

Lady of Avalon by Ben Pittman

Excerpt

The sun rises on the Kirke tavern and Davey is sleeping at a table with a half-empty bottle of rum before him. Sara enters. She stares at her sleeping son, allowing him a few more moments of dreamy solace. Dogs bark loudly outside and Davey wakes.

SARA

You'll get lice sleeping in here.

DAVEY

My lice have lice.

SARA

Lucy will fill a bath.

DAVEY

Later, the new rum... it's spicy, and potent.

SARA

And expensive.

Sara picks up the bottle, noticing how much Davey drank.

You've never spent the night in the shop.

DAVEY

I've been gone many years, you would not believe where I've slept.

Davey stokes the fire.

SARA

What happened?

DAVEY

What? To Father?

SARA

I need to know.

DAVEY

Here? Now?

SARA

What better time? The sun is rising, the men have all gone fishing... we are alone.

DAVEY

The details mother... you may not want to...

SARA

Please!

DAVEY

Where to begin?

SARA

His body?

DAVEY

They took him away. They claimed he had contagion, so I'd say he was cremated.

Davey cannot bear to look into the fire and turns away.

SARA

Contagion?

DAVEY

It was not, though it may distress you to hear, 'twas the beatings he suffered that killed him.

SARA

Prison is a marathon of pain.

DAVEY

I told you everything in the letter... I know not what more I can...

SARA

You told me of his end but –

DAVEY

- What does it matter?

Davey gets a cup of water and drinks thirstily.

SARA

It does matter son; anything.

DAVEY

I was with an army on the run, waiting for orders from a King in hiding. We all knew the war was over but some of us... we held on to hope that we'd get help from France or Ireland. (*Davey drinks*) Our neighbors were only too happy to see England devour itself.

Beat.

Then I heard that father'd been arrested... and an idle army is a terrifying beast, so I left and went to London.

SARA
The heart of hell.

DAVEY
And then some, it was chaos. I got in to see him, I claimed to be his barrister.

SARA
How was he?

DAVEY
Hopeful... strong.

Beat.

I got to see him once more... he was not the same man, beaten... broken down but... he still made me take an oath. The one he could not fulfill.

SARA
You were with him... at the end.

DAVEY
Yes.

SARA
He was not alone.

Sara kisses Davey on the cheek.

I remember during the war with France, when he was knighted... not much older than you. He and his brothers forced Champlain to surrender - the founder of Quebec flying the white flag for the Kirkes.

DAVEY
If only my brothers were so inclined.

SARA
(Sarcastic) Let us wrap George in some armor, teach him to shoot straight. Unleash Jarvis on the world. Tell Phillip to give his life for a cause... any cause.

Beat.

They are not soldiers.

DAVEY
Well they damn well should be!

Davey gets a drink of rum.

SARA
The foe is too great and our allies too few.

DAVEY
So we are to carry on?

SARA
We must try.

DAVEY
Conduct business with the rebels as though nothing has happened?

SARA
What is the alternative? (*Beat*) It was not the rebels who kept David in jail as you well know.

DAVEY
Bloody hell mother! They killed our King!

SARA
Kings get themselves executed from time to time.

Beat.

DAVEY
I was there.

SARA
At Whitehall?

DAVEY
One strike... The King's head was cleaved clean. It was sickening... people who had cried for Charles the previous day, were now bawling for his demise.

Beat.

There is such a poison flowing through the blood of England... my every instinct compels me to take action.

SARA

Your ordeal is finished son. This is our home... all we have left. You are needed here.

Davey, distracted, pulls out the bloody handkerchief.

DAVEY

The things I've seen... done.

SARA

I know the horrors that stay with a soldier.

DAVEY

(Relives the moment) I tried to wipe it off but it...

SARA

(Touches his arm) Son?

DAVEY

King Charles... his torso, was like a fountain. The mob surged. I was carried to the stage. They grasped and dove for the stream...I...I was painted. The handkerchief you gave me...

SARA

If it pleases God, all this war and death is over. Let us pray for a long time... we must keep our mind on the business.

Beat.

Cromwell will not long be in power, Englanders need a King, need a bloke to gossip on.

Davey pockets the handkerchief.

I will be gone two months and I must set sail at once or I'll never make the appointment.

DAVEY

I've never seen one so headstrong to pay a debt. Two months?

SARA

Old stains that need removal. See that our new guests settle in and...

Beat.

Throw out that bloody rag.

Sara exits. Davey is about to throw out the rag but changes his mind and returns it to his pocket.

End of Excerpt.