

The Shaman

For as long as I can remember, stories have been a part of me. At first, I thought it was the videogames or the boardgames and little plastic warriors that made me love storytelling. That made sense. I spent hours escaping into fantasy, letting made-up worlds wrap around me like armor. But recently, I remembered something older. Deeper. Something I hadn't thought about in years.

My childhood wasn't easy. Not tragic in the way people write about in books but heavy in a way that sticks to your bones. I was five autumns old when I first understood death. Not the idea of it. The fact. That cold, simple realization: things die. People disappear. Some questions don't get answered.

I grew up on the hills of the first city founded after the Spanish landed in the Americas. The kind of place where history is carved into stone walls and bleeds out of the earth in the form of legends. The kind of place where, if you're quiet long enough, the past will whisper to you.

And every week, a man would walk into our neighborhood. Not a local. Not someone anyone really knew. Just... a man. Older than old. Thin as driftwood. His eyes sharp in a way that made you feel like he was always three steps ahead in a story you didn't know you were part of.

He carried a bag of glass spheres¹. Perfect little orbs, not cheap crystal, but something denser, heavier. Like they were filled with time. For a few silver coins, he'd let you choose one. You'd sit there, your fingers still tingling from the sphere's warmth, and he'd begin to speak. Not loudly. Not theatrically. Just... clearly. With rhythm. Like the story had been waiting to be told and he was just the one chosen to tell it. And the orb would glow. Not like a lamp. Like memory. Like the way a candle flickers behind your eyelids when you try to remember someone's face after they're gone.

Visions. Forgotten kingdoms, floating mountains, deserts of singing glass. And always, the quiet certainty that what he told you wasn't just fiction, it was history.

¹*The View-Master is a stereoscope device that uses reels of 3D images, originally designed to provide a virtual travel experience and later popular as a toy for children. It was first introduced in 1939, taking advantage of the newly available Kodachrome color film to display high-quality, small color images in 3D*

Someone's history.

I never learned his name. Never saw where he came from or where he went when he disappeared down the dusty road. I just called him ***The Shaman.*** It felt right. He didn't sell stories; he summoned them.

And maybe that's why I tell stories now. Not for glory. Not for fame. But because once, when I was just a lonely kid sitting on a crumbling hill, someone taught me that stories can carry you across time, not to forget your pain, but to understand it. To make sense of it.

He gave me a sphere once. Said I didn't have to pay. Told me to keep it until I had my own stories to share.

I still have it.

It doesn't glow anymore. But sometimes, when I'm writing, I catch it shifting in the light, just a little, as if it's listening.

Waiting for the next tale...