**Gypsy Bell**

By Jim Raife©

The old plains town was fallen down the wind was everywhere

Thistle weeds grew in broken streets like knots of devil hair

Rotting spokes of gingerbread and fences stained with rain

And window boxes where daisies dried will never bloom again

Settled before the Civil War high atop a wooded hill

Was a covered bridge cross the river Finch that pulled the flourmill

Grand houses raised from timber that had journeyed endless miles

Surrounded on all sides by a sea of flowers dark and wild.

On a cold spring day in 88 came a wagon ‘cross the hills

Was led by a family of gypsies selling medicine to cure all ills

Painted beautifully blue and gold and carved like a treasure chest

Crowned atop with a silver bell as large as an eagles’ nest

They drove their dappled ponies to the ridge above the town

They people raised their windows and the children gathered round

Cloths of flowers of fire in the dust they danced a beggar’s tale

Proclaiming the magic potion that would heal the weak and frail

In the clatter of the crowd the miller clenched his anguished fist

Hearing desperate cries of hope from the gypsy barker’s pitch

Breaking through the crowd took from his pockets coins of gold

For his wife who then laying dying of the fever that burns cold

The dusk began to fold upon them shadows growing long

They settled their wagon by the riverside to camp until the dawn

The white milk moon had mapped a trail three quarters through the sky

When from atop the hill there came a wild, pathetic cry

A chilling wail it cried, she’s gone, everything I ever had

Soon then was followed by the shouts of an angry mob gone mad

And like a hell-bound flood of hatred down the hillside swept

Setting fire to the wagon where the mother and babe they slept

On that windy midnight prairie the fire burned like a fallen sun

The crowd soft vanished back into town, not quite sure what they’d done

There like a skull the wagon lay a moonlit blackened shell

All that remained was the smell of death, and a tarnished silver bell.

The day that followed no sun appeared, the morning dark and still

No man spoke as they carried the miller’s wife atop the hill

When they reached the spot that was to have been her resting place they found

A new laid grave with a ring of prairie flowers circling round

The silence only broken by a cold and bitter wind

Then a deep and eerie toll that sent a chill right through the skin

Where only a man held by the call of love could ever climb

Hung the blackened bell, the crime of hatred to remind

The months went on, the springtime cold, the winds blew deep and strong

Each day all night the bell would clang the dreaded mournful song

And one by one they began to leave, all moving far away

Leaving bare the morning fields where the children once would play.

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