

Carrying the Dream

No one in the valley thought of Ioram as a brave man.
He was careful. Which is not the same thing.

He measured twice. He showed up on time. He repaired what could be repaired and declined any work with even the faintest whiff of trouble. When the rains came early, his roof did not leak. When they came late, his stores held. People trusted him precisely because he did not surprise them.

That was his reputation. And he liked it.

One night, after a day of ordinary satisfactions, Ioram dreamed.

In the dream he stood at the edge of the old quarry where stone had been cut generations ago. The moon was low and enormous, close enough to touch. Someone stood beside him — he never saw a face — and placed a bundle in his arms.

It was wrapped in rough cloth. Heavy. Alive in some way.

“Take this with you,” the voice said.

“Where?” Ioram asked.

“Into the day,” the voice replied. “That is enough.”

He woke with his heart racing and his arms aching, as if they still remembered the weight.

By morning, the dream had already begun to fray. He told himself what sensible men always tell themselves: dreams are compost. They break down into nothing if left alone.

Still, he hesitated at the door.

The valley was awake. Voices. Footsteps. A neighbor calling for help lifting a beam. The world, in other words, was offering him many ways to forget the night.

He almost took one of the offered escapes.

Instead, he did something small and inexplicable.

He went back inside and took an empty sack from the wall. Folded it carefully. Tucked it under his arm.

“I’m losing my mind,” he muttered, which was the last sensible thing he said that day.

At the quarry, nothing was wrong.

That was the trouble.

The old cut lay quiet in the early light. Tools leaned where they always leaned. Men passed through on familiar routes, stepping around a half-loosened stone as they had for years. It was simply there — neither dangerous nor useful enough to merit attention.

Ioram felt the weight in his arms again.

The stone wasn't blocking anything important. No one had asked him to touch it. He told himself to walk on.

He didn't.

He set the sack down and pressed his shoulder against the stone. It resisted, then shifted a fraction. Someone laughed. Someone else shook their head.

"Leave it," a voice called. "It's not going anywhere."

"I know," Ioram said, surprised to hear himself answer.

He worked slowly, awkwardly, as if negotiating with something that had not yet decided to move. When the stone finally slid free, it settled lower down the slope with a dull, unremarkable thud.

Nothing happened.

Neither praise nor disaster. Just dust in the air, a sore shoulder, and the uneasy knowledge that he had done something without being able to explain why.

Later — much later — that changed.

When the rains came early that year, water tore through the quarry in a way no one remembered seeing. Runoff followed old channels and found old weaknesses. Where the stone had been, the flow widened instead of choking.

The path would have been washed away.

Only then did someone remember.

"If that had still been there..." a man said, trailing off.

Ioram said nothing.

By then, other things had begun to happen.

He was asked to help with a house no one else would touch — too unstable, too likely to fail. He went anyway. He braced a wall no one had noticed leaning.

A sick animal wandered into his yard one evening. Everyone said to drive it off. He didn't. He stayed with it until morning.

A child who had not spoken since her mother's death followed him for three days before anyone else besides Ioram noticed she was there. He did not ask her questions. He went about his tasks and she followed him. On the fourth day, she spoke to someone else.

People began to talk.

Some said Ioram had grown reckless.

Some said he had finally become who he always was.

Ioram said nothing.

He was learning something the dream had not explained: that acting without guarantees rearranges the world in ways no plan ever could. That meaning, when it arrives, does so quietly — and never on schedule.

That night, he dreamed again.

The quarry was empty. The moon higher. The voice returned.

“You carried it,” the voice said.

“I never knew what it was,” Ioram replied.

“Neither did I,” the voice said. “That was never the point.”

When he woke, his arms did not ache.

Something else did: a gentle, permanent ache where certainty used to live.

In the days that followed, Ioram went on being careful — but careful now in a different way. Careful not to dismiss what arrived without explanation. Careful not to demand clarity before showing up. Careful, above all, to make room for what could only be carried, never understood in advance.

He never again dreamed of the quarry.

But he learned to recognize the feeling when something invisible was placed in his arms.

It always felt unreasonable.

And it always asked to be taken into the day.

— *William Zeitler*

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