

# THE LAST BELL

I know nothing. My thoughts are a haze. Ringing in my head are the bells. It's noon, and I am awake. I don't know the last time I ate anything. I can feel the length of my hair, but I don't have a mirror to look at myself. There are words that play in my mind, over and over again. Destruction. Pain. Church piano. The air tastes of wet stone and candle smoke.

Outside is raining, but I see him sitting on the bench feeding pigeons. He looks calm, put together, maybe 12 or more. I descend the stairs and go to him. I sit next to him, silence making noise more than words could ever do.

"Do you come here often?" I hear myself speak. The rain drips on the boy, but he doesn't mind, or so I think. He lets out a sigh and spreads bread crumbs.

"I like the silence." The boy answers. His gaze isn't towards me but to the pigeons.

"They like you."

"Yeah..I like them too," the boy answers, gazing at me for a second. "I read a newspaper article today about the girl who jumped from the church balcony. Here."

The boy points towards the church.

"It was all over the news too. They suspect she was pregnant with the priest. Awful stuff."

I am silent. I let the words hit me as a surge of memories floods into my brain. I remember now. The words strike me like the toll of the bells. The wind, the fear... The world tilts; the rain smells like blood. The wind. The balcony. My hands shaking. My scream. I am that girl.

by Mateja Saraja, October 2025