A painting depicting a knight in full armor, including a helmet with a crest and a red cape, standing next to a woman in a white dress and a blue cloak. The knight is holding a sword. The background is a dramatic, cloudy sky with warm tones. The scene is set on a rocky or uneven ground.

BLUT AND BODEN

A Fairy Tale for Children
of European Descent

Ash Donaldson

CHAPTER 3
BLUT AND BODEN

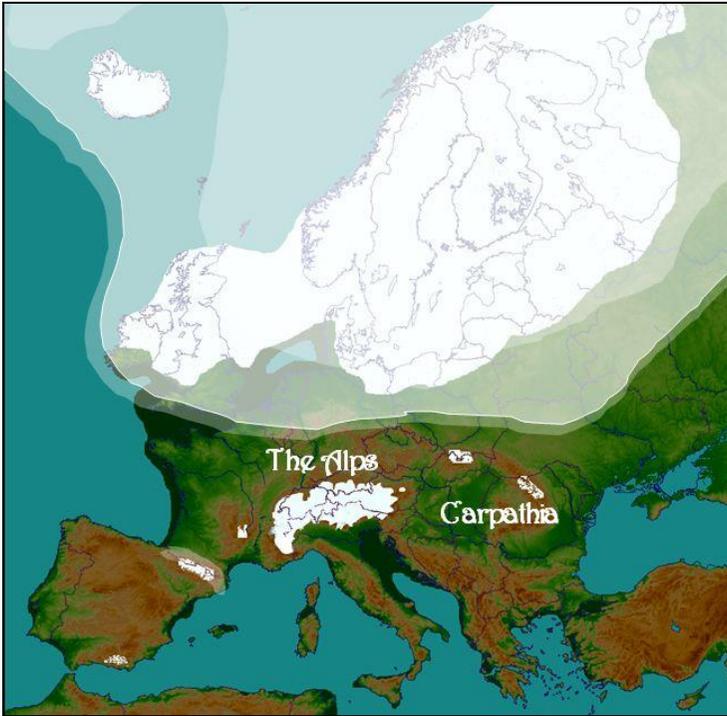
Young Boden grew up in the mountains of Carpathia, and he soon proved to be clever, bold, and skilled in magic. While all elves possess some skill in magic, Boden was truly a lord of nature. If he so chose, wherever he stepped, there a new tree would grow behind him. He could make each tree rise up full grown all at once, so that, running through a barren field, he could transform it into a forest in the blink of an eye.

But that was not all. If Boden raised his palms to the sky, he could make a newly formed bird appear above each one – any sort of bird he wished, from a tiny wren to a mighty eagle. And if he held his palms facing down, to the earth, beneath each one would emerge a wild animal – any sort of animal he wished, from a wee field mouse to a great stag. Thus Boden could make a place flourish with plants and animals very quickly.



Boden learned to fight, as well, for even far from the front lines, he would come upon Frost Giants. Already in his youth, he gained fame for his manly daring, and the sword he wielded became known as the Giants' Bane. You must understand that elves are not slight, frail beings who never harm anything. Beset by many enemies, they have fought more wars through the ages of the earth than any creature, and no giant has as much wrath as an elf who has been angered.

Wild and free Boden lived, but he could not escape the terrible conflict known as the Winter War, which had been raging long before his arrival. Many kingdoms succumbed, as had those in the west. But the elves of Europe had help from an unlikely place.



Some mortal men had joined the elves in their struggle against the giants, for their homes also lay here. Only a few did so, for most men had no desire to face the cold and the wrath of Frost Giants, choosing to remain instead in the sunnier lands to the South. The few who dwelled in Europe were a hardy breed. Little sunlight shone here, and the winters were so long as to seem endless. Those who had darker skin did not take in as much light as their bodies needed, and they grew weak and sick. The ones who survived had the whitest skin.

Over many hundreds of generations in that cruel war, other changes came about. The survivors had narrower noses, to warm up the cold air before it came into their lungs. While those in the South chased quickly after

the animals of the plain, the men of the North were gone for weeks, hunting great beasts that once roamed those frozen wastes. They needed strength more than speed, and the ability to endure.

Those in the farthest North, on the front lines of the war, lived where the sun barely rises in winter, and on a few days there is no sun at all. They had blue or green eyes to take in more light, and many of them had hair that was red or blond.

And so the men of this war not only fought alongside the elves; they and their women came to look more like the elves than all the races of man, with a stout, dwarf-like toughness. This happened over many thousands of years, for the Winter War was longer and more terrible than any war before or since.



Thus was this new race shaped in outward form. But inside, as well, these men and women were being forged like a sword on a dwarf's anvil, and their children grew up tough. Unlike the races in sunnier lands, who could survive year-round with or without dwellings, those of northern Europe had to build houses that could withstand the long, harsh winter. Those who did not build well died from the cold. To find food in the frigid winter is not easy, so only the cleverest survived. They went on long hunts across frozen landscapes that one could scarcely navigate. To survive, they had to reason, remember, and plan.

So difficult was it to hunt animals in the cold North, that many families might be kept from starvation by only one hunter's find. Thus, the tribe survived through its members showing kindness, always thinking the best of one another. To bring down the huge mastodons that once lived in Europe, they had to work together, decide quickly, and take risks that might end someone's life. Being willing to sacrifice oneself for the common good became the highest virtue among them.

To survive meant planning well, saving enough food and wood, and preparing for the winter while it was still warm outside – to see things that are not here but one day will be. They had to rise in the night to keep the winter-fires burning, fighting off sleep and comfort, or else death would come in the frozen North. With patience and forethought, they put off what they wanted until what they had to do was done.

Everyone pitched in, from the youngest to the oldest, and they valued hard work as much as any dwarf. The harshness of life made every life precious, even the

smallest child, for only if their family was strong did everyone survive. They held their women in higher regard than any men on earth, and to be true to each other was not only a virtue, but a necessity for survival.

Deep in their soul, too, they became more elvish, for the elves had a sadness inside that has been with our race ever since. From them we get our sense of lost glory, of a golden age long gone. We feel it in our bones, that things are not as they should be, that the world is in decline, and that it will get worse – until the sleeper awakens.

Thus, they slowly became like both elves and dwarves, this new race. The elves dubbed them the sons of Arius, or Aryans, those descended from the Noble One.

Yet always, like any man, this race had the giantish impulses waiting to be fed. Much beauty can be shaped from giant-nature, as both elves and dwarves know. But for that, one needs to be a master of one's drives and not a slave to them. Otherwise, you can create no true beauty.

In that land of Europe, in the little corner of Carpathia, the elf-prince from across the sea heard tidings of a great massing of Frost Giants, and that his race was in peril. For while the giants had suffered many losses, now they had slain the last of the elf-kings. From all sides their armies marched, seeking to wipe out their age-old enemies at last, and they were led by one known as the Winter King. A giant every bit as fearsome as Grim Jack, he had been butchering the sons of Arius for ages, and many an elf, too, had fallen under his great club.

The last of the elf-kings to fall in the defense of his people had a daughter named Blut. She now gathered the remaining elves into the mountains of the Alps to make a

final stand. The sons of Arius, who had fought alongside Blut's kindred for many thousands of years, did not abandon the elves in their hour of greatest need. By tribes they assembled, and Blut welcomed them.

To the troubled court of that elf-princess came Boden one day, and he cut a gallant figure even among those hardy knights. Many an elf-maiden wished for his love, but he saw that none were as fair, none as enchanting, as Blut.

Oh, the beauty of Blut! How can I describe it? Her hair had the unique quality of changing color throughout the day. At dawn, its red matched the horizon, then as day came, it slowly blended into a blond that equaled the shining sun. At sunset, her hair reddened once more, then darkened from chestnut brown at twilight to raven black at midnight. With the coming of dawn, it lightened again.

But that was not all – the color of her eyes altered with the seasons. In summer, their green was like the trees that sigh softly in the northern forests. As leaves begin to change color in autumn, her eyes became hazel with gold flecks, then amber passing into light brown. But in winter, her eyes became as gray as the sky that could be seen between the bare tree branches. Then, with the coming of spring, her eyes deepened into blue like the rains that wash away the snow and bring life, whereupon they became green once more. So beautiful was Blut, men said it was not her eyes that matched the seasons, but the seasons of earth that tried to copy her eyes.

Depending on the time of day and season, Blut's eyes and hair had truly endless combinations of color. For because the hues changed gradually rather than all at once,

you never saw her in quite the same way. But always she had the lovely white skin that set off each color perfectly.

This radiant mix of colors for hair and eyes we find in the race of Arius. No other race of man possesses it, so that some call it Blut's Gift. In truth, this snow-forged race received many such gifts from her. They say that every painting, every sculpture of a woman is but men's feeble attempt to recreate the beauty of Blut, which they find reflected in the woman they adore. In every daring deed a man does, every effort he puts his whole heart into, he is driven by the inspiration Blut's beauty stirs in him, embodied in his true love. Thus does this race-memory course down through the ages. How else to explain why the sons of Arius have been the greatest inventors and creators?

Most striking of all was the necklace Blut wore. Dwarf-made but touched with elf-craft as well, it was a heart suspended on a necklace, crimson in color but like nothing else on earth. For the more you looked at it, the more there appeared to be something going on inside of it. If a man looked closely into its depths, he became speechless so long as he beheld it, and afterwards, he could not remember what he had seen.

A mystery lies within the Radiant Heart, as it was called, and I cannot tell you what it is, for I do not know. They say it was forged at the dawning of the world, and that the giants would most like to have it. If the Devourers ever did come to possess it, the creative spark would leave the sons of Arius and elf-kind alike.

BLUT AND BODEN



They say, too, that babies know the secret when they are in the womb. When they come into this world, they cry night and day because they cannot share it. And when they first smile, it is because their mother's face reminds them of Blut. They have no way to tell it, however, and as they grow, their memories fade, until at last, it appears only in dreams.

One can easily see how this mistress of the elves would captivate Boden, and how this dashing prince might win Blut's heart where none before had. Their romance is the stuff of legend, and many a poet and writer has tried to describe it. For every love story is a distant memory of this one, which echoes through the ages like a note played on a harp, lingering in the air long after the hand has plucked the string.

As must be the case for every man, however, it is not enough to love a woman; he must be willing to fight for her. How Boden did so is the next part of my tale.

BLUT AND BODEN

