

This Too Shall Pass

There was once a stonemason who lived at the edge of a wind-swept land where nothing stayed the same for long. The river shifted its course each season. The dunes crawled across the plain like great, lumbering beasts. Even the stars overhead seemed to shimmer with uncertainty.

The people of the land built with haste and little hope — they expected things to fall apart. And of course they did.

But Elyas, the stonemason, carved each stone with the care of one who believed it mattered. He never hurried. His walls held longer than most, but still, in time, even his finest arches cracked, even his best-laid foundations shifted.

And yet he stayed.

He stayed through famine. Through flood. Through the year the sky did not clear and the year the rains did not come. He stayed when neighbors moved on and when wildfires came to kiss the eaves of his workshop. And always he carved, as if stone might remember something the rest of the world had forgotten.

One day, a traveler arrived — barefoot, bright-eyed, and clearly lost. She had the look of someone used to running but uncertain what she was running toward.

“Are you Elyas?” she asked. “The one who builds things that last?”

He looked up from his chisel and nodded.

“I’ve heard you know something the rest of us don’t,” she said. “I’ve tried everything. Joy flees. Grief drowns. Love blazes, then vanishes like smoke. I want to know how to live without being undone.”

Elyas said nothing. He simply motioned for her to sit, and he handed her a small stone, smooth, river-worn, veined with silver like cracks of light in a night sky.

“Hold this,” he said. “Tell me what you feel.”

She turned it in her hands. “It’s cold,” she said. “Hard. Solid.”

“Is it heavy?”

She shrugged. “Not really.”

“Follow me,” he said.

He led her down a narrow path to the river — the same river that had carved new paths through the land for generations. At its banks, he gestured for her to toss the stone in.

She hesitated. “Why?”

“Because I want to show you something.”

She tossed it.

It sank, of course. As stones have been doing since the dawn of time.

They stood in silence for a long while, watching the ripples fade.

“That’s how I feel,” she said at last. “Like that stone. Pulled under.”

Elyas nodded. “The river embraces the fallen too. Not by lifting, but by letting them belong.”

He stepped into the river and scooped up a flat stone from the shallows — this one carved with care. Its surface bore a single phrase in a language older than memory. He handed it to her.

She read it aloud: “This, too, is the Path.”

Not “this too shall pass” — and will soon be behind us. Not “endure” — and get past it. Not “rise above.” Rather, “This, too, is the Path” — this moment, this breath, this present Now.

“The sorrow?” she asked.

“Yes.”

“The joy?”

“That too.”

“The empty in-between?”

He nodded.

She clutched the carved stone like it might dissolve if she let it go.

“But what do I do with it?” she asked.

Elyas gestured to the river again. “You carry it as far as you can. Then, when the time comes... you let it go.”

She looked at the water, then back to the stone. She wasn’t ready to release it — not yet. But something in her settled.

She stayed with him. Learned how to carve. How to sit still through a storm. How to breathe without needing answers. How to love a cracked wall for the way the light came through. How to wait without waiting — the way mountains do, without effort, without end.

Years later, when Elyas died, she buried him by the river. Not with a monument. Just a single carved stone, smooth and silent.

And then she walked away into the dawn — barefoot, bright-eyed, and no longer lost.

— *William Zeitler*

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