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Once upon a web, a spider sat spinning time.

A priest, draped in holy cloth, walked the woods seeking peace. Determined to find his purpose, each step deeper into the woods brought the priest closer to the peace he sought. His faith, guiding him to what he was sure he would find beneath the branches. He first came to a still, quiet pond. A frog croaked, disturbing the peace.

“Why have you come to my pond, holy man? What is it you seek?” asked the frog. Startled, but steadfast in his search, the priest answered:

“Your pond? I seek peace – I see it about this place, in the stillness of the water and the calm of the leaves.”

“Be not deceived for these waters stir with life below and chaos above. Peace is not here, priest, only uncertainty. A stagnant pool that demands change to survive.”

The priest considered the frog – and spoke once more.

“Very well, friend frog – endure your change and I will seek peace elsewhere.”

The priest left the still pond, looking for his purpose. A way through the brush before him. Unwavering in his faith, he knew peace lay at the end of this path. The priest struggled through the thicket and emerged from the woods to find a beautiful scene.

An expansive field of wildflowers stretched before him. Tall grass waving in the gentle breeze, bees dancing between blooming blossoms, movement filled the priest’s sight. He spoke to the heavens about this beautiful place.

“Surely, peace rests here. Amongst the busy bees and the wandering wind, a place bathed in light and colored by life – I feel love in each stalk of grass. I feel ease in each vibrant petal.”

“Peace, is it?” A dragonfly darted by him, now here and then there. “If that is what you seek in our field of flowers, you mistake love for peace.” The priest, undeterred by this doubtful dragonfly, persisted:

“Is there not peace in love? The love in this place is obvious – does peace not found the building of such beauty? A pond is still but tumultuous beneath, is this field not dynamic above but united in love?”

“An ever-changing, elusive love yields hope – not peace. This field of wildflowers depends on cooperation, in hope – peace as fleeting and unpredictable as the wind on my wings,” whispered the dragonfly before swiftly drifting towards a new direction.

The priest, unshaken, moved on. Back through the woods, purpose and peace upon his mind. Many steps and many more thoughts. Before a meadow he stood, in reverence.

“Peace at last, I have certainly found it. My dedication to purpose has led me here – a meadow so lovely and undisturbed.”

Soft grass and softer light, butterflys floating on wings so bright. Yellow and white meets orange on black, just inside the circled meadow the priest finally sat.

In all the beauty around him, one oddity: at the center of the meadow, a dead tree of leafless branches reached towards the sky. Death surrounded by life.

“This is it, peaceful balance. The life and hope around me, change and love yet passed. This meadow is peace, a dream fulfilled.”

“Not ssssoooo fasssst priessst...” a snake slowly crawled to where the man found rest. For the first moment of his journey, the priest felt fear.

“Begone, wretched creature – leave me be. This meadow holds peace, I am at ease beneath this tree.” The snake crept closer:

“My tree, my home, this meadow away from time – I rule this domain, your fear is mine.”

“In peace there is no fear, only certainty and love; my purpose sated, you have no power here.” The priest looked again at the lifeless tree. That snake came closer, ever so certain:

“You seek peace, a hope outside of time. This tree you see lost to hope, a monument to inevitability.”

Eyes closed, the priest finally felt the pull of uncertainty. Even in this place, time the victor. Love saves not the grip of death, hope a façade – is peace a myth?

A flap of wings draws attention – eyes now open the priest watches a lone dove land on a dead branch high up in the tree.

Silence. Stillness. Peace.

“What is it you seek, faithful priest?” The dove’s words echoed throughout the now-motionless meadow. No thoughts, no sounds – only these words breached the priest’s awareness.

“Peace.” His answer.

“Peace I offer, from these stalwart branches. A resistance to time, even in death – this tree has escaped both. If it is peace you seek, it is your end I grant you through will and certain faith. To choose reprieve of this snake is only yours to make.”

A fair trade? To find peace, so determined? To escape fear and death, abandon hope and love – peace awaits.

“That is not the peace I seek.”

A shift. Time, again.

The priest flies to join the dove, his companion, upon the branch. The branch no longer dead, the tree evergreen in life. The snake – now the spider – dangling from the branch spinning webs of time. No snake spoke venom, only a spider spinning time – from a web of possibility complex in design.