

Storyteller

Martyn Bennett

WELL THERE WAS ONCE UPON A TIME there was a king and his wife, and she died, an they left a daughter. So the king remarried. And this king, when he remarried, the stepmother took a hatin to this girl. Sae she was goin one day for a pitcher o water, an she let the pitcher fall. So she put the blame on the daughter.

So she says to her stepmother, she says, "Look, " she says, "for God's sake," she says, "leave me alone." So the girl sets away. Her father drove her out. She'd nowhere to go. She wis jist left alone. So she says to herself, she says, "A must go away."

So she married this great fellow, an he was called up to the army. An when he was called up to the army she was left in childbirth. So she wisn't able, an nowhere to stay. She'd nowhere to stay at all. So she was jist on her own. So her bairn was born, a young son.

So her father cam up to her.

She says, "Look," she says, "you drove me out," she says, "father," she says, "an," she says, "look," she says, "ye understand whit I mean," she says, "A widna like ye for to . . . for tae come on the same grounds as where I'm walkin."

He says, "Look," he says, "daughter Doris," he says, "d'ye see that sword?" he says.

"Yes," she says, "father."

"Well," he says, "A'm cuttin off yir arm." So he takes this sword an he cuts off her arm. "Is that sore," he says, "daughter Doris ?"

"Oh yes, father," she says, "very." She says, "What about ma wee child," she says, "father?"

"Never mind about it, daughter Doris," he says. So he takes his sword again an takes the other arm off her. Cuts her other arm off. He says, "Is that sore, daughter Doris?"

"Oh yes," she says, "father, very sore."

He says, "Look," he says, "when ye're walkin on the road," he says, "wi your child in yir arms -"

"How can A walk," she says, "father," she says, "when A've no arms to carry ma child," she says, "an A'm blidding to death?"

He says, "Look," he says, "d'ye see that sword, daughter Doris?" he says, " 'at cut off yir two arms?" And he says, "D'ye see that sword? A'm cuttin off two legs," he says. So he cuts off her right leg. He says, "Is that

sore," he says, "daughter Doris?"

"Oh," she says, "father, very sore. Father, very," she says.

He says, "No better," he says, "than what ye've done tae my milk pitcher." He says, "D'ye see that sword, daughter Doris?" he says, "that cut off yir two arms an yir right leg?" he says. "Well it's cuttin off yir left."

She says, "How am A gonnae carry ma baby," she says, "father," she says, "when A've no legs," she says, "an ma two arms is a-wantin?" She says, "Look," she says, "father," she says, "I would like if you'd leave," she says, "even ma one leg," she says, "an let God," she says, "b'lieve in ma side." She says, "Look," she says, "for God's sake," she says, "will ye do that for me?"

"No," he says, "you broke ma milk pitcher," he says, "an," he says, "ye're gaun tae suffer." Very good. So he takes the sword again. He says, "Well, this is the last one," he says, "an then the last, sweep," he says, "Am gaun to give ye, " he says, "is yir left leg away. An," he says, "A'll leave nothing," he says, "but the trunk of the body." So he takes this sword an he sweeps the leg off her, the left leg. "Is that sore, daughter Doris?"

"Oh father," she says, "very."

"It's no sorer," he says, "since the . . . day ye broke ma milk pitcher. But," he says, "yir child," he says, "is a wee son."

"Yes," she says, "father, he's a wee son. An," she says, "he's gonna be a great hero," she says. She says, "A'm lyin here dyin. A'm bleeding to death," she says, "an," she says, "this day," she says, "bove any other day," she says, "A'm not able to carry ma child," she says, "A'm not able," she says, "for to give it a drink."

"Well," he says, "look," he says, "A'm takin the sword," he says, "an A'm cuttin off yir breasts," he says, "so yir child'll die."

She says, "Fir God's sake," she says, "father, don't dae that," she says. "A lost ma baby," she says, "an A'm dyin," she says, "A'm bloodin tae death."

He says, "Look," he says, "there's the sword," he says, "an A'm cuttin off yir breasts." So he takes the sword an he cuts off her two breasts. That was her two legs, her two arms an her two breasts. He says, "Daughter Doris, " he says, "is that sore?"

"Oh yes," she says, "father, very sore."

"It's no sorer tae you," he says, "than the day you broke ma milk pitcher. Well," he says, "A must get on ma horse's back."

"Well," she says, "my young son," she says, "â€™ll be a hero some day," she says, "an anither thing. Before ye go on yir horse's back A hope to God there a thorn, a black thorn," she says, "â€™ll go in your foot," she says, "and there's no anither doctor," she says, "or professors in the country â€™ll ever take that out except ma son." An she says, "Cheerio."

So she's tryin to cairry her wee baby in her teeth, tryin tae cairry it. An she got up tae an orchard wi't rollin on her side an pullin it, in God's torture. So she lands at this orchard an she's takin a bite o aipple an she's tryin tae chew it an put it in the wee baby's mouth an she's bloodin tae death, jist the last gasp, when this old man wi a white baird comes up.

He says, "Look," he says, "daughter Doris," he says, "lift yir child!"

"Oh," she says, "A can't lift ma child," she says, "A've no arms."

"Try't," he says. "Have a go at it. Jist try it!"

She says, "How can A?"

He says, "Try." She [sic] says, "Jist - There's yir baby lyin there," he says, "jist lift it up."

So she tries, an her two arms come back the same way.

"Try," he says, "an walk."

"How can I walk," she says, "when A've no legs to walk on?"

"Try't," he says.

So she tries tae walk: she's walkin up an then she's got her wee baby in his [sic] airms, she's gaun up and down wi't.

He says, "Give your baby a feed."

"How can I? Ma breasts wis cut away," he [sic] says. She says, "Look, how can A do it? "

"Jist have a trial," he says, "Jist have a wee trial."

So she lifts her baby up an she tries her breast, tae it come back jist the same. So she went out on to the road again and thanked the old man very much, thanked him a thousand times. An she walked on the road. An she meets this young chap, a very young, handsome young man, an she gets married to him. So they gets settled down.

Now there was a great playcard up in every shop. It's posted on every telegraph pole - maybe in these days A don't think there'd be telephones, but they'd be on trees an that: "There's a king dyin: anybody can save his soul they've aid [?] in my wealth."

So she looks at it, she says, "There's only one man," she says, "an that's ma wee baby," she says, "'Il cure that."

So she gaes up tae her father in the bed. She says, "Father," she says, "d'ye remember cuttin aff my legs?"

"Daughter," he says, "I remember it," he says. "A thought ye were dead," he says. "Have ye got two wooden

legs?"

"No," she says, "father." She says, "That young man is ma husbant there," she says, "an that other young man is my son. An he's only about thirteen or fourteen years of age," she says. And she says, "Look," she says, "there's only one man 'll cure that, an that is my young son. An," she says, "there's only one thing he'll take it out with an," he [sic] says, "that's the point o your sword which you cut off ma legs with."

So the young fellow staps her [?]: he says, "Look," he says, "it's ma own flesh an blood," he says, "an A'll take the sword." So he cuts the leg off an he flings it intae a bin.

So the old man is lyin in agony. "Get me a frog!" says the young hero. "I'll take a frog," he says, "an leave it in the bed," he says, "for twenty-four hours along with my grandfather," he says, "and the morn," he says, "his footâ€™ll come back natural."

Very good. So they went an they got a frog, an they put it in the bed. So it lickit his foot or that, anyway, I don' know how it happened. So anyway, this . . . young hero is jist waitin on the word to see if he'd die or live. So the king looks, the auld king himself. He says, "Look," he says, "you've saved my life," he says, "an A'll take your place," he says, "an you take mine."

So A don't know very much more about it.

Lyrics submitted by Padraig O'Neill.

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