
AALHOLM
1
The King’s New Castle

# One king. Two children. A new beginning.

King Christopher has an idea: his new castle should stand by the coast. But at Refshaleborg, the castellan Rane strongly disagrees.

Signe and Asger know nothing of the king's plans yet. They have enough to do with loose planks, missing sausages and grown-ups who won't listen.

Soon they must find a way out of a besieged castle, and a way towards a new home.

**Meet Signe**
Eleven. A carpenter's daughter. Good at seeing how things fit together, and asking the questions adults would rather avoid.

**Meet Asger**
Nine. A kitchen boy. Braver than he thinks. His best plans nearly always begin with food.

A complete adventure inspired by Aalholm's history. At the back, discover the historical background and what we invented.


Lolland, 1256. King Christopher had an idea.
Here.
Right here?
The castle, Eskil. Not you.
From here we can see the ships coming.
Yes, my lord.
How tall?
Write: A tall tower.
Taller than that paper.


Water on several sides. And the harbour nearby.
Strong walls. A tower here.
Your cloak, my lord...
We already have Refshaleborg.
It guards the lake. But the ships sail here.
Write to the castellan. He must surrender the castle.
And the people?
They must be free to leave in peace.


PRESS!
I want his answer.
And if he says no?
Then you ride over there.
Alone?
No.


At Refshaleborg, the day began with a serious crime.
There were TWO!
No need to panic.
Your sleeve is leaking breakfast.
It's a spare.


A good joint must hold when the wind blows.
Like this?
Exactly.
I'm fetching timber. You stay with Ane.
I'm staying with Ane too.
You're staying with her sausages.


A message from King Christopher!
Have you an appointment?
I have the king's seal!
What does the king want?
The castle must be surrendered. People and goods may leave in peace.


The king will build his new castle at Aalholm.
This castle stays where it is.
We weren't going to carry it.
Good. I can carry two at most.
My answer is NO!
That will be easy to remember.


Shut the gate! Nobody leaves the castle.
Wait! My father's out there!
DUNK!
KLONK!
That's a lot of people for one letter.
We must get Father inside.


My daughter's in there.
Then we must get her out.
Your father can look after himself.
I won't just wait.
We'll help those we can. Water first.
And food afterwards?
You think a lot about afterwards.


The whole castle sprang into action.
The enemy is usually in front of you.
What's in the chest?
None of your business.
Come on. People need water, even when grown-ups get stubborn.


It smells of old socks.
A gate to the lake!
It's forgotten to be open.
The water gate. Supplies used to come in here.
Who has the key?
Rane. Of course.


The king brought more men than the letter.
He refuses. And keeps the people inside.
There are children behind those walls.
Send one last warning. Women, children and servants must be allowed out.


We could use a rope.


It only reaches as far as your next idea.


How about asking nicely?

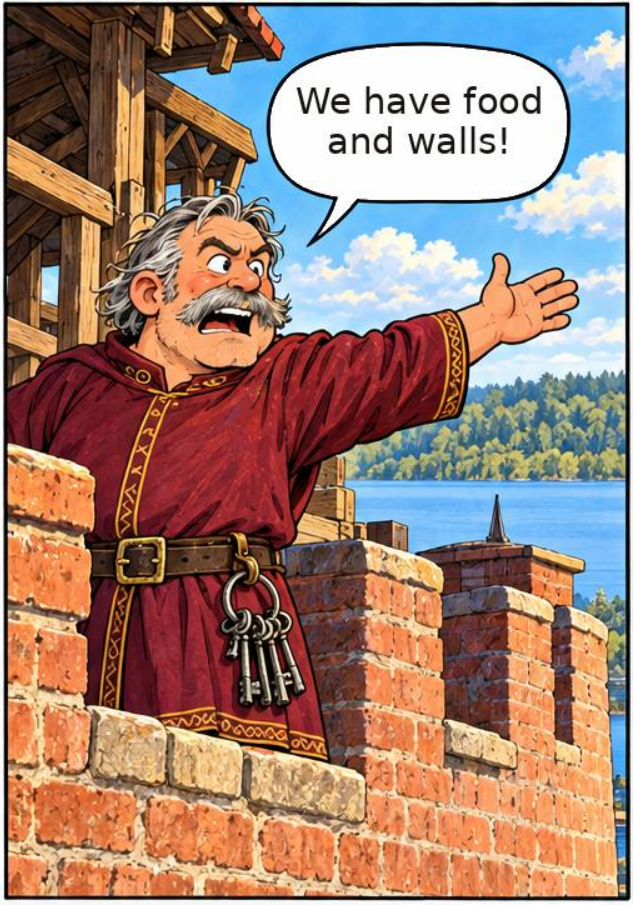

Rane's orders. The gate stays shut.
Then it must be the water gate.


There! A boat.
Who's waving in my fishing spot?
Can you find my father? Toke. The carpenter.
The one with the crooked cart?
He says it's the road that's crooked.
That's him.

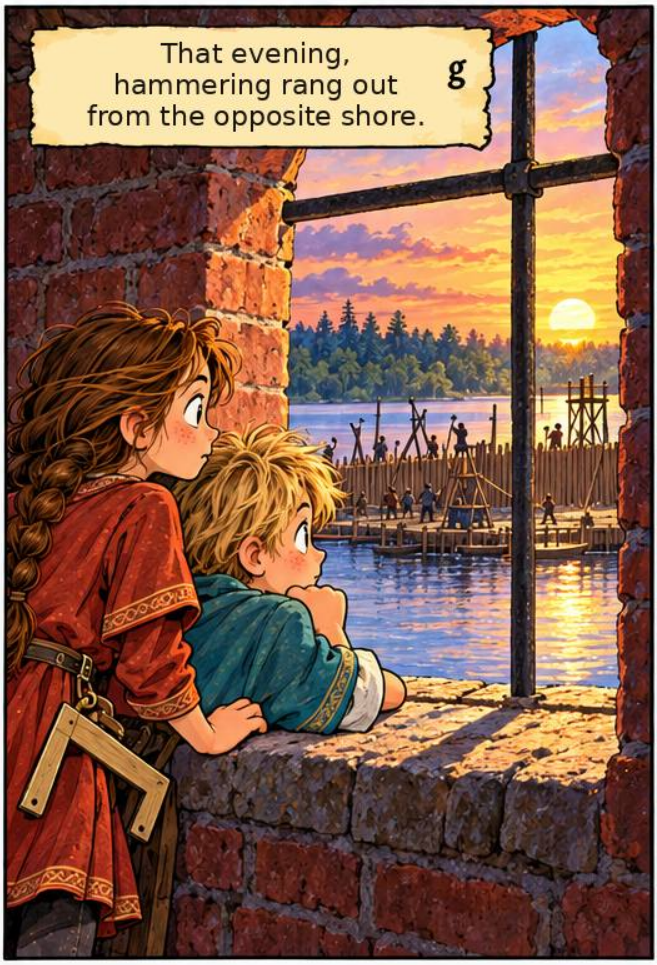

Nobody goes anywhere alone.
I can look after the food.
Then Signe will look after you.
Maren will find Father. But the water gate is locked.
Then we'll talk to the man with the key.


Let us go. The king promised safe passage.
Nobody leaves my castle!
Is it your castle? Or the king's?
Now he looks like a boiled turnip.
Turnips listen better.


Let those who want to leave out!


We have food and walls!


He forgot to count the food.


That evening, hammering rang out from the opposite shore.


Father!
We have permission to collect you. Get the gate open.
Rane has the key.
Then Ane must make him understand.
We'll wait behind the reeds.
We're hurrying very slowly. I'm scared.


At dawn, the waiting was over.
Stay together. Wait for the signal.
Away from the windows.
BAAAH!
I preferred the hammering.


Then the king's men came.
TAK!
To the wall!
It's snowing indoors.
That's the wall. Get away from the door!


DUM!
The gate won't hold much longer!
Open the water gate now!
I can't leave the gate.
Then give us the key.


The big one. With the round head.
Asger, fetch the others.
Everyone down! Hold hands!
Where's little Liv?
She was just here.


There you are!
It wouldn't come.
Neither would I.
You look after the cat. I'll look after you.
Everyone here?
Even one with whiskers.


It doesn't fit.
Then we'll try the next one.
KLIK!
Good. We have a door.
And no stairs.


Stay there! I'm coming alongside.
Tie the boat fast!
Father! Can we use this?
Yes. But we'll tie it first.


Remember what I taught you.
It must hold when the wind blows.
One at a time. I'll catch you.
The cat's heavy.
It ate my spare.


Boat after boat emerged from the reeds.
Twelve.
Thirteen.
The food's saved too.
How much?
Most of it.
BRAAAG!
Who's still up there?


Go!
Father! Up here!
Then we'll take off the cloak.
The cloak's stuck.
That was an expensive cloak.
Then it can be castellan.


Now or never!
It looks small.
So do you without the cloak.
Look at me. Not at the water.
As the last boat left the wall, the main gate gave way.


Behind the gate, the fighting wasn't over.
Into the courtyard! Shields up!
The people are gone. Who are we holding the castle for?
Enough! We lay down our weapons.


BRAAAM!
Lower your weapons! It's over.
We surrender.
It was our home.
Yes. It was.


Liv. Asger. Signe...
And this one!
We'll count that one too.
I thought you'd stay in the kitchen.
The kitchen moved.
At last, a good order.
Eat.


Did everyone get out?
Everyone we'd gathered.
Good.
Where will we live now?
In the camp first. Then we'll build houses.
Before the tower?
Before the tower.


You locked the people in.
I wanted to hold the castle.
You forgot the people in it.
You're no longer castellan. Help put a roof over their heads.
Now he's holding something useful.


In our story, the king decided not to rebuild Refshaleborg.
Anything useful mustn't go to waste.
Will it all go?
The walls. Not what we've learned.
I'm saving the most important thing!

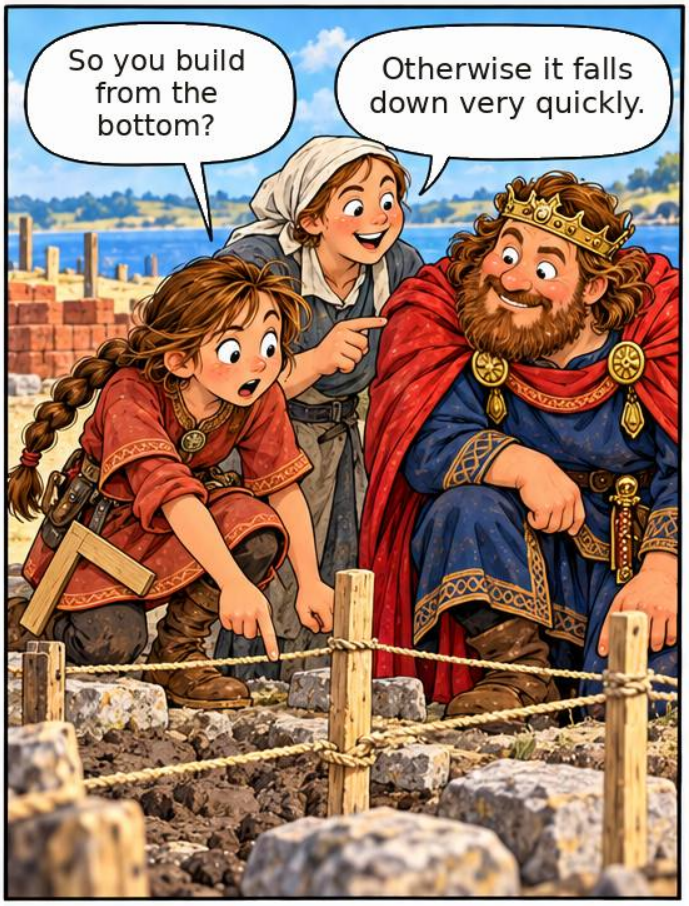

Look! Our plank.
It's still good.
It's getting a new job.
Then we'll take it along.
Out. This is for porridge.
There's no legroom anyway.

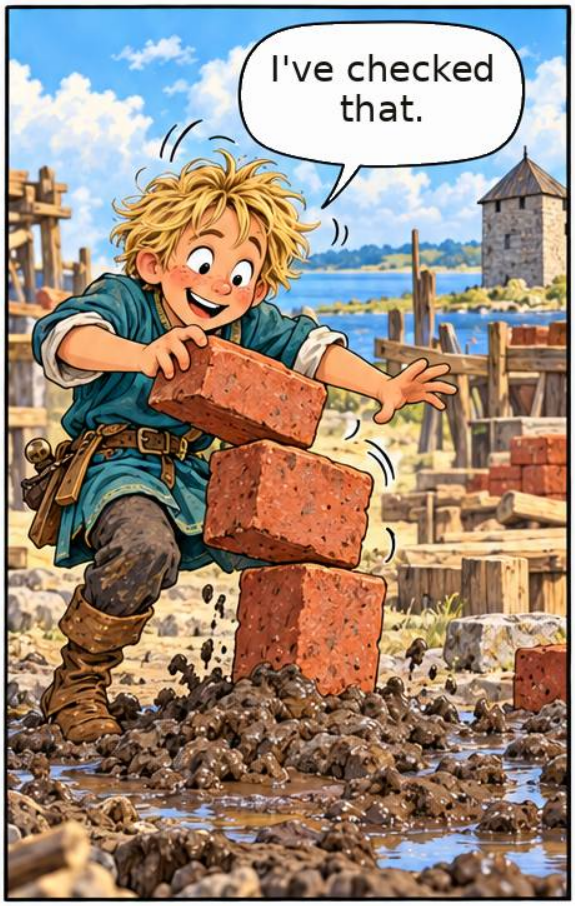

Later, they set off towards the coast.
Do you think the new castle will be nice?
That depends on who lives in it.
On three!
You said two last time!
RUMLE!
I'm going by sea next time.


No finished castle awaited them at Aalholm. Only a beginning.
A roof. A fire. We can use that.
Before the tower.
He kept that promise.
Right. Now all we're missing is everything edible.


How tall can the tower be?


First we must find out how firmly it can stand.


So you build from the bottom?
Otherwise it falls down very quickly.


I've checked that.


Summer passed with stone, timber and aching hands.
Measure twice. Saw once.
Carry two. Drop none.
He's measuring twice too.
Two boots. Same hole.


I've got the rope under control.
Lunch!
Not for the birds!
We're building a castle. Not a bakery in the sky.


Then the weather changed.
Off the scaffolding. Tie down anything loose.
Father! That joint is moving.
Under the roof! Now.


The rope's too short!
The cart! We tied the timber with a long rope.
The old plank. Here!
This time I'm counting the grown-ups too.


Winter came. Then spring. The work continued.
It really did get a new job.
So did we.
Where shall the bread go?
See. Now you're asking first.
We'll share. But you're not getting my half.


From here we can see the ships coming.


And from here you can see the people who live here.


I must remember them too.


Solid ground at last.
You've brought the old stuff with you.


Aalholm wasn't finished yet. But it had become their home.
Fetch the basket. Then we'll eat.
Was that your stomach?
DING...
My stomach doesn't have a bell.
THE END... for now.

# What do we know about Refshaleborg?

### A castle before Aalholm

Refshaleborg stood on Borgø in Maribo Søndersø. In the Middle Ages it was a large castle complex.

### The year 1256

The Lund Annals say Refshaleborg was besieged and destroyed in 1256. The short entry does not name the attackers.

### Who sent the soldiers?

Aalholm's history page suggests one theory: perhaps the king was behind it, wishing to move his centre of power to the coast. This is not proven.

### Our story

We chose that possibility to begin a fictional adventure. The king's letter, conversations, course of the battle and children's rescue are invented.

### Background and further reading

Aalholm Slot: Refshaleborg: the castle before the castle.
Read the history page at aalholmslot.dk.
aalholmslot.dk

# What we made up

**The characters**
Christopher I was a real Danish king. Signe, Asger, Toke, Ane, Eskil, Rane, Maren, Liv and Astrid are fictional characters in this story.

**The old stone castle**
The little grey castle at Aalholm is our imagined reconstruction. We do not know that such a building stood there in 1256.

**From one castle to another**
We send families and materials from Refshaleborg to Aalholm. The direct move and reuse shown here are not documented.

**The building work**
Aalholm's exact founding date is unknown. The king's building plan in 1256 is invented. The drawings show an imagined early castle. We compress time into a few scenes, not an exact building plan or timeline.

**The bell in the wall**
We invented that too. Where it leads the children is a story for another day.

Want to explore the past? Always ask: What do we know? What do we think? And what makes a good story?

# Who was bravest?

Signe found the way. Asger fetched Liv. Toke and Maren brought the boats. Ane kept everyone organised.

Who do you think was bravest? Can you be brave even when you're frightened?

**Look for these next time**
Find the plank Signe and her father repair. Where does it appear again?

Watch Eskil's boots. Does he ever get all the mud off?

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The King's New Castle
English edition · October 2026
For ages 7-11.

Story and illustrations were created with AI for Aalholm's comic project. Historical reconstructions and fictional events are explained on the preceding pages.

aalholmslot.dk

# The king has a plan.

The castellan has another.

And Signe and Asger have a problem: they're caught between them.

When the king's men surround Refshaleborg, two children must find their way past stubbornness, locked doors and a castle that is no longer safe.

An adventure about courage, friendship and the art of building something that lasts.

**THE KING'S NEW CASTLE**
The first story in the AALHOLM series.