

# Song of the Third Way

**T**wo kingdoms lay side by side, their borders drawn not by rivers or mountains but by ancient grievances.

Each believed the other a curse, and for as long as anyone could remember, they had been at war.

Into this land wandered a bard named Selen,  
carrying only a battered harp and a voice like flowing water.  
He sang not of kings or battles, but of rain falling on roof tiles,  
of a mother's quiet breath as she rocked a child to sleep,  
of the single thread that binds every living heart.  
Wherever he sang, children would gather, their faces luminous,  
while their parents listened from the shadows, afraid to hope.

One spring, both kingdoms heard of Selen and sent emissaries to claim him.  
The Northern general offered gold beyond imagining  
if Selen would compose a war hymn to stiffen his soldiers' courage.  
The Southern general promised him a palace and servants  
if he would create a song to strike terror in enemy hearts.  
Selen bowed to each in turn,  
then vanished into the wilderness before either could bind him.

For months, no one knew where he had gone.  
But deep in the valleys, Selen visited small villages that lay beyond the reach of armies.  
There, in the dim light of cottages, he sang softly to the children.  
He taught them melodies that shimmered like moonlight on water,  
harmonies so tender they seemed to heal old wounds simply by being heard.  
The children learned quickly, passing the songs among themselves  
until they could weave them like garlands of wildflowers.

The war above raged on, ever more senseless.  
Castles burned, borders shifted, generals rose and fell.  
Yet beneath this storm, something unseen was taking root.  
A farmer would hear his child humming  
and find his own bitterness melting away.  
A soldier, home on leave, would weep  
to hear a melody he did not know he remembered.  
The song spread quietly, like seeds scattered on the wind.

Years passed. The war, like all wars, collapsed under its own weight.  
The last generals died with curses on their lips,  
never knowing why their armies had lost their taste for killing.  
When the smoke cleared, the two kingdoms lay in ruins —  
leaderless, weary, and strangely silent.

Then, from a hillside, a single voice began to sing.  
Others joined, timid at first, then stronger,

until the valleys rang with a music no sword could silence.  
The children Selen had taught were grown now.  
They gathered not to rebuild thrones or armies,  
but to weave a new harmony between once-divided lands.  
In place of borders, they planted orchards.  
In place of war banners, they raised wind chimes to catch the breeze.

As for Selen, no one could say where he had gone.  
Some claimed he had walked into the sea, carrying his harp.  
Others swore they had seen him among the singers,  
smiling quietly before slipping away.  
But all agreed on this: his song had not ended.  
It lived in them now, a melody that refused to be silenced,  
a promise carried from one heart to another.

And whenever the world seemed ready to fall again into darkness,  
a child's voice could still be heard —  
singing.

— *William Zeitler*  
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