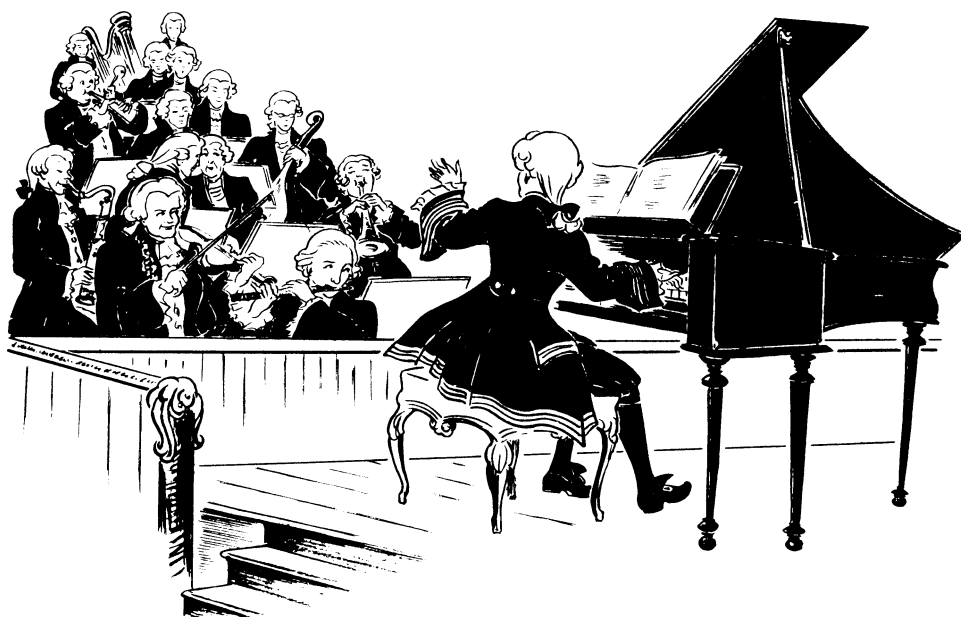


LUDWIG *BETHHOVEN*

And the Chiming Tower Bells

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CHAPTER ONE

The good folk of the quaint little city of Bonn hurried into their tall pointed houses and locked the doors tightly against the bitter December thunderstorm that suddenly beat down upon them from the Seven Mountains.

The icy wind tore at the shutters and howled in the chimneys, racing on through the valley of the Rhine to churn the waters of the old river into foam and toss the ferry boat on the high white-capped waves.

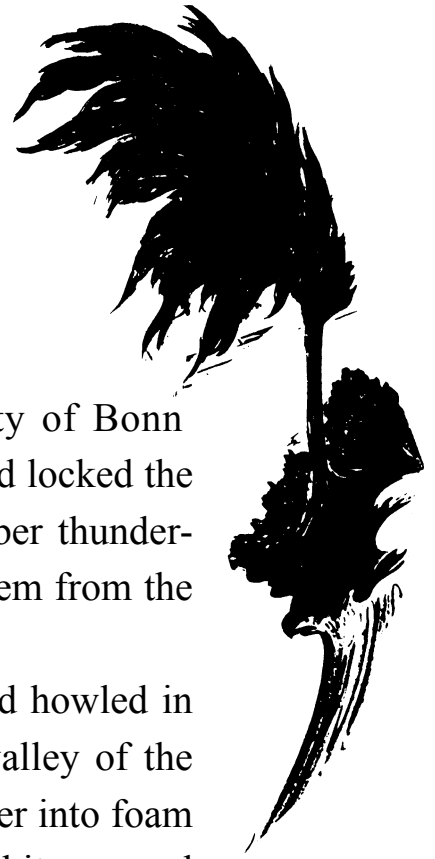
Grandfather Beethoven stood on deck with the captain, his old red coat pulled close around his broad shoulders against the driving rain.

“A bad night ahead, Captain.”

“Aye, and not another crossing for us this day.”

Soon the struggling ferry was landed at the wide pier of Bonn, nestling safely at the foothills of the mountains.

Grandfather Beethoven stepped ashore and tramped through the wet cobbled streets, stopping now and then



to look in the windows of his good neighbors, gathered snugly around their crackling hearth fires.

The Bonngasse at last! Opening the low green gate, he crossed the small garden and slowly climbed the long back stairs to the attic rooms at the top.

How cold it was in the poor, three-roomed home of his son! As he softly closed the door, a flash of lightning made the tiny bedroom as bright as day. A crash of thunder shook the walls and a baby cried lustily in the dark.

“Ah, my good Maria, the little one is here!”

“Yes, Grandfather, and you will see what a fine boy he is, too!” answered Mother Beethoven softly.

Lighting a candle, Grandfather Louis bent over the old worn bed and looked for a long time at his new grandson.

“He is not a pretty baby, Maria, but he makes a good noise! Perhaps he will be a fine singer some day, like his Grandfather!”

As the thunder growled and the wind and rain beat through the cracks in the window, the wailing grew louder than ever.

“There, there, my little one, do not cry so,” crooned Mother Beethoven tucking the coverlet closer around the small baby.

Grandfather Beethoven hurried to his home across the street, and was soon climbing the stairs again, his arms piled high with wood.

Before long, the fires were blazing cheerily, and the new baby, warm at last, fell fast asleep beside his mother.

Early the next morning, Father Beethoven carried his new son to the cold stone church of St. Remigius near by, where he was christened Ludwig van Beethoven.

In the months that went quickly by, little Ludwig heard music much of the time, for Father Beethoven was a singer in the royal choir at the Elector's palace, and gave lessons on the violin and piano to the children of noble families.

And there were many concerts in the low attic rooms, when the neighbors of the Bonngasse



gathered together to play on their instruments with Father Beethoven until far into the night.

But the best time of all was in the early morning, when Grandfather Beethoven came to visit his small grandson.

“Sing! Sing!” called the brown-skinned, black-haired little Ludwig. As Grandfather Louis, in his deep voice, began the songs that he had sung so many years ago in the royal choir, the small boy waved his arms in time to the singing.

“Just see the child, Johann — he does not miss a single beat!”

“Yes, Father. Perhaps he, too, will become a musician, like all the Beethovens!”

As soon as Ludwig was old enough to run about on his short, stocky legs, he was seldom at home, for every morning, almost as soon as he opened his big black eyes, he ran across the street to look for Grandfather Beethoven.

“Ludwig! So early you are, little one — just like the sparrows!”

After they had eaten their simple meal of sausage and bread, they wandered happily together through the busy market square and on back to the narrow Bonngasse, to chat with their good neighbors along the way.