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Heft Of The Afternoon Michael Chitwood

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Michael Chitwood

HEFT OF THE AFTERNOON

Before the University and the Ministry of Celebrations, I was apprenticed to a woodcutter. I longed for learned discussion, but he would work all morning without speaking. At noon, he made us put on the coats we had shed while chopping. "The wood has already warmed us and kept us out of trouble a morning. We thank You for the wood," he said as daily grace before we ate the cold cheese sandwiches and drank from the tin cups. The water tasted of the cup, a tang like the word 'banjo' on my tongue.

To keep my mind busy as my arms, I imagined the halved blocks I carried to the wagon were the ancient texts I longed for. They were thick with dead languages, and I cradled them for the knowledge they held. By late afternoon at least my arms understood their knotted philosophies.

His old horse was always glad to head home, so the woodcutter would drop the reins and play mountain ballads while the animal hauled us back. They were alike really, just work and hunger. Now on grey afternoons when the celebratory regulations blur, I sneak back to the archives to read. It's not the words I want but to feel the grain of the fine paper.