

The Mountain of Quiet Bells

There was once a land of great cities and high towers,
where roads crossed the earth like veins beneath the skin.

Merchants traded silks and spices.
Scribes wrote laws and decrees.
Armies marched beneath banners bright as fire.

For a time, it seemed the realm would last forever.
The towers gleamed,
the roads thrummed with life.

But as the years passed, the towers became hollow.
The roads cracked beneath their stones.
The heart of the realm grew brittle and diseased,
though few dared to speak of it aloud.

Rulers quarreled.
Merchants schemed.
And in the streets the people whispered,

“The center cannot hold.”



One night, beneath a sky veiled by smoke,
a lone traveler awoke from a dream.
In the dream he saw a mountain rising above the clouds,
its peak crowned with bells
that rang not for war,
nor for commerce,
but for something older than both.



He set out at dawn,
leaving behind the market cries and the clatter of swords.

The path was steep,
and as he climbed
the world below faded to a distant murmur —
like waves crashing far beneath a cliff.



At last he reached the summit,
where stood a monastery of quiet stone.
Its windows glowed with warm light.

At its gates stood a figure in a simple robe.
The figure said nothing,
only bowed
and opened the door.

Inside was no throne, no treasure,
only a circle of storytellers and musicians,
their voices weaving tales that shimmered like stars.

The traveler wept,
for he felt he had come home
to something he had never known.



From that day forward,
while the empires below waged their endless wars,
he remained among the bells and stories.

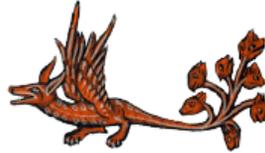
And when he descended at last,
he carried no weapon,
no decree,
only a song and a story to share.

Some laughed at him.
Others ignored him.
But a few listened.
And those few, in turn,
climbed the mountain themselves.



The world below still fell, as worlds must.
Towers toppled.
Roads dissolved into weeds.
Maps faded into half-remembered songs.

But the bells never ceased their ringing.
And the stories they sheltered
were carried forward into the dawn of a new age —
just as seeds are hidden beneath winter snow.



Seasons passed.
The fragments of the old world grew quiet.

And then,
as if stirred by some deep memory,
the people began to gather,

to plant,
to build.

From scattered villages
rose new towers and new roads ,
guided not by fear or greed,
but by the whispered echoes of songs and stories
brought down from the mountain.



The traveler, now gray with years
stood once more at the monastery gates.
The figure in the robe smiled and said:

“Empires fall, and empires rise.
The banners change, the names on the coins change.
But what matters is not the stone or the sword.
It is the song carried through the storm —
the flame kept alive
until the winds grow calm again.”



And in the distance,
below the mountain’s shadow,
a new city stirred to life,
its foundations humming faintly
with the ringing of quiet bells.

Empires come and go,
doctrines and creeds come and go.
But the songs and music of a people
feed its soul from generation to generation.

— *William Zeitler*
2025 September 11

© 2025 William Zeitler. Originally published at: GrailHeart.com

