

Blood and Flesh and Bone
By Jenny St. Angelo

A young man with dreams of glory learns the true cost of holding
on to power.

EXT. BALLEYBODEN, A SMALL VILLAGE. DAY.

ARDAN, a young man, 17, is sitting on the edge of the village fountain, reading a book. A scraping sound starts and stops. He looks up, sees nothing, and goes back to his book. The sound begins again. Ardan looks up again, curious, annoyed, and then looks down over his book.

ARDAN
Having trouble?

DAVINA
A little.

Davina, a small girl of five, is holding a rather large bucket.

DAVINA (CONT'D)
Can you help me please?

ARDAN
Sure.

He lifts the bucket up, dips it into the fountain until it's filled.

ARDAN (CONT'D)
There you go.

DAVINA
Thank you.

She tries to lift the bucket. It doesn't budge. She tries again, little grunts and harrumphs echoing through the village square. A satisfied smirk sits on Ardan's face as he goes back to his book.

DAVINA (CONT'D)
This is too heavy now.

ARDAN
Oh, I do apologize. I'll fix that.

He kicks the bucket over, water spilling everywhere. Davina yelps and runs after her bucket. Ardan laughs, going back to his book.

DAVINA
That was very rude!

ARDAN
It's not my fault you're too small.
Next time don't try to get more
than you can carry.

Davina scowls and walks off. A moment later she is back with a small apple box. She marches haughtily up with her bucket, and dips it into the fountain. She very slowly and carefully turns to head down the steps.

EOGHAN (V.O.)

Ardan O'Donahue get up at once and carry her water.

At the sound of Eoghan's voice, Ardan leaps into the air, his book lands with a splat on the dusty ground. Eoghan, a massive man, 40, picks it up. Ardan looks down sheepishly.

EOGHAN

(gently)

Now, little miss, who sent a wee one such as yourself to fetch so much water?

DAVINA

(proudly)

Eida.

EOGHAN

Did she?

Eoghan looks at Ardan, looks through him, looks so long that--

DAVINA

Um, yes she did. I'm supposed to be back--

EOGHAN

Of course little miss, I do apologize. Yes, Ardan, you will carry...what is your name?

DAVINA

Davina McShane. I'm five. I can carry it.

EOGHAN

I see! Well, if you say you can, you can. But Ardan, you will accompany Miss Davina McShane until she is safely home. And, Miss Davina, please tell Eida than Eoghan O'Donahue sends his respects and his son to meet her.

Eoghan bows, Davina curtseys, Ardan rolls his eyes.

EOGHAN (CONT'D)

Ardan.

He pauses, clearly struggling to say something.

EOGHAN (CONT'D)

Be good.

EXT. THE DIRT ROAD AT THE EDGE OF THE FOREST. DAY.

Ardan has found a stick, and many imaginary lives are lost at his hand. Davina is struggling proudly with her bucket.

DAVINA

Stop doing that! You're going to make me drop my bucket!

ARDAN

You don't get to order me around, *little miss*, seeing as how I'm doing you a favor.

DAVINA

You're doing this because your da' said you must.

She thinks a moment.

DAVINA (CONT'D)

I like your da'. He's nice.

ARDAN

(proudly)

Everyone likes him. He's the town's blacksmith. Once he shoed King Cormac's horse. The King said my da' was the finest smithy he'd ever met. Asked him to come to the castle and be his blacksmith.

DAVINA

(impressed)

And did he go?

ARDAN

(frustrated)

No. He said he would be honored to shoe His Majesty's horses, but he could never leave Balleyboden. So now I'm stuck here with the likes of you instead of my true calling: becoming a knight.

DAVINA

I don't like knights.

He comes to a halt.

ARDAN

(incredulous)

What do you mean, you don't like knights? They defend our lands from savage enemies! They are the strongest and bravest men, they can have any wom- um, never mind that part. Everyone jumps when they walk into a room, they're given the best seats by the fire, the best ale, the best cuts of meat. If I was a knight everyone would do as I say, or I'd chop their heads off! That life should have been mine!

A cloaked figure appears, seemingly from nowhere, and gently lifts the bucket from Davina's hands.

EIDA

Do not be so hasty in deciding what your life should be Ardan O'Donahue.

Startled, Ardan turns, ready to fight. There stands Eida, a woman of indeterminate age. She looks at Ardan and his stick curiously. The stick drops from his hands.

DAVINA

I'm supposed to say "Eoghan O'Donahue sends his respects and his son to meet you."

She breaks her gaze, looks down at Davina, and smiling, takes her hand.

EIDA

Thank you Davina, you have done excellently in bringing me what I needed today.

DAVINA

Well, it was hard carrying the water, but I did it in the end.

EIDA

(to herself)

That is not quite what I meant.

As Eida walks into the woods, she glances at Ardan. With a nod she beckons him to follow.

INT. EIDA'S COTTAGE. DUSK.

Eida brings a fire immediately to life in the fireplace. No one seems to notice. She pours the water into a large pot hanging over the fire.

Ardan is examining objects. No two are alike; one is a broken clay pot, another a delicate painting in a gilded frame. Every corner holds the oddest odds and endless ends.

ARDAN

What is all this stuff?

DAVINA

Things we sell! Well, we try to sell. Not many people come this way, but sometimes a hunter comes through and he'll buy a rope or a bag, but mostly no one comes here.

ARDAN

My father has a very busy shop. People come from all over to see him. They pay him loads 'cause he's the best. I can get new books whenever I want.

DAVINA

We can't buy new books really, but we've got some very old ones! I'm not allowed to touch them.

ARDAN

Is your ma very strict?

DAVINA

Eida's not my mother.

EIDA

No, indeed, I am not. Come, Ardan, I have something to show you. Davina, would you please see if any rabbits fell into our trap?

Davina runs outside, shouting "Here rabbits!" Ardan walks over to the fire.

ARDAN

What happened to her mum?

EIDA

That is not for me to tell. Ardan, look in this pot, what do you see?

ARDAN

Water and a few puny potatoes.

EIDA

What does that tell you?

ARDAN

Unless you catch that rabbit you're not going to have much of a supper.

EIDA

And why is that?

ARDAN

Well, it's all you've got, because you're poor, obviously.

EIDA

Obviously.

ARDAN

Water and potatoes aren't enough to make a real meal. Listen, my father is a very smart man, he'd fix this place up, tell his customers to come to you for...something. Then you wouldn't need to live like this.

EIDA

(laughing)

Your father said the same thing.

ARDAN

My da's been here?

EIDA

(ignoring the question)

If you could have any supper, what would it be?

ARDAN

Oh that's easy, the shoulder of a pig that's been roasting all day with a cranberry basil glaze. A heaping pile of buttered smashed, cinnamon carrots, black pudding, and a mug of dark ale from the cellar.

As he says these things, Eida's eyes turn black, and on a small table next to Ardan appears the very meal he's describing. Eida's eyes return to their normal hue.

ARDAN (CONT'D)
How did you...?

EIDA
I am a witch Ardan. I can do many
things.

With a small flick of her hand, the objects in the room begin to rise, transforming into golden candelabras, silks, dresses fit for a queen. She snaps her fingers and everything falls back to their normal assorted states, a cloud of dust billowing.

ARDAN
Can you make me a knight?

EIDA
I can make you armor that will
never rust, a sword that will never
break, maille so fine not even a
needle can penetrate it.

ARDAN
What do I have to do? I'll do
anything.

EIDA
Eat.

She gestures to the beautiful meal before him.

ARDAN
(laughing)
That's it? I'll do it!

Ardan grabs a knife, cutting off a piece of the pork shoulder.

ARDAN (CONT'D)
It's very...bloody.

EIDA
Eat.

He begins chewing, blood dripping down his chin, a grimace on his face.

Davina runs in, and goes stock still at the sight of the blood. A rabbit squirms in her hands.

ARDAN
This doesn't taste very good.

His hands are bright red and dripping. He puts down the pork

and tries the mashed potatoes. They crunch in his mouth. He pulls from his mouth a small white bone. Horrified he stands up.

EIDA

Sit down and eat the rest of your meal.

ARDAN

I don't want it.

EIDA

I thought you wanted to be powerful? To have all the finest cuts of meat?

ARDAN

I do! But this isn't-

Eida takes the squirming rabbit from Davina and begins skinning the rabbit alive. The squeals echo through the cottage.

EIDA

This is what power is Ardan. It is the blood, and flesh, and bone of everyone who stands against you. Power doesn't come easy, and it doesn't stay without force. There are those that will always fight, and what will you do to force their respect? Who will you become? The trappings of power come at a price. Your father understood this, and that is why he stayed here.

She quickly breaks the rabbit's neck, it goes limp and silent. Ardan begins retching. A bowl fills with warm water and potatoes. Eida takes it to him.

EIDA (CONT'D)

There are many paths to glory. Power alone is not one of them.

He looks at the fine meal, then drinks the broth. The meal vanishes. The cottage, the odds and ends, the rabbit, Davina, all vanish. Eida and Ardan are alone at the edge of the forest.

EIDA (CONT'D)

Go home Ardan O'Donahue. And do good.

FADE TO BLACK.