

BLOOD ROOTS

by
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FADE IN:

INT. LIVING ROOM - HOUSE - DAY

A small room in an old and weathered home. Cardboard boxes and suitcases line one wall.

JANE HOBBS, (29), sits on a threadbare couch. She strokes her long, blonde hair and stares at one of the many cracks that run along the walls.

Her son ALEX, (5), sits next to her and plays with an action figure. A baby, MARLENE, sleeps in Jane's lap.

All three of them wear winter jackets.

Daylight streams through a window, but aside from that, the house is dim, silent and still.

A knock at the door. Jane turns her head, not surprised in the slightest.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - DAY

OFFICER GRADY, a stout man whose cheeks flush from the cold, stands on the creaking floorboards of the porch. He holds a piece of paper in his hand.

The door opens and Jane steps out.

GRADY

Jane Hobbs?

Jane nods. Grady reads from the paper.

GRADY

Ms. Hobbs, you have previously been served with a three day eviction notice from the owner of this property. I am now legally required to remove you from the premises.

JANE

We're ready.

Grady nods and lowers the paper, grateful for her cooperation.

EXT. CALLIE'S HOME - DAY

A tiny ramshackle house engulfed by forest. Smoke billows out of a chimney.

A rusty old sedan rolls along a dirt path and parks next to the house. Jane gets out, lets out a sigh of despair as she stares at the shabby abode.

INT. CALLIE'S HOME - DAY

CALLIE HOBBS, (64), eats from a bag of potato chips as she listens to the radio. She brushes away wisps of long, white hair from her face.

Piles of clutter clog the cramped dwelling.

Callie rises when she hears a knock at the door. She approaches, then stops and leans her head forward.

CALLIE

Who is it?

JANE (O.S.)

It's me, Mom.

Callie opens the door to see Jane holding Marlene in her arms. Alex stands by her side, a suitcase in front of him.

CALLIE

What's this?

JANE

Lost the house. Need somewhere to stay. Just for a bit.

CALLIE

There's nowhere else you--

JANE

No.

They stare into each other, the tension obvious.

CALLIE

Alright, but only for a few days.

They walk in and Callie shuts the door behind them. Alex sets down his suitcase and explores the stacks and heaps of assorted junk.

CALLIE
Ain't like I got much room.

JANE
Like I said. It's only for a bit.

CALLIE
And what's that translate to?

JANE
If you can watch the kids for me
tomorrow, I'll take care of the
rest.

CALLIE
Job lined up?

Jane considers her response before she delivers it.

JANE
Opportunity.

Alex runs his fingers along the tomes that fill a dusty bookcase. One large book in particular sticks out among the rest. He wraps his hands around the spine and pulls it free.

Bound in ancient, cracked leather, the cover reads, "Galdorcraeft" in faded, intricate lettering. Beneath the word, a bizarre rune consisting of dozens of intersecting lines and symbols.

ALEX
What's this book?

Jane and Callie both look toward the boy. Jane visibly grimaces when she sees what he holds.

JANE
That's...that's an old family
album, honey. Just put it back,
okay?

They watch as Alex slides it back.

CALLIE
Boy should know his heritage.

JANE
I'm all the heritage he needs.

LATER

Jane sits on the couch as dying embers glow in the fireplace. Alex sleeps on the other end of the couch and Marlene dozes within a bundle of blankets on the floor.

Jane turns the pages of a phone book, then traces her finger down a row of listings.

INSERT: "Institute of Scientific Skepticism, 441 Bray Ln."

She rips out the page.

EXT. CALLIE'S HOME - DAY

Callie watches from the doorway as Jane walks to her car. Alex waves to his mother and she waves back.

JANE

Be back soon.

INT. CALLIE'S HOME - DAY

Callie shuts the door as Alex runs among the clutter. He makes a beeline for the strange book he found yesterday.

He pulls it out and runs his hand along the cover.

ALEX

This book is cool. What's it about?

Callie sits on the couch as she cradles the baby.

CALLIE

Do you really want to know?

Alex smiles and nods. Callie grins back at him.

INT. LOBBY - INSTITUTE OF SCIENTIFIC SKEPTICISM - DAY

Jane walks in and approaches an old RECEPTIONIST.

JANE

Hello. I'm here about the challenge.

The Receptionist looks her up and down.

RECEPTIONIST

Are you saying you'd like to attempt the paranormal challenge?

JANE

If that's what you call it, yes.

She cracks a smile at Jane.

RECEPTIONIST

Please have a seat. I'll call Dr. Walcott.

Jane slumps into a chair. She inhales deeply, closes her eyes.

A few moments later, DR. JOHN WALCOTT, (55), a professorial type, walks over to Jane. He extends his hand and Jane shakes it.

WALCOTT

Hello, I'm John Walcott. I run the institute. I understand you've come about our challenge, Miss...

JANE

Hobbs. Jane Hobbs. Yes, I'm here about the hundred thousand dollars.

WALCOTT

I see. And you understand the money is rewarded only after we observe indisputable evidence of the supernatural or paranormal?

JANE

Yes.

WALCOTT

And the test will be designed by us, using our protocols.

JANE

Whatever.

WALCOTT

And what ability do you claim to possess?

Jane thinks about it.

JANE

It's really not one thing in particular, but...I suppose the easiest thing to do would be moving something without touching it.

WALCOTT

Telekinesis?

JANE

It's not...yeah, telekinesis.

WALCOTT

Okay, then. We have some paperwork for you to fill out. Then I'll bring you back and introduce you to my colleagues.

INT. TESTING ROOM - DAY

A clinical, white-walled room free of any adornments.

Jane sits behind a long table. At the other side of the room, Walcott sits behind an identical table. On either side of him sit DR. ELEANOR PHIPS, (35) and WILLIAM MATHER, (48).

Phips regards Jane with a look of disdain, almost scorn. Mather wears an easy grin, like he's about to be entertained.

In the center of the room stands a table made of gleaming stainless steel.

Two sealed glass jars rest on the table side by side. Strings attached to the inner lids dangle within the jars. Metal bolts hang on the ends of the strings.

Jane looks at the four video cameras that stand on tripods around the room. One of them is trained directly on her.

JANE

Are the cameras necessary?

PHIPS

Obviously.

MATHER

We like to thoroughly document every attempt at the challenge.

Walcott notices Jane's unease at the cameras.

WALCOTT

Is there a problem?

JANE

No. It's just...I'd rather this not be taped. Where are you gonna show the video?

PHIPS

On our website. So the public can see for themselves how charlatans and con artists always fail when their so-called powers are put to the test in a controlled setting.

Jane's dislike for Phips is evident.

JANE

Con artists, huh?

MATHER

Ms. Hobbs, this challenge has existed for over fifteen years, and we've had over five hundred applicants. Not one has succeeded.

JANE

Fine. Can we...can we just do this?

WALCOTT

Before we begin, may I ask you how long you've had this ability?

JANE

It's the result of years of training. And, people in my family seem to have a gift for it.

MATHER

For telekinesis?

JANE

No, for...conjuring.

Phips leans forward, incredulous.

PHIPS

You're saying this is some sort of witchcraft?

Jane grits her teeth as she sees Phips stifle a giggle.

JANE

That's right.

PHIPS

So why come to us? Why not use your witch powers to conjure up a million bucks?

JANE

It doesn't work like that, Dr. Phips. I can summon elemental and spiritual forces or invoke an incantation. But I can't just make stuff appear out of thin air. And I'm here for your money. That's the only reason I came to you people.

The two women glare at each other.

WALCOTT

Okay, let's begin. The test is simple. Without touching the jars or shaking the table in any way, you must make the metal bolts move. Understood?

Jane nods.

WALCOTT

You may approach the table if you wish.

JANE

I don't need to.

Jane inhales deeply through her nose, concentrates on the metal bolts that hang from the strings.

She mutters a strange language under her breath.

INT. CALLIE'S HOME - DAY

Callie and Alex sit on the couch as they look at the open book. Handwritten words in Old English fill the pages.

Callie suddenly raises her head, as if she heard a loud noise.

CALLIE

Jane. What are you doing?

INT. TESTING ROOM - DAY

Jane continues to mumble to herself as she stares at the jars. The bolts slant slightly to one side.

Walcott stands and leans closer.

The bolts spin within the jars in perfect unison.

Phips narrows her eyes, then looks to Jane.

Jane's gaze never wavers from the jars.

The bolts pick up speed. Soon they become a blur.

MATHER

I don't believe it.

Walcott and Mather gawk at the inexplicable spectacle. Phips shakes her head.

PHIPS

It's a trick. Magnets. Something.

Jane leans back in her chair and stops chanting. Within moments, the bolts slow to a stop.

JANE

I want the check now.

Walcott and Mather look at each other, unsure of how to respond.

PHIPS

Do it again.

JANE

No. I want the money.

WALCOTT

How did you do it?

JANE

I already told you how.

Walcott bends down to Mather and they whisper between themselves. Phips stares daggers into Jane.

WALCOTT

Alright, Ms. Hobbs. Mr. Mather and I are satisfied--

PHIPS
No. Have her do it again.

WALCOTT
(to Phips)
That's not part of the challenge.

PHIPS
I promise you she's a fraud. She's
just more clever than the others.
Give me a couple hours and I'll
tell you how she did it.

Jane leans forward in her chair.

JANE
Lady, you better pay me my money or-

PHIPS
Or what?

Phips offers up a sly grin.

Jane stares at her, then raises her left hand. She begins to quietly chant again.

Her eyes dart to the cameras. One by one, they click off.

Slowly, Jane clenches her fingers into a fist.

Both jars explode, sending bits of glass all over the room.

Phips drops to the floor. Walcott and Mather backpedal to the wall.

JANE
I'll take that check now.