and was read by Frederick Browning, who was then a young officer in the Guards. It touched him so deeply that he travelled to Fowey in his boat to meet the person who had written it. In 1932, Browning and du Maurier were married. They had two daughters and a son. Du Maurier spent most of her adult life in the Cornwall which she loved so much and where her most popular books are set.

Jamaica Inn (1936) was du Maurier's fourth novel, and there seem to be three main influences at work behind the story. Firstly, there is her great interest in the novels of the Brontë sisters (*Jane Eyre, Wuthering Heights*). These, like many of du Maurier's own stories, take place in wild, dark, empty moorland (although

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their stories take place in the north of England, not the south). Also, like du Maurier's, these stories are about the darker, more dangerous side of the human imagination.

The second main influence seems to be the stories that du Maurier read in her childhood. As a young child, she had loved reading boys adventure stories like Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, and she clearly wanted to write an adventure story in that style.

The third influence behind the story was a visit that the young Daphne had made with a friend to the real Jamaica Inn on Bodmin Moor, where they had many adventures. On one occasion, for example, they left the inn to go horse-riding over the moor. When they got lost in bad weather, they had to shelter in an empty, old building, but were eventually led back to Jamaica Inn by their horses. During that stay at Jamaica Inn, Daphne met and talked to the vicar from the church at Altarnun. Years later, Daphne remembered this and the vicar of Altarnun became an important character in the story. It would be interesting to know what the real vicar of Altarnun thought of the fictional one!

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Du Maurier's books can be divided into two main groups. The first consists of historical fiction set in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Cornwall, and includes *Jamaica Inn* (1936), *Frenchman's Creek* (1941), *Hungry Hill* (1943) and *The King's General* (1946). These are romantic stories of adventure, violence and love. They show a strong desire for the past, but also a sense of how our present lives are affected by past events. The second group are modern mystery stories, including *Rebecca* (1938), *My Cousin Rachel* (1951) and *The Scapegoat* (1957). The wild weather and scenery of Cornwall provide the background and atmosphere for nearly all of her stories – tense, romantic mysteries and exciting, historical adventures.

In addition, du Maurier wrote several collections of short stories and two plays.

She also wrote non-fiction. Her first non-fiction book was an description of the life of her father, *Gerald: A Portrait* (1934). She later wrote *The du Mauriers* (1937), a family history, a study of Branwell Brontë (1960), a book about Cornwall (1967) and the story of her own life, *Growing Pains* (1977).

There have been several films of Daphne du Maurier stories. The great film director Alfred Hitchcock was a particular admirer of her stories. His film of *Jamaica Inn* (1939) is interesting because it is the last film that he made in Britain before he moved to the United States. Later, in 1940, he made a prize-winning film in Hollywood of du Maurier's most famous novel, *Rebecca*, with Laurence Olivier as Maxim de Winter. Hitchcock returned to a du Maurier story again in 1963 – this time to one of her short stories, *The Birds*. Other famous films of du Maurier stories include *Frenchman's Creek* (1944), *My Cousin Rachel* (1952), *The Scapegoat* (1959) and *Don't Look Now* (1973), with Donald Sutherland and Julie Christie.

Daphne du Maurier died at the age of eighty-one in 1989, at her home in Cornwall.

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Chapter 1 Jamaica Inn

It was a cold grey day in late November, and although it was now only a little after two o'clock in the afternoon the dark of a winter evening seemed to have come down over the hills, hiding them in mist. The air was cold, and in spite of the tightly closed windows it found its way into the coach. There must have been a small crack in the roof, because now and again little drops of rain fell softly through onto the leather seats. The wind blew hard, and on high ground it blew with such force that the whole body of the coach trembled and struggled to stay upright. The wheels of the coach sank into the holes in the road, and sometimes they threw up mud against the windows, where it mixed with the rain so that any view there might have been was blocked out.

The few passengers sat close together for warmth. Mary Yellan was sitting where the drops of rain came through the crack in the roof. She brushed them away with impatient fingers. Although she was only 40 miles by road from what had been her home for 23 years, she was already beginning to miss it. The courage which was so large a part of her, and had helped her so much during the long unhappiness of her mother's illness and death, was now shaken by this rain and wind.

She remembered the letter from her aunt. The writer said that the news had shocked her; that she had had no idea that her sister was ill, because it was many years since she had been in Helford. And she went on: 'There have been changes with us that you will not know about. I no longer live in Bodmin, but nearly 12 miles outside it, on the road to Launceston. It's a wild and lonely spot, and if you were to come to us I should be glad of your company in wintertime. I have asked your uncle, and he does not object, he says, if you do not talk too much and will give help when it is

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needed. He cannot give you money or feed you for nothing, as you will understand. He will expect your help in the bar in return for your room and meals. You see, your uncle is the landlord of Jamaica Inn.'

The letter was a strange message of welcome from the smiling Aunt Patience she remembered. A cold, empty letter, giving no word of comfort, and little information, except that she must not ask for money. Aunt Patience, with her silk skirts and delicate ways, the wife of an innkeeper!

So it was that Mary Yellan found herself travelling north in the coach. Villages were scattered now, and there were few smiling faces at the doors of the small houses. There were almost no trees. The wind blew and the rain came with the wind. And so the coach rolled into Bodmin, grey and unwelcoming like the hills around it, and one by one the passengers collected up their things ready to leave – all except Mary, who sat still in her corner. The driver, his face a stream of rain, looked in at the window.

'Are you going on to Launceston?' he said. 'It'll be a wild drive tonight across the moors. You can stay in Bodmin, you know, and go on by coach in the morning. There'll be no one but you going on in this coach.'

'My friends will be expecting me,' said Mary. 'I'm not afraid of the drive. And I don't want to go as far as Launceston; will you please leave me at Jamaica Inn?'

The man looked at her strangely. 'Jamaica Inn?' he said. 'What would you do at Jamaica Inn? That's no place for a girl. You must have made a mistake, surely?' He looked at her hard, not believing her. Then he called over his shoulder to a woman who stood in the doorway of the Royal Hotel, lighting a lamp. It was already getting dark. 'Come here and reason with this young girl. I was told she was going to Launceston, but she has asked me to leave her at Jamaica Inn!'

The woman came down the steps and looked into the coach.

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'It's a wild, rough place up there,' she said, 'and if you're looking for work, you won't find it on the farms. They don't like strangers on the moors. You'd do better down here in Bodmin.'

Mary smiled at her. 'I shall be all right,' she said. 'I'm going to relatives. My uncle is the landlord of Jamaica Inn.'

There was a long silence. In the grey light of the coach Mary could see that the woman and the man were looking at her. She felt cold, suddenly, and anxious. Then the woman stepped back from the window. 'I'm sorry,' she said. 'It's none of my business, of course. Good night.'

The driver began to whistle, rather red in the face, as one who wishes to end an awkward situation. Mary leant forward and touched his arm. 'Would you tell me?' she said. 'I shan't mind what you say. Is my uncle not liked? Is something the matter?'

The man looked very uncomfortable. He avoided her eyes. 'Jamaica Inn's got a bad name,' he said; 'strange stories are told – you know how it is. But I don't want to make any trouble. Perhaps they're not true.'

'What sort of stories?' asked Mary. 'Do you mean that people get drunk there? Does my uncle encourage bad company?'

The man did not answer. 'I don't want to make trouble,' he repeated, 'and I don't know anything. It's only what people say. Respectable people don't go to Jamaica Inn any more. That's all I know. In the old days we used to water the horses there, and feed them, and go in for a bite of food and drink. But we don't stop there any more.'

'Why don't people go there? What is their reason?'

The man paused; it was as if he were searching for words.

'They're afraid,' he said at last, and then he shook his head; he had no more to say. He shut the door and climbed into his seat.

The coach rolled away down the street, past the safe and solid houses, the busy lights, the scattered people hurrying home for supper, their figures bent against the weather. Now the horses

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were climbing the steep hill out of the town and, looking through the window at the back of the coach, Mary could see the lights of Bodmin fast disappearing, one by one, until the last was gone. She was alone now with the wind and the rain, and 12 long miles of empty moor between her and her journey's end. She sat in her corner, shaken from side to side by the coach. On either side of the road the countryside stretched away into space. No trees, no paths, no houses, but mile after mile of moor, dark and empty, rolling like a desert to the unseen horizon. No human being could live in this country, thought Mary, and remain like other people; the children would be born twisted, like the blackened bushes, bent by the force of a wind that never stopped blowing. Their minds would be twisted too, their thoughts evil, living as they must among rough bushes and hard stone.

She lifted the window and looked out. Ahead of her, at the top of hill on the left, was some sort of building, standing back from the road. She could see tall chimneys in the darkness. There was no other house near. If this was Jamaica Inn, it stood alone, unprotected from the winds. The horses came to a stop, clouds of steam rising from their hot, wet bodies.

The driver climbed down from his seat, pulling her box down with him. He seemed to be in a hurry, and kept looking over his shoulder towards the house.

'Here you are,' he said, 'across the yard over there. If you hammer on the door they'll let you in. I must be going on, or I'll not reach Launceston tonight.'

In a moment the coach was away down the road, disappearing as if it had never existed, lost and swallowed up in the darkness.

Mary stood alone, with her box at her feet. She heard the sound of the door being unlocked in the dark house behind her, and then it was thrown open. A great figure walked into the yard, swinging a light from side to side.

'Who is it?' came a shout. 'What do you want here?'

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