

The Wonderful Tower

In the small village of Elmbridge, nestled between rolling hills and dense forests, there lived a boy named Corwin. From the moment he could talk, it was clear he saw the world differently. While other children played games of chase or tended to their chores, Corwin would lie in the fields, gazing at the clouds, imagining them as floating castles or great beasts. He spoke of things no one else saw — hidden patterns in the stars, melodies carried by the wind, and stories whispered by the trees.

The villagers didn't know what to make of him. His mother, a kind but overburdened woman, often whispered to her neighbors, "He's a dreamer, my Corwin. Always lost in his own world."

The other children, baffled by his strange ideas and quiet demeanor, left him to his own devices. Corwin wasn't angry or resentful. But he was lonely.

One crisp autumn afternoon, as Corwin wandered the edge of the forest, he came upon a smooth, flat stone half-buried in the earth. He knelt to examine it, running his fingers over its surface. It felt warm, almost alive. As he stared, an idea took root in his mind: he would build something — something grand, something that would speak to the wonders inside him.

"If no one understands me here," he whispered to himself, "maybe others like me will come."

That day, he carried the stone back to an open field just outside the village. It would be the cornerstone of his creation.

For years, Corwin worked tirelessly. He scavenged stones from the river, carried wood from the forest, and salvaged bits of metal from abandoned tools. His hands grew calloused, his back strong. The villagers watched with a mix of curiosity and skepticism as a strange structure began to rise in the field.

"What is it supposed to be?" they would ask him.

"A place for wonders," he would reply, smiling faintly. But he never elaborated.

The structure grew taller with each passing season. At its base, Corwin carved intricate designs — spirals, constellations, and figures from his imagination. Inside, he built narrow staircases and hidden chambers, each with its own peculiar beauty. One room had a ceiling painted like the night sky, speckled with tiny shards of mirrored glass that caught the sunlight. Another had chimes strung across its walls, so the wind played a soft, ethereal melody as it passed through.

By the time Corwin turned twenty, the tower was nearly complete. It stood high above the village, its spire piercing the sky. The villagers, once dismissive, now spoke of it in hushed tones. Some called it "Corwin's Folly," while others whispered that it was enchanted. Children dared each other to approach its base, but none ventured inside.

One spring morning, as Corwin was adding the final touches to the spire, a traveler appeared at the edge of the field. She was a young woman, her clothes dusty from the road, her eyes bright with curiosity. She stood at the base of the tower, craning her neck to see its peak.

“What is this place?” she called up to Corwin.

He climbed down to meet her, his heart pounding. “It’s a place for those who see wonders,” he said. “Do you?”

She smiled. “Always.”

Her name was Lira, and she was the first of many. News of the tower spread, carried by travelers who passed through Elmbridge. Over time, more people arrived — poets, painters, musicians, and dreamers of all kinds. They marveled at Corwin’s creation, adding their own touches: murals on the walls, songs in the air, and stories shared in its echoing chambers.

The village, once wary of Corwin, began to change. They saw how the tower brought new life to Elmbridge, filling its once-quiet streets with music and laughter. The market bustled with travelers, and the innkeeper’s rooms were always full. More importantly, they began to see Corwin not as the strange, lonely boy he had been, but as a visionary who had built something extraordinary.

As for Corwin, his loneliness faded. Surrounded by kindred spirits, he felt a deep contentment he had never known. The tower was no longer just a monument to his solitude; it was a beacon, drawing others who saw the world through wondrous eyes.

Years later, when Corwin grew old and passed the care of the tower to the next generation, it remained a place of beauty and inspiration. Travelers continued to come, and the people of Elmbridge would tell the story of the boy who built a home for wonders, turning loneliness into a gift for the world.

And high above the village, the Tower of Wonders stood, its spire catching the sunlight, a reminder that even the loneliest dreams can touch countless lives.

— *William Zeitler*
2024 December 19

© 2024 William Zeitler. Originally published at: GrailHeart.com

