

IN THE FIELDS

(GENESIS 4:1 - 16)

V I. BEGINNING AGAIN

“Toto, I’ve a feeling we’re not in Kansas anymore. “

–Dorothy, *Wizard of OZ*, Frank L Baum

When you first sat down I promised you a tale of murder, betrayal, deception, and love; a story of sex, greed, hopelessness and reckless abandon; one brimming with the fear of the unknown and lightly seasoned with rye humor and pathos. You have received all these things. So, why bother reading anymore?

The voice of the cynic rises out of the mud. The faint-hearted cry of the banshee screams for sheer delight. Fairytale characters like leprechauns and trolls, elves and unicorns sweep across our consciousness asking, “Who am I? Where do I fit into your greater plan?” These questions may never be answered. It is the wellspring of human imagination that fantasy and reality must never meet and so, like forbidden lovers, they steal away in the middle of the night in order to rendezvous. Giants, ogres, nymphs and sprites plague the outskirts of possibility ...

The shadows of their day gave way to the nightmares of their sleep. Strange and twisted creatures no one had ever seen before invaded their dreams. They were now in the world of the unknown. They could never be certain that they were the only two.

“Leave them; they are blind guides.

If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit.”

–Matthew 15:14

A VOICE IN THE

DARKNESS: Where are we?

2ND VOICE: Where did everything go?
3RD VOICE: Who is that? Who's speaking?
1ST VOICE: Is that you 'Snake'?
'SNAKE': Don't call me 'Snake'.
4TH VOICE: I can't see! I CAN'T SEE!
1ST VOICE: 'Snake'?
5TH VOICE: My god, He's blinded me!
'SNAKE': None of us can see, you twit. There's no light.
5TH VOICE: My god, He's blinded all of us!

(Now this last statement could neither be proven nor disproven. All they knew for certain was what they could sense around them. The noise of stumbling about in the dark, the occasional "ow" and the dull sounds of bumping into things (not to mention each other) was all that could be heard. That is when these things could be heard above the crying.)

VOICE: I've got to get out of here.
'SNAKE': We will.
1ST VOICE: When?
2ND VOICE: How?
3RD VOICE: 'Snake'?
'SNAKE': What?

(A club smashed into the wall above 'Snake's' head. 'SNAKE' calculated the trajectory and swiftly brought his foot up until it met his opposing force.)

3RD VOICE: Ughhhh ...
(The big demon dropped to his knees.)
'SNAKE': Careful where you step.

(For a moment all that could be gleaned was the shared echo of moaning throughout the void.)

4TH VOICE: Where are we?
6TH VOICE: In a pit.
4TH VOICE:
(Yelling over the din:)

I said, "Where are we?!"

6TH VOICE:

(Yelling over 4TH Voice:)

I said, "I think we're in a pit!"

'SNAKE':

Do you have to yell? We can't see, we're not deaf!

5TH VOICE:

OH MY GOD, ARE WE GOING DEAF TOO?!

6TH VOICE:

'Snake'?

'SNAKE':

What?

(Another crashing blow—another near miss. 'SNAKE' swung wide. His attacker fell to the floor.)

VOICE:

'Snake'?!

(This time he acted first, swinging without any apologies.)

11TH VOICE:

How long are we here for?

2ND VOICE:

I don't know.

3RD VOICE:

What is this place?

4TH VOICE:

'Snake'?

('SNAKE' moved away from the wall.)

'SNAKE':

Do you all blame me for this, is that it?

VOICES:

Yes!

'SNAKE':

(Let this sink in for a moment:)

Well, I'm glad you can agree on something.

5TH VOICE:

Someone get us out of here!

'SNAKE':

I'm working on it.

6TH VOICE:

I'm cold. Why's it so cold in here?

'SNAKE':

Just be patient.

7TH VOICE:

I can't see!

8TH VOICE:

It smells.

(They tested the air ... It did, indeed, smell.)

9TH VOICE:

Sorry.

'SNAKE':

Ok, I know this looks like a setback.

- 7TH VOICE: It might if I could see anything. I'd be happy if I could "look" at all.
- 'SNAKE': Stay with me on this and I'll get us all out of here.
- 8TH VOICE: You mean *follow you*? It was following you that got us here in the first place.
- 'SNAKE': Me? 'Following' me? No, my friend, let's get one thing understood here. You didn't follow me. You followed your own selfish desires. You 'came' to me because you saw in me the one someone who could make those desires become real for you. Well, I was that someone then and I am still that someone now. Or would you rather follow that.
- (He stopped and let the whimpering and bellowing speak for itself.)*
- It's up to you. What you fail to recognize is that we have launched a war. This wasn't some schoolyard fight. There are several engagements to be involved. So, are you afraid to finish what we started? Or did you really expect Him to give everything up just because we said, "boo?" This was only the first battle. This is only a setback—in fact, it isn't even a setback—consider it a regrouping. As far as I'm concerned we are still very much at war.
- 9TH VOICE: Uh ... If you haven't noticed: the war is kind of over. I think we lost.
- 'SNAKE': It's over when I say it's over.
- (Another blow, this one came low and hard. 'SNAKE' jumped and landed with a thud on the head of his would be assailant when he came back down.)*
- 'SNAKE': Alright, we can do this the easy way or the hard way!
- 2ND VOICE: If you really know how to get us out of here then do it.
- 3RD VOICE: Where are we?
- 'SNAKE': The pit. This is where He cast off the waste from his "creating" the world.
- 5TH VOICE: What happened to Heaven's waste?
- 2ND VOICE: There wasn't any.

8TH VOICE: We're Heaven's waste.

'SNAKE': And how does that make you feel? Does it make you angry? Does it make you angry enough to do something about it? As I see it, there are—

3RD VOICE: I can't SEE anything!!

'SNAKE': Will you shut it up?! There are only two ways going here. If you think it's over then for you it's over. Choose your sides: You can join the wailers, the criers and the babies over there babbling and blithering away or join with me over here and make a difference! What will it be?

(The next moments were unclear. All that could be discerned between the screams and other such outbursts was the shuffling of feet, the occasional bump and scrape, and a curse here or there, until eventually everyone present had taken their stand.)

VOICE: And what about us?

'SNAKE': What about who?

VOICE: Us.

(The VOICE came from one of the unmoved, a member of the contingency that wasn't going to sit and wail and yet, also, who'd had enough of 'Snake' and wasn't about to follow him anymore.)

'SNAKE': You? You don't exist.

The noise began softly at first. Adam and Eve lay sleeping on a bed of grass as the intruders came nearer. The sound of their steps were muffled by the dew on the grass but the nasal intake gave them away. There was only one at first but she was soon joined by another. And then another. Their paws pushed at the ground as their sense of smell drew them ever nearer to the now waking couple.

The misplaced pair remained perfectly still as the canines ran their noses up and down the foreigner's arms ... their legs. Their yellow eyes met the blues and browns of Eden's fugitives. The couple dare not even breathe now. One of the wolves bared her teeth to a late comer crowding the pack, warning him not to come any closer.

Eve could feel the beast's hot breath on her own shoulder as she snarled, daring any other on lookers. Eve looked to her husband. Adam watched her as well. Their gaze met. Without words or motion they spoke to each other through their eyes as they waited for the inevitable lunge that would launch the pack into a full feeding frenzy.

Adam decided to make the first move. If they were lucky the ravenous mob would turn all their attention to him and Eve would get away.

The late wolf nuzzled in closer than he dare ought. This was all the threat needed for the self-appointed leader to snap: not at the prey but at the gatecrasher. Fang met fur and the two tangled into the pack. A tail was bitten. A paw torn. Another wolf responded in turn. For the slightest moment the would be victims were ignored.

Something cracked. There was a sound somewhere in the brush beyond them. Something else was coming. Something even the wolves were afraid of. The pack turned toward the direction of the sound and even more silently than they had come they whisked out of sight.

Air. The abandoned couple filled their lungs quickly as their gaze searched the landscape for what was coming next. They listened but heard nothing. Eve was the first to move. Adam followed close behind. Together they scurried their way out of the field and up into the hills where they could gather a better view. Reaching a safe elevation they finally stopped to regain their breath. A large bear lumbered in the distance.

"That's it," Eve decided. "We're done *sleeping under the stars*. You're going to build me a ... a ... thing."

"Thing?" Adam needed clarification.

"You know 'thing' ... where you live inside kind of 'thing'."

"A house?" Adam tried to fill in the blank.

"Yeah .. A house. You're going to build me a house."

"Great," Adam murmured under his breath. "Before or after I dig up tonight's dinner?"

"As long as it's done today," she answered.

Adam looked up to the sky trying to judge how many hours might be left to this day. He sighed.

"I'll help," Eve joined in, "I've already got it all designed out in my head." There was interesting lack of response. "Or I'll just do it myself?" She immediately began choosing from

nearby branches.

Adam watched her move into action. He sighed again and stepped up to the plate. This was going to be a long day. Eve smiled knowingly. “This’ll be fun.”

“You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends ...”

—John 15:14-15

Each was given according to their ability. Each trusted the King to know just what those abilities were. Those who sacrificed much were rewarded with much. Following the ceremonies the entire Kingdom broke into full celebration.

But now the moment had come for the King to sit down upon his thrown and address his nation.

“At this time,” he began, “I wish to share with you my plans. Because you are not just my kingdom, you are my friends. I love each and every one of you. And you must know that I love the man as well. I shall make a new covenant with the man. Not immediately but we must prepare. The cleansing of Heaven was unfortunate but necessary. And now a restructuring of Heaven is necessary as well.

“So, ‘how do I fit into this plan?’ you may ask. And well you should. Everyone here has a part to play. One chosen for you long before we started. So, first, let me address the matter of those no longer with us: It has been brought to my attention that we now may be lacking for musicians. This obviously has to do with the fact our misguided orchestral leader recruited from those he felt closest to; leaving us with what some have said is a shortage of troubadours. Well, I for one disagree. I have no interest in replacing perfect pitch with their lack of harmony. I prefer instead the pureness of your hearts. Rather than golden tones may the kingdom be filled with joyful noise. I tell you that if every tongue were still that the rocks and stones themselves would lift their voices in praise. But, fortunately, we’re not limited to suffering the tone deaf endearments of such minerals.”

Crickets. OK, so it wasn’t the greatest joke ever told but once the King smiled the giggling began. The laughter grew far beyond the worthiness of the humor and the King stood to

gain their attention once again. His voice sombered.

“I want to dispel any concerns you may have in disagreeing with me. I want you feel free to do so--disagree, that is. Openly. In fact I welcome the interaction. I urge you to question me to my face not my back. And in our conversations I ask you to seek to gain knowledge and wisdom. In fact the more you receive of these the less I'm sure we will find ourselves in disagreement.

“There is much to be done and know you are sufficient to the task. You are sufficient to the purpose. You are more than sufficient in this: you are not alone. I am with you. There is nothing I will ask of you that I can not do. I welcome you to join me in what we do together. Do not be ashamed of asking for my help. I will never ask you to do anything without me. Do not even try. For it will fail. With me you can do all things. From some of you I expect much because you expect from me much. From others I will expect less ... for now. Do what I ask and I will help you to succeed. But do not try to impress me with what you can do beyond what I have asked of you. Please, do not boast of what you can do on your own. Keep in mind why Heaven was cleansed. Keep in heart also that when you exalt yourself you can raise up as high as you can reach on your tipped toes. However, when I exalt you, you will be lifted ever higher indeed.”

To emphasize this fact, The entire assembly took light and were elevated even farther into the heavens. The distance now between Heaven and Hell proved insurmountable. As far as the East is from the West. The cheer of understanding was enormous.

And with that the work began.

The first matter of business was to figure out, somehow, a way to see in this godforsaken place. ‘Snake’ worked as best he could in the dark to map out Hell’s perimeters by touch as he and his cronies felt their way around their new home’s edges in search of a way out. They attempted to distanced themselves as far as they could from the wailing and moaning of their fellow cast outs.

Among the other former citizens of Heaven plopped into the darkness (in addition to the wailers and mourners) were the screamers, who were far more affectively annoying than the criers. There also were those who were prone to throwing tantrums which included the

occasional physical outburst. There were, of course, the delusional and the depressed. Then there were those who sat and thought and those who walked themselves into ruts. And to round things off there were the diggers. The diggers spent their hours beating away at the rocks and dirt in hopes of clawing their way out.

All of this went on without even a glimpse of light. They all moved about by sense of feel and, of course, smell.

9TH VOICE: Sorry.

A putrid odor filled their nostrils with a stench that seemed worse than the darkness. This and the cold that chilled their bones was all they had. 'Snake', wary of all the attacks had fashioned himself a stick amongst the ruins. The stick was flat on one end and just round enough on the other to fit in his hand like a staff or a cane. It was made, not of wood, but of iron and dealt a terrible blow in defense of the attacks he seemed unusually privy to.

The staff had saved him from a miserable end when he had stepped slightly too far west and the ground gave way. The reek rose up as the floor opened beneath him. He found himself floating in a primordial quicksand. He grabbed at the air but found nothing. He then threw his stick out to each side. Finding a rock formation, he managed to wedge the flat end of the stick between two secured stones thereby enabling 'Snake' to pull himself out of the mire and back to safety. The edges of the thickened swampland were impossible to determine. But the stench began and ended here. They headed what they thought was east, feeling their way through the tunnels until they again lost all sense of direction. They were never out of earshot, however, to the relentless cries of what used to be a choir in heaven.

It took time but they managed to appropriate a daily pattern to their new life. In the morning, when the ground was softer from the evening's damp they would pick vegetables from the ground. In the heat of afternoon they would pick fruit (as the stems were most brittle at this time of day and trees and vines would more willingly give up their bounty). They soon learned that unless they planted seeds to replace what they were eating they would eventually starve to death.

The couple worked side by side in this routine until Eve slowed down. Some mornings

she wouldn't get up at all. Some mornings she would throw up. There were days could she could barely stomach the thought of food let alone dig it up or eat it. There were good days when they would both eat from his bounty and bad days when he would dine alone or worse days when they wouldn't eat at all. Then there were those special days when only the *right* food would do.

EVE: You know what I want?

ADAM: What?

EVE: You know what would really taste good right about now?

ADAM: Figs?

EVE: Spinach.

ADAM: ... Ahh ...

EVE: Spinach soaked in olive oil.

(There was a lengthy pause. EVE waited for her provider to respond. She could see he was lost in thought. She dare not speak because the light bulb in his refrigerator might go out.)

ADAM: Do you really want spinach that bad?

EVE: Fine. (Why did he ask?)

ADAM:

(He lightened his tone:)

No, no, do you really want spinach that bad?

EVE: I heard you before. I heard what you meant.

ADAM: I didn't mean anything.

EVE: Oh, right. You meant: Do I really *have* to do this *now*? Why don't you just eat the wonderful fruit and beans I brought you already? (Which is fine if you just want snack food but I need sustenance here.) 'Why doesn't she just get it herself for word's sake', hunh? 'Why can't she do anything around here anymore? It used to be she was a great helper for me but that was before she started just lying around getting fat!' And why don't you look at me 'that way' anymore, like you used to, hunh? Why can't you just give me a hug once in a while or does it always have to lead

to something? Why don't my feelings matter anymore, like they used to?
Why does everything always have to be about you?

(There was a long pause in the land just beyond Eden.)

ADAM: You got all that from, "Do you really want spinach that bad"?

(EVE started to cry. ADAM moved to her. Trying to comfort her he put his arms around her, then awkwardly moved them about, trying to rearrange his limbs into the right position. She remembered when it wasn't such a chore for him to show some tenderness. But it wasn't his fault. She was the one who had changed. It took a couple of attempts but he found the way to pull off one good hug without pressing on 'the baby'.)

ADAM: I'm sorry, alright? I'll ... uh ... get you what you need.

EVE: No, it's alright. I don't need spinach.

ADAM: No, I want to.

EVE: You don't have to.

ADAM: It would be my honor. It shall be my purpose in life ... for today.

EVE: Adam, no.

ADAM: Are you sure? 'Cuz if you're sure then I've got plenty of figs and look: I can smash them into a paste and put them between what I call a cracker ...

EVE: I'm fine.

ADAM: "Fine"? Fine-fine or ... 'fine'?

EVE: I'm fine.

ADAM: I'll go get some spinach.

It was on the eighty-fourth day, if he could count such things without the benefit of the sun or moon, that he found it. It was a small flat stone. It crumbled in his hand but it smelled unlike anything else they had found so far. Its taste was bitter as well as salty.

"Find me more!" 'Snake' demanded. "Find me more of this!"

"What?" one of those nearest him asked.

"Smell it."

The demons assisting him could faintly distinguish it's peculiar aroma from the stench

that had already begun to burn through their senses.

“There has to be more.” ‘Snake’ felt all around.

“What for? You can’t eat it.”

“Look, I can stick it up my nose.”

“Don’t do that.”

“Woah ... it hurts.”

“Clean it off.”

“Can you smell it now?”

“Yeah ... yeah ... it smells like ... Dragon’s breath.”

“Don’t be ridiculous ... just find me more.”

They searched on hands and knees till they found a second piece.

“Is this it?”

“Yes! More!”

Then a third. They continued in what they thought was a southerly direction. Just as ‘Snake’ surmised the more they traveled their direction the more they found.

The stink of the rock began to battle the stench of the gasses. The mixture of the air was thicker the farther they proceeded. Until they finally came to a bend where the stench of the stone overpowered the gas.

“Find the wall!” ‘Snake’ roared.

“Wall?”

“Find the source!”

They bumped into each other like cartoon characters as they scurried about in the blackness, searching for the new edges to their prison.

“I found it!” One of them yelled.

‘Snake’ ran to the voice. He ran his hand along the wall and felt its dusty granite texture. He could detect the density of its fabric. He pressed his face against the cold stone and met it with his tongue. It had the same bitter salt taste. This was it.

“Well done,” someone else may have said. “Stand back,” would be the least remark made in a civilized society. But ‘Snake’ said neither of these. He said nothing at all but laid the edge of his stick up against the wall’s height and, in one fell sweep of his arm, ran the iron tip swiftly across the facade.

The sulphur sparked against the iron like a match to flint. One spark is all it took. The fumes of the methane and other natural gasses burst before their eyes. The entire room ignited, blinding them once again in the flash and the smoke.

The wall of sulphur burned grotesquely, exploding all about them.

The fire ball created in the 'room' screamed through the veins of Hell.

Breathing was impossible. 'Snake's eyes widened with delight. He strode the fire's same path. Those with him followed close behind as the barreling torch raced on before them.

Hell's crying stopped, if only for the moment, as the fireball took on a life of its own. With little or no fuel among the rocks the fire splashed thru the caverns in pursuit of a home.

They followed the blaze as it careened down one hole and then another, swerving through unexplored passageways, until it finally met its destination.

Whether the quicksand took possession of the flames or the flames took possession of the muck it made no difference. The two were from this point forever intertwined. The small sea burst into splashes of yellow, orange and red. Molten lava moved in rivers inside its fiery currents. The angels present looked on in awe.

The demons came from everywhere, following the paths of destruction they had never before seen but only known by touch. For the first time they gazed upon each other as well as their 'home'.

'Snake' was preceded by his 'groupies' who applauded their leader's entrance. The criers, the wailers, and the like followed suit as the once crowned prince of heaven strode his way to the fire's shore. 'Snake' waited as the tumult finally died down and then with a sweeping gesture of his arm he acknowledged the lake of fire and sang out, "There! Let *that* be light!"

*"Children's children are a crown to the aged,
and parents are the pride of their children."*

—Proverbs 17:6

Eve kept designing and redesigning while Adam kept building and rebuilding her house. The first house was made of nothing but large leaves pulled together and tied around a tree. Their next attempt was the same concept, only fashioned out of branches rather than leaves. He

suggested a cave but bugs and snakes lived in caves and Eve wanted nothing more to do with them. Every day he would work to rebuild the house and every evening he would dig and replant food.

And still in the mornings she would look out at the new day and search the horizon to see if God would come out and tell them, “Everything’s alright now, come on home.” They would take walks, on the mornings Eve could walk, and they would talk to God as if he were there. Sometimes they knew He was and sometimes they only wondered.

“I wish I could see you again, Lord,” Adam spoke out. “To see your face again.”

“You will,” God answered.

“When?”

“In time.”

“Me too, Lord,” Eve added herself.

“In time,” God repeated, saddened by her thoughts of exclusion.

“Will the baby know you? Will he know you like we do?” Eve asked.

God did not reply.

“God?” Adam asked wanting to know if He was still there.

“I’m here.” God assured them.

“Will the baby see your face?”

Again God did not reply.

“Is it a boy or a girl?” Eve asked.

“You’ll know when the time comes.”

Eve sat on a rock, needing to rest just for a minute. She knew He (God) may continue his walk but it was a chance she had to take. She couldn’t go any further. Adam sat beside her.

“Will it be soon?” Adam asked either of them.

“Soon enough.”

“Will it hurt?”

“Yes.”

“Why?”

“We’ve been over that. Prepare. Get your house in order.”

“My house?” Adam sighed. “How many times will I have to rebuild my house?”

Again no response (being a rhetorical question, no one ever expected one.) Still Eve took

it upon herself to pat her husband on his knee. “Building a house or becoming one,” she mused half spiritedly. “I’ll trade places with you any day.”

Heat from the fire spread throughout the pit. Everyone by now had gathered to take in it’s warmth and to see again. ‘Snake’ set himself center most in the thick of things. Even those who had previously dismissed him as a failed general had to concede to this latest achievement.

“What do you think of me now?” the self appointed leader asked of his dissidents.

“You’re still why we’re here,” they answered. “But at least we’re warm.”

“Warm ...” the demon thought aloud. “Bring me those who chose against me.”

As he spoke he could see his arm in the firelight. The shape of which was familiar but the color, the texture, made him pause. He stared down at his own hand as the band of rebel-rebels were gathered forward. The backside to his palm had a leathery appearance brought on by the blast from ‘the room’. His fingers were charred to the bone with a mere wisp of skin stretched over them. He feared the worst.

The unappreciative non-followers were now set before him. He pulled a smaller demon out of the crowd and held him up to see his own reflection in the ‘angel’s’ breastplate. It was true. His face had charred as well. Pockets of flesh boiled over white and red patches of hide. His eyes were like two black olives floating in empty sockets staring back at him. He wouldn’t have them see him in despair. His looks were gone, his anger flared.

“You want it warm, do you?” he asked the fallen cherub in his hands. “Have warm!” And with those words he tossed the waif into the pool of fire.

Some cheered at the onslaught while others were stunned by the violence. ‘Snake’ stepped away, heading off the way he’d come in order to seek out some seclusion. He had to think. “All of them,” he directed. He forged ahead without looking back as his minions did his bidding.