

THE AGE OF ELDERS

FROM THEIR ENDING CAME A NEW BEGINNING



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In the late Stone Age, a nomadic tribe journeys endlessly across the steppe, following herds and the rhythm of the seasons. Among them is **Manika**, an aging woman whose body can no longer endure the migration. As winter approaches and food grows scarce, tribal custom demands the weakest be left behind. Her daughter and granddaughter weep as the tribe departs, leaving Manika alone with her loyal dog to face the cold.

When she is near death, two mysterious cloaked riders find her. They lift her into a **crude wheeled cart**, an invention unknown to her people, and carry her through mist into a hidden valley. There, Manika awakens among a settlement of elders who have all been left behind by their tribes. She learns they have survived through quiet resilience and innovation: they plant crops, pen goats, store food, and shape wood into wheels. It is a world of stillness instead of motion.

Guided by **Taren**, a man once of her own tribe, Manika struggles to understand this new life. She walks through fields of ordered grain, finds that the goats are penned instead of herded, and witnesses a wheel turning – a sight that fills her with awe and fear. At night she lies awake beside the communal fire, trying to grasp how these old ones have mastered the earth.

When drought strikes, the stream dries and panic spreads. The elders pray to absent gods. Manika, haunted by memory, rides beyond the huts to a dry hollow, prepared to surrender. There she sees an **onager** paw the cracked ground and drink from a small seep it uncovers. Her dog follows, lapping the hidden water. Realizing the earth still holds life beneath, Manika returns to the village and leads them to dig. From the damp soil rises the valley's first **well**.

Relief turns to danger when starving nomads raid the valley, seeking food and water. During the chaos, Manika's former tribe arrives, recognizing her and the dog. Violence halts; the young join the old to drive the raiders away. Together they deepen the well, reinforcing it with wood and stone.

In the aftermath, Taren tells her, "The gods gave us water, but your eyes showed them where" As seasons turn, the tribes remain together – elders teaching, youth protecting, crops thriving. The final image reveals the wheel turning beside the well as the valley hums with quiet permanence – the first village born from memory, mercy, and the courage to listen to the earth.