



Songs for the Orchard

'Down in Yon Forest'

New words to a very old English Christmas carol from c.1500, over 500 years' ago: 'Down in Yon Forest'.

Perhaps a fresh version, a new vision and a new story is needed?

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#### **'Down in Yon Forest?'**

- v. 1     Down in yon forest there stands the last tree.  
           The death knells of Paradise I hear them ring?  
The dark night's approaching, we go too gently.  
           Do we need a new story to tell and to sing?
- v.2     The legend runs deep that from grace we did fall.  
           The death knells of Paradise I hear them ring?  
Eternity's promise has held us in thrall?  
           Do we need a new story to tell and to sing?
- v.3     Did the sweet virgin Mary bear a Saviour that night?  
           The death knells of Paradise I hear them ring?  
So where is the goodwill and peace, love and light?  
           Do we need a new story to tell and to sing?
- v.4     The children are crying – fear, hunger, disease.  
           The death knells of Paradise I hear them ring?  
Young people are dying – no days left to seize.  
           Do we need a new story to tell and to sing?
- v.5     Down through the ages there's bloodshed and hate.  
           The death knells of Paradise I hear them ring?  
People and nations divided by fate.  
           Do we need a new story to tell and to sing?
- v.6     A handful of men own the wealth of the land.  
           The death knells of Paradise I hear them ring?  
Life chances of millions ground down in the sand?  
           Do we need a new story to tell and to sing?

- v.7 Crop yields are ravaged and livestock bled dry.  
The death knells of Paradise I hear them ring?  
Resources exploited, “consume more!” they cry.  
Do we need a new story to tell and to sing?
- v.8 Temperatures rising, Earth facing extremes  
The death knells of Paradise I hear them ring?  
Land flooded, storms raging, the world laments and keens.  
Do we need a new story to tell and to sing?
- v.9 So where lies salvation this Christmas time?  
When the death knells of Paradise I hear them ring?  
A cradle, a cross or religions sublime?  
Do we need a new story to tell and to sing?
- v.10 Meanwhile this blue dot of life spins in space.  
The death knells of Paradise I hear them ring?  
A jewel in the darkness, a wonder-ous place!  
Do we need a new story to tell and to sing?
- v.11 We are all connected, in kinship entwined.  
The bright bells of Paradise we hear them ring?  
Sankofa<sup>i</sup>, ubuntu<sup>ii</sup>, all ‘best lives’ combined.  
Do we have a new story to tell and to sing?
- v.12 Down in yon forest there stand strong new trees.  
The bright bells of Paradise we hear them ring.  
Repair, restore, rise up from bent knees.  
Do we have a new story to tell and to sing?

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Words © Phil Heasman (2023)

ⁱ Sankofa: retrieving things of value from our knowledge of the past. [Sankofa: Embracing Past Lessons for a Brighter Future–AYEEKO](#)

ⁱⁱ Ubuntu: ‘humanity to others’. ‘I am what I am because of who we all are.’ [Ubuntu philosophy - Wikipedia](#)