

LORE CARD 025 “BELLS”

“See those spires on the great dome up there? You can walk on that ledge all the way ‘round. I’ve done it. I was born up there, where the fog collects in the arcade and the chantsman sing in the mornings.” The new watchman was young and fresh-faced and thought he’d be both poet and gunslinger.

The old watchman’s voice broke hoarse and mean, “Ain’t no big thing, walking the ledge. Dunnit myself. Carved my initials on ‘em and drew your momma there too. Never saw you up there though.”

Unbroken, the young man smiled thinly, “Mothers. That’s a good scent. I’ve seen the morning break over the eastern towers and heard the market calls echo across the square. I’ve met the outland tramps wide-eyed at the dockyard and seen the awe spill across their eyes when the bell towers rose from their ramparts. They shake the city every day for its awakening. Your mother loved that.”

The old watchman squinted his eyes in sudden suspicion, “Watch your punk mouth. I’ll fix you if you try’n talk personal with me. You’ll wish you hadn’t. You don’t know anything ‘bout my mother.”

Nodding gently, “I know she held you close in that last winter in the Skywalk off Hatchet’s Reach, crying that her man had left you both, that he’d gone chasing fables of a lost oriel hidden in the city. I know that.”

He stared angrily, growing more uncertain about what was real and what wasn’t.

The young poet pointed to the mighty clocktower and its hundred-fold sculptures, “And she left you there to find him, didn’t she? To try one last time with all her might to call him away from the lure of mystery gates and lost worlds? Then you were alone. Here. Talking to smoke.”

The old watchman looked back from the clocktower to where the young watchman had stood, seeing nothing there at all. It was just old thoughts, running around in his head. They took on different faces sometimes, so it could surprise him.

“She did love those bells. She really did.” He wiped his eyes and pulled his scarf closer up his neck to brace against the chill.

