

## **IN THE GARDEN**

*(GENESIS 1- 3)*

### **I. CREATION**

Pull out any map and you'll find them. The Tigris and Euphrates rivers. But their courses have changed over the years. At one time they merged with two equally demanding rivers (the Pishon and the Gihon) both of which are gone now.

The four rivers met there. It was there they sprang forth from the ground and ran towards the oceans, traveling through lands that would one day be called home by countless generations. But for now it was just land. And it was here, where these four rivers met, that He rested.

Settling Himself in the center of creation He watched the infant boy He called Adam forage and play with the other animals.

**“What could he be thinking?”** God wondered. The very thought amused Him. To have the thought alone pleased Him. First thing on His “to do” list would be to agree on a common language that would allow them to communicate. Today, however, they would rest and enjoy each other’s company. Tomorrow the work would begin.

Adam proved to be a headstrong little boy. As certain as a thought came to his mind he was certain that the thought was right. The world was there for his exploring. Any item that could be picked up, lifted or thrown: would be. Anything that could be climbed must have been placed there for that sole purpose.

The Angels were entertained, doing their best not to laugh at the irony of it all. God had created in Adam a vision of Himself as a child. And as anyone who’s looked back at their own childhood knows, the choices we make are baffling.

Every experience was a first experience and God made sure He was there to share them all. He wanted the boy to appreciate everything. He needed to help him understand what it was he was thinking or feeling. But as any parent knows, telling a child what it is he is experiencing isn’t nearly as successful as being there for him as he finds out for himself. God took all this in stride. His hosts of angels were amused, for the most part, while a small faction felt betrayed.

*“What does He think He’s doing, wasting His time on that man-thing? We sing Hosannas to the wonder of each new creation while this boy steps on the flowers and laughs at the way the petals feel between his toes. And ‘He’ is thrilled. I don’t understand God. I don’t know why I should feel so ... used by Him. I have been used. He made us on the way to making him. We have not only been replaced we have, in fact, been the instruments of creating our own replacement.”*

God sat perched on a rock and watched as the curious wanderer jaunted from one item to another. Before long the boy could sense he was being watched. He turned around to face his observer and stared back in turn.

**“What?”** God asked, waiting to see what the child would do next.

“Wha-”, Adam mimicked.

The Lord beamed. **CONTACT!**

God pointed out Himself to the boy and spoke. **“God.”**

The boy pointed to himself as well and before he could repeat the claim God intervened with the name: **“Adam.”** The Lord pointed to himself again .. **“God.”** And then to the boy: **“Adam.”**

“Adam”, the boy echoed in both gesture and word.

God stood as He announced to the Hosts of Heaven, **“This is Adam. He shall be my right hand here on earth. Just as you are both my arms and legs in Heaven so he shall be on earth.”**

The Angels applauded in agreement. The flutter of a million or more wings kissed the sky as they rejoiced. A gentle breeze blew across the young one’s face. He could hear the faintest sounds of music. But having never heard music before, he didn’t know what to make of it all. So he moved on to the next best thing: Food. He picked up a clump of clay and put it into his mouth.

**“No, no, no, no, no, no, no,”** God moved in to assist the child who was now spitting mud. **“That’s not for eating. We have to go through the lists. There are things made for eating and things for growing, other items bring shade and music and ... ”** He stopped mid

sentence. **“And you have no idea what I just said to you.”**

The boy belched, striking himself on the chest he repeated, “Adam.”

Heaven stopped to watch.

**“Yes, well,”** God surveyed the situation carefully, **“We’ll start with bigger concepts. Such as ‘Sky’ and ‘Land’.”** He pointed these items out as he continued. **“‘Water.’ This is ‘Day’. That is the ‘Sun’. This is ‘Sky’: Together: ‘Day’. ‘Sun’ in ‘Sky’ is ‘Day’.”**

Adam picked up a handful of gravel and announced, “ ‘Dirt’ .”

**“What?”** God tested him.

“ ‘Dirt’ , ‘Land’ , ‘Dirt’ .”

**“A game,”** the Lord thought aloud. Well, this was to be all his after all. If the boy is to take ownership of this world, a part of it must be uniquely his. He picked up a round blossom that had fallen to the ground. He held it out to the child, who studied it curiously.

“ ‘Apple’ ,” Adam decided.

**“ ‘Apple’ it will be.”** God then turned to the Host and addressed them. **“From now on this will be ‘apple’. It seems our boy has carved a job for himself.”** He bent down and handed the fruit to the child. **“This,”** He continued, **“you can eat.”**

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From then on it was Adam’s position to name each item God had created. What he couldn’t get to was brought to him by the Host. God oversaw everything. Each item was, in turn, catalogued by the Angels.

In the morning the four winds carried every species of bird and insect that was capable of flying. Their joyous songs woke Adam anew each sunrise. In the heat of the day he would play in one of the different rivers and meet the many creatures of the sea. As the day declined he would meet with the beasts of the land both large and small.

“Isn’t it perfect the way he chooses just the right name for each creature?”

“Oh yeah ... isn’t it though?”

(Heaven was beside itself with chattering. Yet one voice could still be heard in a distinctly different tone.)

“Isn’t it though? The child can do virtually no wrong. ‘Wombat’, ‘Sloth’, ‘Kangaroo’, ‘Porcupine’ ... Where *does* he come up with them all?”

“I’m particularly fond of ‘porpoise’ .”

The Host began to laugh. Some of them laughed with each other, others laughed at each other. And some just laughed to be seen laughing.

“You can’t be serious?”

The Host laughed all the more. All but one. All for the same reasons.

“Look at him,” they reasoned. “Look at both of them. They’re thrilled with each other.”

“Of course they are,” the dissenter reasoned, “He can do no wrong because He’s God. And he can do no wrong (indicating the child) because ... he doesn’t know any different. Give him something he can’t do; then see how things change.”

“Opossum” “Reindeer” “Mongoose” “Salamander” “Iguana” ... the list went on.

God, in turn, would take Adam to His side and instruct him on the proper care and maintenance of the garden. He taught him to water and turn the soil. He impressed upon him the importance of the right amount of watering needed to produce the sweetest fruit. He tutored the child in matters of seeding and harvesting and tried his best to impress upon him the concept of perfect timing. And then there were the matters of self control.

GOD:           There is a tree, in the center of the garden; you must not eat of it. One rule. One denial. One test.

ADAM:          Why?

GOD:           Because I love you. Because if you do ... because what you’ll find there will lead to death. This is all I ask. Can you do that?

ADAM:          Why?

GOD:           Because I don’t want you to die.

ADAM:          Why?

GOD:           Can you do this for me?

ADAM:          Sure.

GOD:           Will you?

ADAM:          What’s the difference?

*(GOD wiped a tear away from his eye.)*

ADAM:          What’s that?

GOD:           A tear.

ADAM:          What’s a tear?

GOD:           A tear is a rip in the fabric. A tear, on the other hand, is a leak from the

tear. It's called crying.

ADAM: Why are you crying?

But before he could wait for an answer the earth moved. Not all of it, just a piece. A branch seemed to move along the ground. No, not a branch ... a rope. The boy's eyes followed. He picked it up from the neck of the front end.

God watched carefully as the boy placed himself in harm's way. (But, then again, there was no such thing as 'harm' at this point in time).

Adam let go of the creature. It quickly swam over the dirt away from the child. Adam hurried after it, intrigued by its rhythmic movements on the land. The creature turned back and spat at him. "Ssssss."

Adam froze in place.

**"What happened?"** God asked, reclining as best as He could to get a better look at the both of them.

"Back," Adam replied.

**"That's a 'back'?"** God questioned. **"We already have a 'back'. We have a 'back' and a 'front', 'top', 'bottom', 'right side', 'left side', 'inside' and 'outside'—"**

"No."

Adam grabbed it by the tail and the reptile spun around and hissed at him again, "Ssss".

"Sssss," the boy spat back.

All of Heaven laughed. All but one.

The boy let go and the "Ssss" swam further away then slithered up a tree.

"Want 'Ssss'."

**"What is it then?"**

"Ssss," the child declared.

**"'Sssss?'"** God echoed. **"That's a sound, not a name."**

"Ssss-nake," Adam decided. "Want snake."

Again Heaven enjoyed a front row seat to the comedy unfolding. God, in kind, called out to the one Angelic hold-out, inviting him to join with the rest of creation. **"Lucifer,"** He urged, **"get the 'snake'."**

The Angel Lucifer, our disgruntled hummer, begrudgingly complied. He shimmied up

the tree and sat there in the branch along side the serpent and awaited God's next command.

**“Give it to Adam then,”** God entreated, half amused by the moment. Fully aware.

The Angel climbed down and offered the asp to the boy.

There was an awkward moment here. Adam held out his hand innocently and the Angel laid the serpent in his grip while at the same time waiting to let go. It seemed, if only for a moment, that he might not. And still ... he did.

**“What do you say, Adam?”** God coaxed.

“Thank you ‘Snake’.”

Heaven laughed.

**“That isn’t–”** God began then changed His course: **“Which one is the snake?”** He asked, politely correcting the boy.

Adam was stumped. He was also embarrassed and didn't want to be wrong. “Both,” he replied.

**“Both? I see...”** He laughed with all the Host then shared His joy with the newly entitled Angel. **“So, you have a new name ... Snake.”**

Heaven laughed. The Angel did his best to contain his own feelings and step away.

**“Laugh,”** God cajoled. **“This is a joyful moment.”**

‘Snake’ only mustered a smile as he continued his way out of the spot light.

God took in all these things and pondered them quietly as Adam played. The boy eventually tired of the snake and let it go, ready to move on to a new adventure.

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Days passed, months followed, and finally years rolled by. And as surely as water will run downhill and not up the thought of the tree, the one tree in the center of the garden, drew the boy's attention. More often than not he would find himself sitting beneath it ... wondering. With all of creation at his disposal, no matter what he did, thoughts of the tree pulled him back.

ADAM: God?

GOD: Yes, Adam?

ADAM: I have a problem.

GOD: M-hmmm?

*(ADAM hesitated.)*

GOD: The tree?

ADAM: How did you know?

GOD: You can come to me with all your problems, son. This won't be the last.

ADAM: What do I do?

*(GOD thought carefully for a moment, not that He didn't already have the answer, but He didn't want the boy to feel dismissed by how quickly He could respond, for indeed GOD had already thought this out.)*

GOD: I have another game in mind. There is, in fact, another tree somewhere in the garden I do want you to find. This one will grant you life eternally. Find it.

ADAM: Why?

GOD: Again with the "why?"

ADAM: Why all the rules now? "Find this tree", "leave this alone." I thought this was supposed to be fun.

GOD: Focus, child, on the Tree of Life. Pursue it. Hold it fast in your heart. And the gnawing at the back of your mind for the forbidden tree will fade. Instead of focusing on what you shouldn't be doing; focus on what you should. Can you do that for me?

ADAM: I guess so.

GOD: Will you?

ADAM: You talk funny.

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## II. "HIDE and SEEK"

Every dawn before the dew dried off the grass God would start His morning walk. Some days the boy would be waiting for him; some He would be waiting for the boy. Who enjoyed their time together more was uncertain but from their Heavenly vantage point the Angels watched silently knowing their turn to enjoy God's favor had come and gone and maybe would come again.

The honor of naming every creature that crossed Adam's path had long ago become more of a chore than a game. So to liven things up Adam got up early one morning and concealed himself in a patch of shrubberies. He waited quietly for God's entrance. Nothing happened. He felt a twinge; something he hadn't noticed before; something different. Then he heard Him.

**"Adam?"**

The 'something' left. Adam smiled to himself, careful not to make a sound. He knew where he was. He knew what he was doing. This was going to be great.

**"Adam, where are you?"**

The boy couldn't giggle—couldn't keep from giggling—couldn't risk giving himself away.

**"Adam?"**

God looked about knowingly. He waited for the boy to come out. It seemed things were at a standstill. Still, He waited.

Adam heard something. Something else. There was someone else in the garden. Maybe this wasn't such a good idea after all.

**"Adam?"** God looked around.

Adam turned inside the thicket to find the Angel he'd named 'Snake' sitting there beside him. Adam startled silently. He was certain the specter hadn't been there a moment ago. He wanted to jump but something told him, "no."

"Are we hiding?" the Angel asked innocently. "Wha'd you do wrong?"

Adam looked back at him curiously. He didn't understand 'wrong'. Nothing had ever been 'wrong' before. He tried to answer him as quietly as he could. "I'm playing a game."

“A new game?” he asked, a little too loud.

“Yes,” Adam answered even softer.

“Can I play?” ‘Snake’ whispered back almost inaudibly.

Adam didn’t know how to respond. If he said ‘yes’ then they’d have to start over and the whole surprise of the game would be lost. If he said ‘no’ ... well ... Could he say ‘no’? What would ‘Snake’ do if he said ‘no’?

“Well?”

Adam didn’t know what to do. All he wanted was for the Angel to be quiet. “Sshhh”, he begged.

“Shssss” ‘Snake’ hissed back, chuckling lightly to himself at the boy’s frustration.

God, meanwhile, had let things go on long enough. He pulled away at the branches that concealed them both as He asked again, “**Adam, where are—**”, their eyes met, “**—you?**”

Adam breathed a deep sigh of relief and threw his arms around God.

“**Morning,**” God softly smiled as He held the boy. “**Morning,**” He repeated as He shared a glance with ‘Snake’. “**What have you two been up to?**”

“A game, Lord,” ‘Snake’ responded. “A silly hiding game.”

“**A game?**” God sat down and bounced the boy on his knee and watched as the blood returned to his cheeks. “**Were you playing a game?**” But Adam didn’t answer. “**Do I get to play?**”

“Oh, but you were playing, Lord. You just didn’t know it,” ‘Snake’ added.

“**Ahhh, is that so?**” God slowed His knee and let the child respond. “**And who came up with this game?**”

“The boy did,” ‘Snake’ announced proudly in a tone that somehow communicated a verbal genuflect. “I would never do anything to disrupt his progress of learning new ideas.”

“**Adam, is this true?**” God’s tone however remained sincere and caring.

Adam hesitated. Why, he didn’t know. “I just wanted to have some fun.”

“**I see,**” God replied thoughtfully. He patted the boy on the back and ruffled his hair.

“**And what shall we call this game?**”

“Why?” Adam asked again.

“**We already have that game. What shall we call this new one?**”

Adam looked to ‘Snake’ for an answer. The angel politely waited for the boy to take

responsibility. Adam thought about it for a moment. He enjoyed having both their attention as he came to his decision. “Hide ...” he finally said. “Hide ... and Find.”

“**So,**” God accepted the name and moved on to the next subject—the playing of the game:

“**The object is for me to look for you—**”

“Hide and Look,” Adam changed the name.

“**First you have to hide and then I look—**”

“Hide and Look,” Adam repeated for ‘Snake’s’ attention too.

“**After you’re hidden,**” God started again, “**we seek you out—**”

“Hide and Seek,” he liked that name better.

“**You’ll have to decide,**” God parried.

“Hide and Seek,” Adam decided.

“**Are you sure?**” his parent figure asked.

“Yes.”

“**Alright.**” God continued on. “**Now, how will I know when we’re playing and you’re not just lost?**”

This stumped the child. He hadn’t thought it that far thru. He hadn’t thought anything thru yet. He was more or less flying by the seat of his ... (Well, having no clothes at this time, he must have been flying by his seat).

“If it pleases you, Lord,” ‘Snake’ spoke politely, “I will offer to watch over the child—remaining an unbiased observer—and I can alert you to whether the child is playing or what else he might be up to. If you like I can even counsel him. Allowing you to attend to more important matters that might please you.”

God weighed the offer carefully—not without a response but in search of a motive. “**So, the question is should Jimney counsel Pinocchio or Pinocchio counsel Jimney. I choose neither. I’m not out of the loop yet. Thank you for your offer but I must respectfully decline.**”

‘Snake’ nodded, conceding to His wishes.

God returned his attention to the boy. “**Well, with this game, we’ll have to come up with some rules.**”

“More rules?” Adam whined.

“My offer remains open,” ‘Snake’ bowed.

“**Noted,**” God countered without looking up.

*The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.*

*The owner's servants came to him and said, “Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?”*

*“An enemy did this,” he replied.*

*“The servants asked him, “Do you want us to go and pull them up?”*

*“No,” he answered, “because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.”*

*– Matthew 13:24-30*

*“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”*

*– Matthew 19:14*

One dusk Adam met God in the garden and climbed up into His lap as He rested on a rock.

“I know what Heaven looks like,” he announced.

“**You do?**” God played along.

“Yes, I do.” Adam demonstrated with his arms open wide. “It’s big..”

“**Is it?**” God smiled.

“Yes, and it’s bright. It’s never night there.”

“**Never night?**” God peered out at the soon to be setting sun. “**Tell me, how would you know it’s day without night to compare it to?**”

Adam again went silent.

**“You must think things thru.”**

Adam leaned back on God’s chest. “Why can’t I go to Heaven?”

**“You will,”** He stroked his hair as they watched the sun burn into the horizon..

“When?”

**“When it’s time.”**

“Why can’t I see it now?”

**“You see me now, don’t you?”**

“Yeah.”

The conversation stilled as the last vestiges of burning orb melted out of sight.

**“Well, there will be a time when I, like the sun, will be gone from your sight but know,”** He tapped his the child’s chest just over his heart, **“that I’ll still be here. In the same way know that you will see Heaven. All things come in their proper time if you don’t push it.”** His eyes fell upon a piece of rock with markings on it in the boy’s hand. **“What do you have there?”**

“The rules.”

**“You wrote down the rules?”** God was impressed.

“Uh-hunh.”

They studied the rock together.

### The Rules

GOD: What is that?  
ADAM: “Rules”  
GOD: Very good. And what is that?  
ADAM: “Rules”  
GOD: Yes, but that specifically?  
ADAM: “Rrr”  
GOD: “Rrr”  
ADAM: -R- (are).  
GOD: I am pleased.  
ADAM: You are?  
GOD: You wrote.

*(GOD studied the rock again.)*

GOD: This is very good.

ADAM: Aren't you going to read the rules?

GOD: I love them.

ADAM: I have 'rules' for my game. Wanna play?

GOD: Which game?

ADAM: Hide and Seek.

GOD: Mmmm. How do I play?

ADAM: Well, the first thing you have to do—  
*(ADAM sat up straight to share his plan.)*  
—is count.

GOD: Count? What is that?  
*(GOD asked this specifically to see if the child had yet given thought to the words or if he was just making them up as he went.)*

ADAM: You know... count. Add up all the leaves on that tree and then open your eyes and try to find me.

GOD: Thirty thousand, four hundred and sixty two.

ADAM: That's not fair. You have to count.

GOD: Oh, I have to be fair, do I? What is fair?

ADAM: I don't wanna name things right now. I wanna play. You have to count.

GOD: Why don't I count this branch one by one—

ADAM: Out loud so you can't go so fast.

GOD: Out loud so I can't go so fast and when I'm done I will find you.

They played games. They laughed. They shared time together. Then one morning Adam began the game again without God. He chose just the right spot. A small cave just outside their usual meeting place. He arrived early and set himself in place and he waited. Time passed and he noticed a troop of ants crawling from one end of the cave to another. He tried counting the ants but there were too many of them. Still no sign of God. And still he waited. He began to feel that 'something' again. That same twinge he'd felt when he first created the game. He felt uncomfortable.

The stillness and silence seemed to envelop him. For the first time he realized he

was alone. He didn't know what to make of it. Then he heard something. Was it God? He wanted to jump out and embrace Him. What if it was 'Snake'? What if ...? The questions seemed to take over. Then he remembered: it was a game. He didn't like the game right now. He didn't like feeling alone. Funny how things happen—here he was sitting in a cave out of his own choice—trapped by his own will. If he really wanted out of the cave all he needed to do was ...

Adam came out into the garden. God was there. Words escaped him—he ran into God's arms and held on as tight as he could.

God held him close and let his voice softly reassure him. **"I won't let go. I won't let go,"** He repeated as though singing a lullaby.

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*"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD,  
"plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."*

*—Jeremiah 29:11*

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**I saw a flock of birds go by today. I guess that's what I'll call them – a 'flock'. There were so many... clustered all together. I'd never seen anything like it before. They seemed to turn in unison. Just when I thought one bird was leading I could swear the sparrow farthest back began to turn and the rest of them followed in suit ... but ahead of him. It was so amazing. ... There were so many of them. Together.**

**As I write this one bird swoops the sky alone. And as amazed as I am by the unity of the flock I understand this lone bird all the better. Does he wish to join the flock? Has he lost his way? Does he even know they exist? Or does he choose a solitary life? Why would he do that? There is still so much to learn.**

**But once I've learned these things who will I share them with?**

He couldn't recall when he first realized his plight: but now he'd put a name to it: alone. He had thought this feeling when he was in the cave with the ants. Or was it before, hiding in the bushes? Or was it ... ? When it started didn't seem all that important. But once he had (realized he was alone) nothing else mattered. The thought consumed him. It became him. His identity became his aloneness. And God saw that this wasn't good.

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*Once upon a time* there lived a handsome prince. No one in the kingdom could compare with his beauty. But the prince was not just another pretty face; he was as rich in knowledge, craft, and ability as he was lovely. He was filled with drive, spirit and music. His fellow countrymen hailed him for his achievements and loved him for his abilities. Languishing in a life of luxury he set his sights on mastering the secrets of the kingdom. He longed that one day they would be not so much a mystery to him but a fascinating puzzle he could take apart and re-put together for an afternoon's delight. All the kingdom loved the prince and the prince loved all the kingdom ... because they loved him.

One morning, before mornings, the King declared that he would build another kingdom. A new kingdom filled with beauty, splendor, whimsy and insight, both self sufficient and interdependent. The new kingdom would not replace but co-exist beside their present homeland. The King announced to his court that he wished to enlist the help of his entire first kingdom to build this new land. To his delight everyone rallied to his side and production began.

"This new kingdom must be for me," the handsome prince thought to himself. "I, too, will help build alongside my countrymen. And I will pour out my blessings and favor on my new dominion as they crown me and place me upon the throne."

The work continued around the clock. Time both stood still and time passed suddenly by. Before their eyes this new world was formed and perfected. Each provision was given careful consideration. Beauty overflowed beauty and before anyone knew it the new kingdom was completed. The prince was happy. The King was happy and the kingdom shouted for joy!

And then the King did something no one had expected. Something some thought ridiculous while others praised for his ingenuity. He added one more thing: a caretaker. A groundsman, if you will, to watch over this new land.

The handsome prince beamed. “A servant,” he thought to himself. “My first subject!” The handsome prince sang out in glorious splendor for all the King had created. The whole kingdom joined in unison.

Then the King again surpassed all their imaginations. He gave to this caretaker rule over all the new kingdom. The prince stopped beaming. He was stunned. His countrymen were divided. There were those who sided with the prince, others who had wanted the new kingdom for themselves and, of course, those who sided with the King. The wise King loved them all. He knew that only time would prove the ultimate test of loyalty, and in true kingly fashion he presided over the division giving all his subjects time to settle in to the new order of things.

As predicted the kingdom slowly came around from being threatened by the new kingdom to being thoroughly entertained. They took great delight in the antics of the caretaker, especially in his encounters with the King. Everyone was amused ... well, almost everyone.

Oh, the prince tried to fit in. He tried to make the best of things. But the more he tried the more his own pride mocked him. And every time he stared out his window overlooking the new kingdom something inside him seethed. He longed for things to be back to the way they used to be. Before the new kingdom.

Late in the evening, as the moon waned full over the heavens, the King gathered together his court. The King declared his heart was heavy. He, too, had been watching over the new kingdom. But he looked mercifully upon the caretaker, all alone amongst the beauty. The time had come, the King announced that he must find a suitable companion. So, in recognition of this need, the King was going to throw a royal ball.

All eligible maidens of the first kingdom were to present themselves to be considered for this honored role.

The kingdom was a buzz with preparations. Even those who had doubted the King’s wisdom in placing this new kingdom in the young caretaker’s hands found themselves pulled in. Decorations were hung, the choicest foods were brought in for the feast, music was chosen and re-chosen.

Finally everything was ready. There were maidens of all shapes and sizes, young and old alike. Each of them perfect in their own right for the King had given each their own calling already. What each maiden shared was a willingness to leave their purpose behind in order to please the King. After all, who would refuse such a position of prestige?

The King, however, was wise beyond their expectations: as each potential mate presented herself for his review the King asked her what it was she did in the kingdom. He reminded her how well suited she was in her present role. They discussed how happy she was. He questioned each lady in waiting as to why she felt it necessary to abandon her original calling to accompany the settler of the new kingdom. Most of the maidens left the ball even more self assured of themselves than they had when they'd arrived. Most but sadly not all.

The court asked of the King, "What are you doing? Surely you are talking yourself right out of finding the very thing that you seek."

The King answered them kindly, "I am merely separating the wheat from the chaff; the sheep from the goats."

To this the court could only scratch their heads; some in awe and wonder while the few disenchanted grew even more so. The King looked kindly upon them all and though he could see the disenchanted growing furor. Still, he granted them time. Amongst their numbers was the handsome prince among princes.

With the last maiden interviewed the search was ended. It became apparent to all that the proper helpmate for the caretaker was not amongst the first kingdom. As the caretaker had been created from the clay of the new kingdom, the only proper mate would be found as well in the new land.

Those who opposed the new kingdom rallied by the handsome prince and begged him to fight for their cause. "The king," they echoed, "cares nothing for us. But only for his latest toy. Let us band together and overthrow him."

The prince said nothing. Instead, he waited. Waited for the moment when opportunity would rise—when either the King would abandon the new kingdom or defect from their own... or tire from his endless duty to both kingdoms ... The prince would wait.

The King, however, did not wait. Looking kindly upon the caretaker, he laid him down upon a bed of dried grass to sleep. He then set about to complete the work He had previously started ....

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As Adam slept God leaned over and kissed the child on his forehead. **"There are times of passing that can not be turned from. Moments that forever change the soul. To this moment we are now. I will never forget our days together. I would never leave you but**

**you need now more than I shall give. And I will give you more than you may want. For now you must sleep.”** He softly stroked his sleeping child’s hair.

“I am truly sorry, Lord.”

The voice came from somewhere behind them. God needn’t look up to know who the voice belonged to. It was the sincerity in the angel’s voice that surprised Him. A sincerity that He hadn’t heard for quite some time.

‘Snake’ could see that God was hurting, he tried to console Him as best he could. “Sorry it didn’t work out with this man thing.” He stopped himself realizing that his words hadn’t come out quite right. “Maybe next time we could help you with your design.” God was silent. Maybe he’d listen—maybe he’d hear—maybe he’d learn how wise the angel knew himself to be after all.

“I know he looks like you,” the angel started cautiously, “but he’s not. He can’t watch over birds soaring thousands of feet higher than he can reach. He can’t prevail over the ocean’s depths: he’d only drown. He runs no faster than a common monkey with half the agility. He may be able to watch over dogs and cats but with any other creatures he was severely limited. Next time give him wings. Give him fins and gills so he can glide thru the seas. Give him the eyesight of an eagle. Give him the strength of the lion or the bear. Give him the hearing of ... What animal hears the best? Well, you get the idea. Chalk him up to experience.”

**“He’s finished you say?”** God leaned over the child.

“I know you had plans for him,” out of respect ‘Snake’ turned away.

**“Had?”**

‘Snake’ bowed his head as he listened to God disassembling His creation. “Wouldn’t it be easier to just bury him rather than take him apart piece by piece?”

God smiled to himself as He worked. **“I have plans for him. Still. Never changed. You underestimate his potential. He will fly higher than any bird could dream. He will swim deeper into the ocean than any whale. As for speed, he will be able to move faster than sound. He will be able to see thousands of miles into the heavens or focus inward inside the complexity of a single drop of his own blood. He will be able to hear half way around the world. All of these things I have planned. He just won’t be able to do this alone.”**

“What?” the angel looked up. What could this mean?

**“Almost done.”** God’s voice sounded pleased.

“Done with what?” ‘Snake’ turned back around.

His eyes fell on the most beautiful creature he had ever seen. His ambition fell farther. Immediately he recognized... “Oh my dear ... there’s two of them.”

**III. TWO**

**A dream  
Within a dream  
Within a dream ...  
Echoes in the silence  
Waiting  
Wanting  
Wondering what will happen next  
He couldn't say how long he'd been asleep  
For when he gazed upon her  
It was as if his eyes had opened for the first time  
... from a dream**

She hit the ground running. It was her nature. Looking back she should have realized a little caution may have been in order. After all someone had been there before her. That someone being a male. And as often goes when things are left alone in the hands of a man there is generated a need for someone to come alongside or behind him to clean things up. But that realization would require hindsight and at this point there wasn't any. At this point she didn't know what to expect. All she knew was that today everything would change. Today she was going to meet ... him.

Bringing her up to speed had been an education by whirlwind. . If Adam were the master of 'why?' she would prove to be the master of 'who-what-where-when-and-how?' Even so there was still so much to learn. She trusted the teacher and after all, it was part of her make-up to learn on the run. So far there were two types of people in the world (and in all this time nothing much has changed) when it comes to playing games: there are those who read the rules first. Some personality types read from cover to cover while others read just enough to cover the basics. She wasn't one of these people. She was the other type: "Show me the board, give me the dice and start playing. We'll read the rules as we go along. (if we get stuck)" It wasn't really her fault. She was taught this way from the beginning. It was out of necessity. As opposed to feeling cheated by her circumstances she had risen to the challenge and was rightly pleased of her accomplishments. Her tutors, as well, were justly proud of her. But nothing she had learned had really prepared her for what she was about to face. As any firefighter will tell you there's only so much you can learn from the books.

She looked over her new surroundings with curiosity. She realized all too quickly that she really didn't know what to expect next. But for that matter, she reasoned, she hadn't known what to expect earlier either. Why had God said she was ready? Maybe He was wrong. Maybe He was just guessing. She followed him with a faith and confidence she would never know again. There was still so much she didn't know.

They stopped in a clearing. Her young hand reached out to touch a color. The smooth softness felt just like it looked but proved far more fragile than she'd realized. The petals broke apart in her eager grasp.

**"Softer,"** the Creator corrected her. He gently placed a second blossom in her hand.

She gingerly glided her finger over fabric of the petal's delicate surface. It tickled her palm beneath the bud. All around her were different hues and tones of greens and blues, pinks

and yellows, lavenders and whites. She wanted to stop and take this all in but He was already moving ahead. She took in the azure of the skies and let her eye linger slightly longer on the (what had he called it?) the horizon. The blue of the sky kissed the blue of the river's edge but still somehow they remained separate. How did they do that, she wondered.

**“You’re the softer one remember,”** He reminded her as He walked on ahead of her.

She followed Him along the water's edge to where the four rivers met. She wasn't ready. She knew she wasn't ready. Maybe she was ready.

“What if I don't like him?” she called out, catching up with her Guide.

**“Well, that’s a rather arrogant observation, wouldn’t you say? What if he doesn’t like you?”**

She hadn't thought of that. She stopped in her tracks. This could change things a bit dramatically. Then reason kicked in: How couldn't he like her? What was not to like? Then doubt: What if he said, ‘take her back’ or ‘send her away’? What would happen then? Then reason met cold hard logic: After all he had been there first. Would she be sent away? Where would she go? She needed another plan. Of course He had a back up plan. What if she was the back up plan? So many questions kept swirling through her mind. She was too young to have to contend with such enormous responsibilities. After all she was just a child, wasn't she? Wasn't she just a child? Maybe this was all a mistake. Maybe that was what the rivers were for. Maybe the rejects were sent down river. She started walking a little more inland than the water's edge.

**“He will love you,”** God assured her.

“Really?”

**“Well, not right away but, in time.”** And then God smiled. His smile comforted her more than anything else she could imagine. There was peace.

They traveled on in silence as the colors they moved through grew more brilliant and luxurious around them. Patterns of green emanated from long stemmed floral displays. Golden, lavender and lime toned reeds sprouted from the water's edge. Baby's breath blanketed the ground before them as she followed the path blazoned by her teacher. She gazed in awe at this wonderland of sight and smell surrounding them.

“So, this was the garden,” she thought to herself. Every creature and color imaginable were here. Each blade of grass seemed to melt into the next. A slight wind touched the sky and rippled colors across the panoramic view. Waterfalls sprang from rocks and separated into four

rivers that drifted off from where they stood and out beyond the limits of sight and sound.

“Where do they go?” she asked herself.

**“You must add voice to your thoughts now. I can hear you but he will not,”** God informed her.

“Him? Oh .. Yeah ... Him. Where was this him they were talking about, anyway?”

**“With voice,”** God repeated.

“How’s this?” she spoke out loud.

Right on cue a flock a quail took flight from behind a nearby brush. Sparrow followed. Geese, duck, robin, butterflies and other assorted fowl rose into the air and turned the quiet blue into a cornucopia of color and song.

She stood transfixed as the land around her next began to fill with moving fur and skin. Animals of every size and description slowly emerged onto the scene. They were somewhat aware of her presence but undisturbed all the same. Nothing, in fact no one, was disturbed here in the sanctuary of the garden. She watched in reverent fascination as the beasts of the field and air went about their way.

**“Each,”** the Lord seized the opportunity to inform her, **“has it’s own place on this earth. Each carries a purpose and each a partner. And yours, you will find, is here as well.”**

He led her quietly to somewhere in the center of Eden. She was keenly aware of being watched and followed not only by the creatures she could see around her but by the unseen eyes of Heaven. She felt as though her every move was being watched, evaluated and graded. And in a way it was.

It was there under the elms that she saw him. At first glance he appeared to be nothing more than a pile of leaves. Closer inspection would bear out the leaves to be nature’s blanket over his for now still figure. She moved in closer. He didn’t move. He was far less animated than she had expected.

“Is he alright?” she asked, unsure of whether she should risk venturing any closer to his almost motionless frame.

**“He is resting,”** God confided in her.

“Is he ... (she didn’t have the word)?”

**“He’s sleeping.”**

“Sleeping,” she repeated the word as she watched the leaves rise and fall over the young man’s chest. “Does he do that a lot?”

“**Off and on,**” God smiled. “**and so will you.**”

So this was ‘him’. She stared at him wearily as one watches an alarm clock tick it’s way across a broken dial, unsure of when it will stop or what may happen once it reaches it’s appointed time. She knew she wasn’t ready but God knew better and had said she was so ... she was. She looked back to the Lord with a mix of well founded fear and girlish anticipation.

“What now?” she asked.

“**We wait.**”

“ ... Wait” she tried the word out for size. This would indeed be a new experience for her.

*The eye never has enough of seeing,  
nor the ear its fill of hearing.  
What has been will be again,  
what has been done will be done again;  
there is nothing new under the sun.  
Is there anything of which one can say,  
"Look! This is something new"?*  
--Ecclaiastes 1:9-10

“Isn’t this exciting?” the Host proclaimed.

“Like watching grass grow”, “Snake’ responded (if only to himself).

“This is a first. This is a first of firsts. Don’t you want to be there?”

“Like his first moment of gas?” the angel asked straight faced. “The first time he found he could write in the snow? The first time he found something in his nose? I think I’ll skip this *first*, thank you.”

“Why can’t you be happy for them?” the softer angel asked sincerely

“How do you know I’m not?” ‘Snake’ mimicked her back.

“You’re here; they’re here: why not make the best of it?” She looked back upon the gardened couple. “This is their moment.”

‘Snake’ stared down upon the children, a piece of him remembering when he himself had been the cause of firsts. ‘A moment of turning’ God had called it. Who was he to steal their

moment? And who were they take his?.

“We have what we have,” her voice interrupted his thoughts. “Enjoy the now. We find contentment in enjoying what we have.”

“I’d rather have what I enjoy.” his eyes fixed as well upon the pair in the garden. “Not what someone tells me to.”

“If you want to be miserable, who am I to stop you?”

“And if you want to be boring--I’m sorry, content,” he corrected himself, “who am I to stop you?”

She was about to parlay back - in retrospect she would always wonder if she’d won over this argument if history wouldn’t have played out differently--but the truth was she didn’t win the argument--didn’t win the angel’s heart back--the conversation fell into an unimportant script of sideline chatter as she allowed herself to return to the show at hand.

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The girl was there when he opened his eyes, watching and waiting for movement, to meet the new creature.

There was a silence all throughout creation as she watched his eyes move rapidly under their lids.

“Is he having a seizure?” she thought aloud.

Adam’s eyes stopped under the folds of skin. Was he awake? Nothing happened. She leaned in closer to see better.

“Hello?” she whispered softly. Her breath brushed against his face and his cheeks grew flush in response. She backed away not knowing what colors to expect next. She could feel her own eyes widen as the boy’s brown tones behind his lashes came into view. The ensuing silence confirmed that he had not mastered his verbal skills as well as she had. Or perhaps he was deaf.

“Hello,” she repeated a little louder for his benefit.

Adam’s eyes were open now. He otherwise lay perfectly still as his peripheral vision rummaged around beyond the form in front of him in search of God. God, in turn, had stepped back in order to allow them their own moment in history. Adam’s gaze returned to her.

“Hello,” he reluctantly replied.

The girl smiled. He could talk after all. Adam moved carefully out of position until he was sitting opposite her. She watched in amazement at how fluidly the boy moved. He looked

like her only ... different. Still, he just sat there.

“What are you doing?” she asked. The girl appeared far more curious than Adam.

The boy didn't answer. He was studying her as well. It was now her turn to feel uncomfortable. The silence prevailed. Heaven watched.

“You're not going to sniff me, are you?” she asked. “I've seen some of the other animals do it, it seems a little repugnant if you ask me. What's your name?”

“Adam,” the boy answered, caught a little off guard.

“Have you met God?” the girl asked innocently.

The boy laughed. The girl laughed back nervously. The moment was forever caught in time. Adam stopped. The girl stopped.

“Do that again,” Adam implored.

“Do what again?” she asked, craning her neck as if she brought her face forward she'd be a little closer to understanding.

“Ha-ha-ha.”

What a strange creature this was. “‘Ha-ha-ha’?” she repeated after him.

“No, no, no, no, it was higher—like you did before,” he corrected her.

“Why?” she asked.

“I liked it,” Adam reasoned.

The girl looked around unsure of what to make of him or his odd request. She locked eyes with God.

God stepped forward, but only in voice. He was there but His presence couldn't be seen.

**“This ...”** God began, **“is your completion, Adam.”**

The girl watched the boy named Adam carefully as Adam in return watched her. All the while the voice of God continued.

**“This ... She is who I told you had to be. She came from you. I formed her from a rib taken out of your side. You complete her and she: you. There is still much for you each to learn but now you must learn together.”**

They compared hand sizes, faces, feet and other appendages. They noted their differences and their similarities. There were no notions of inferiority or superiority just a newness that overwhelmed them both. The newness hushed Adam into silent questioning while it spurred the girl into questioning the silence.

“What do you do around here?” the girl asked eagerly.

“What?” he didn’t understand.

“What do you do? What is it we do here? What’re we supposed to do?”

“Like what?” his face squinted into itself like she wasn’t making any sense.

“Exactly,” she played upon the word game.

He didn’t respond. She changed her tactics.

“Like now?” she tried to clarify herself. “What do we usually do when we wake up in the morning?”

“Why are you saying ‘*we*’?” he wanted to know.

“Fine,” she obliged him. “What is it *you* do?”

Adam paused again to think about this for a moment, “I name things,” he declared confidently.

“Ah,” the girl let this settle in. She sprung to her feet and stuck out her hand to help him up. “Then are you going to show me around?”

Suddenly on the spot Adam rose to the occasion without taking her hand. They started to walk westward as she pointed to an object in the distance. “What’s that?”

“A cloud,” he answered.

“What’s it do?”

“It blows around in the sky.”

God cleared His throat.

“It gathers water from the ocean,” Adam responded, “ and spreads it across the land allowing vegetation to grow so we can have food and I–I mean *we*–can eat.”

“I see,” she nodded approvingly though she couldn’t care less. “What do you call yourself?”

“My name is Adam,” he said proudly.

“Ok. And what do you call me?”

Adam thought about this for a while. He could hear God in her voice asking him the same question. He had to think fast before she asked him another question and he’d get off track.

“This,” he pointed to her as he addressed God and heaven directly, “is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman’, for she was taken out of man.”

“**She shall be called ‘woman’**,” God reported to the Host of Angels who had gathered with Him to enjoy the show.

The ‘woman’ giggled at the ‘man’s’ bravado.

“What?” the boy returned to the scene as if sucked back into scenario by some unseen force of egoism.

“You write poetry,” the ‘woman’ tittered.

Adam’s cheeks flushed all the more. He didn’t quite understand if this was a compliment or an insult.

“I like poetry,” she smiled. “ ‘I am woman, taken out of man.’ But your name is Adam. Who’s ‘man’?”

“Me,” Adam answered unashamed, “I’m the man *and* my name is Adam.”

“Why do you have two names and I have only one?”

Adam looked around puzzled. He experienced his first headache.

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Headache gave way to heartache. At first it was unnoticeable. They were friends. No, not even friends: they were acquaintances. They needed to get to know each other. The notion that they completed each other was just as frustrating as it was magnificent. He had a habit of completing her sentences. She had a habit of completing his thoughts. Neither truly found an appreciation for the other’s uncanny ability. Especially when the other’s completion seemed to waver off in a different direction than the boy or girl’s original concept. But they had each other. They invented new games. Many more than Hide and Seek. But what was most remarkable was the way they differed. And in this difference was the fullness of God.

ANGELS: They don’t seem to get along to well, do they?

GOD: On the contrary they get along perfectly.

ANGELS: How? All I see is them continually frustrated with each other.

GOD: How so?

ANGELS: Well, you see the way he just...sits there. Like he’s watching a rock?

ANGELS: And she’s everywhere. Looking at the grass, smelling the flowers, doing cartwheels while he ...

ANGELS: Picks up the rocks and watches the bugs under them.

ANGELS: What’s with that?

ANGELS: Which one's smarter? Who'd you give the more brains too?

GOD: Why would you ask that?

ANGELS: Well, it only stands to reason: He's stronger. She's fairer. He's more introverted, she's more extroverted. He's more in touch with his thoughts, she's more in touch with her feelings. He's visual, she's emotional.

GOD: Do you have a point you're getting to?

ANGELS: "Why?"

ANGELS: Yes, "why?"

ADAM: God?

ANGELS: Shhhh...

ADAM: God?

*(GOD LISTENED.)*

ADAM:

I don't know what's going on here? Everything's changed so much and I don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing. The woman is wonderful but ... and I don't mean this in a bad way ... but she's always there. I mean ... Always ... there. And when she's not I miss her. And that doesn't make sense. I don't know what to do with her. I named everything I could think of and I tried to tell her but she seems to want to give everything a ... (what did I call that?:) an adjective. Why? Like what I'm doing isn't good enough? Where does she come off with this? 'flower' isn't enough? Now there's 'pretty flower' and 'ugly' Instead of just flower'. 'Big flower', 'little flower'. It's just a flower. I pulled a whole bunch of them out of the ground and she tied them together and she said they were beautiful. You know what happened? They died. Then she cried. I don't know how to make her happy.

GIRL: God? If you have a moment?

ADAM:

I don't know why I even want to make her happy. What's so wrong with feeling something other than "happy"? They're other feelings too. The other day she was hungry. I wasn't hungry. She wanted to eat. I didn't want to eat so I told her to go ahead and get herself something, I didn't mind. She said she wanted us to eat together. I told her fine but I'll wait till I'm hungry, so she can wait till I'm hungry too. This didn't go over too well, as you can imagine. But I stood my ground. As I saw it nothing was stopping her. I didn't want to eat yet. I wanted to wait till I was hungry. So we talked. Basically we talked about food because that was already the subject at hand. What foods we liked, what we didn't. And I told her again about the tree. The one not to eat from and she was fine with that. And what was funny was the more we talked about food the hungrier I got. This was interesting so I didn't tell her right away; I wanted to check this out. It seemed the longer we didn't eat—the hungrier I got. It was strange how this feeling grew. I'd never noticed it before. Then I told her about it and I suggested we not eat and see how big this feeling would grow. She got mad.

GIRL:

What's with this guy? I don't understand him. He doesn't seem to have a decent idea in his whole head. He's got the sensitivity of a flea. You need to explain to me something here. I know I'm supposed to help him but ... with what? He just stares at me and it's beginning to creep me out. He's not looking at me wrong or anything ... he's just... looking. I know he likes me ... I mean, I think he likes me but ... I don't know. I don't know if he likes me or not. He won't say anything. I try to start a conversation with him and he just clams up. What is that all about? I think we're in deep need of some spiritual guidance here. Take the business of the tree for instance. I know we're supposed to stay away from the one in the middle of the garden but did you say that to anybody else about that or was it just us? I see birds sitting in the tree and nothing happens to them. Snakes and things eating out of the tree and ... nothing. So why not us? Hunh? I asked him and he just looked at me and shrugged. Don't get me wrong—I'm happy—I mean, of course I'm happy, why wouldn't I be happy? But ... well ...we've been here for awhile and ... The Angels all have their work to do, I mean, they're busy doing whatever it is you made

ADAM (continued):

Why does she get mad? We were 'feeling'. She tells me I need to 'feel'; this was a 'feeling' so why not explore it? We were both hungry and we were 'talking' and we were 'feeling'. These are the things she says she wants us to do: We were 'feeling' and we were 'talking' and she's mad. I don't understand her. We ate. Eventually. So what's the problem? Maybe if we came up with some new games she'd be happy. And here we are back at 'happy' again. Lord, I think I so. Yeah ... I think so. What do you think?

GIRL (continued):

them To do and we're just ... He likes playing games. But, there again, if I want to change the rules around so they're fair for both of us he says I'm cheating. I'm not cheating, Lord, I don't mean to ... I just ...wish he'd talk to me. Tell me what he's thinking. Like he talks to you. I want to know what you know so I can reach him. You're so wise ... so full of knowledge ... I want that for us. Is that too much to ask for? I really care for him, Lord, but I don't think he even notices me sometimes. What do you think?

GOD: Everything's going just fine.

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*“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”*

–ISAIAH 55:8-9

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Time passed. They grew. And as they grew Heaven watched. Adam was becoming his own man. He still had years to go but the cherub faced little boy no longer skipped through the garden. He had a certain walk—a stride—a confidence—that comes with maturity; albeit a premature maturity. There are those years when choices are made—when stretching our arms and legs is not merely to soothe an aching muscle but to see just how far we can reach out on our own.

The girl grew too. She became more beautiful every day. Heaven watched. Heaven saw. She was becoming a woman before their eyes. Everyone seemed to notice ... everyone but Adam.

Still she could feel their eyes watching her. More than once they had made themselves known. She encountered an Angel or two from time to time who merely wanted to talk. This wasn't so bad because she loved to talk and Adam ... let's just say that Adam was more of a thinker.

All things known having been named they set about to talk about (and name) things unknown. Then it happened. They were done. Done with the naming creatures. And in that transition they turned to other matters. They turned to each other. They began to share their dreams, their goals, desires and fears.

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Heaven pealed with joy and festivities of merriment as the children of earth came to realize their need and attraction for each other. Understanding what this all meant was still waiting over the horizon but the next chapter was well in sight.

The King looked about his palace to see that there was one citizen, his once mighty

warrior, who had bowed out for some fresh air. In this undisclosed place between Heaven and earth He found his disciple.

**“Why don’t you come and celebrate with us?”**

“I was there. Didn’t you hear the music?”

**“Yes. And not a note was out of place.”**

“Thank you for noticing.”

From their vantage point they could both see the waters of the earth ebb and flow underneath them. A damp mist filled the air as a storm brewed over an ocean that Adam nor his bride would ever see.

**“When I created the water I allowed for them to splash against each other, to drench the rocks, to crest and curl as they splayed themselves across the beach. Their sheer joy makes them sloppy. Their life, their power is found in their movement. They are as unpredictable to each drop accounted for as they are predictable that as whole the seas stay in their place.”**

“This is all very interesting but what? Are you telling me that I color too neatly between the lines?”

**“No, It is why you color so neatly that concerns me. You were wanting for more, I know that. Not much gets past ... let me rephrase that ... Nothing gets past my eyes.”**

“Nothing,” ‘Snake’ echoed giving no hint of reaction other than repeating the word.

**“It is not a boast or a threat. It is simply what is. We are celebrating what has been achieved., what is undergoing and what is still to come.”**

“There’s more to come?”

**“Much.”**

“Why should I be so impressed? He named the animals. He finally notices her. It took him longer to see her than it did for any other creature you brought forth. What is it we’re supposed to be celebrating? That your talking monkey will reproduce? You would hand him the entire world just because he can talk?”

God remained silent, not for his lack of something to say but to allow his band leader an opportunity to voice his concerns.

“I’ve brought you sonnets set to music. Symphonies of praise. Orchestrations beyond any of his imaginings. And what piece of dirt have you given me? Who was here first?”

After allowing the silence to continue a moment or two and thus assure them both that his accuser had ample opportunity to finish God spoke softly. **“I was,”** He corrected the angel. **“Long before you or your kind. Long before there was a thought in your head or a note on the scale. Everything I have made I have made with you in mind. They, the children of earth, can speak to each other but they are limited. Their thoughts are limited. All of creation is bound by limitations. I see these same limitations as opportunities.”**

“Your plan.”

**“I am not impressed by how much is achieved as by how their limits are overcome. You were given so much at the start. And yet you want more. Ambition for you is not a virtue. It is your limitation. Come, celebrate with me.”**

“I’ll skip this round, if you don’t mind.”

**“And if I do? If I do mind?”**

“Snake’ said nothing.

**“We will miss your music,”** the Lord declared as He returned to Heaven.

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But as much as the young couple enjoyed their time with each other there were still some things they didn’t share ... some things they held onto to ... for the morning.

Each morning and each afternoon God would walk through Eden. The earth’s children were always welcome to join Him and they often did. They were building (what did He call it?) a history. Some walks Adam joined God alone. Some journeys the girl sought God out. All in all they enjoyed the garden. And still they were watched.

“Lord?” the girl asked quietly as the wind swept through the almond trees.

**“What is it, my dear?”**

“I have a feeling that doesn’t make sense,” her eyes watched a pheasant swooping through a white mist cascading the garden.

**“A feeling you say?”** He let her reply.

Her gaze continued to follow the large bird’s flight.

**“What sort of feeling?”** He filled her silence.

“I don’t know how to describe it.”

**“Try.”**

“It doesn’t have a name. He hasn’t named it yet.”

**“Tell him. Describe it to him and he’ll give it a name. Then you and I can discuss it.”**

“I don’t want to tell him,” she folded her arms over each other against the wind as if the same motion might better protect her heart.

**“Ah. I see,”** said the Lord.

“Yeah ... I knew you would. So what am I supposed to do with this ... feeling?”

They pressed on with their walk, He understood that to stop at this point, would be taken as an emphasis on their conversation that may bring her back to silence as she had already begun to exhibit a small habit of giving undo importance to what in hind sight were small matters. But as we had already stated there were very few ‘hind sights’ at this point in time. After all this was a matter of ‘feelings’ and what could be more important than first ‘feelings?’ So He carried on as He steered their conversation slightly to the right.

**“Is this ... feeling telling you to do something?”**

“It’s a feeling. It doesn’t tell me what to do; I tell it.”

**“Do you trust your feeling?”**

“No.”

*Well, that came out as little fast, didn’t it?*

The Lord added heaven to his attention as they were watching. They were always watching. Aware of his acknowledgement they quieted themselves down.

**“That is wise counsel,”** He honored the girl’s response. **“Feelings change. They can be effected by any number of things. Like the weather. Or any other number of outside influences. You are not to trust them but ... I wouldn’t ignore them either. Feelings are a warning pattern connected to your soul. They can be your guides they are not your destination.”**

“Sometimes have I trouble following you.”

He took this as an opportunity to now stop and sit with her. Their view overlooked a cliff and a veritable orchard of every sort of tree imaginable (and one not). A teachable moment at hand He drew her attention back to the garden.

**“Take the tree for example.”**

“Which one” she looked out at them all.

**“Exactly: there are many trees and just as many feelings,”** He continued.

**“Close your eyes.”**

She did just as he requested.

**“So, when I ask you to choose a tree now, where does your mind wander to? You ask again, ‘which tree?’ Right? So I ask you which tree is the tree of life?”**

“OK” she did her best to follow this line of thinking .

**“Finding the tree; that’s the key. To find that tree: How does that make you feel?”**

“Happy?” she asked as if being quizzed.

**“There isn’t a wrong answer. Only truth. ‘Happy’ is honest, ‘happy’ is an emotion. And when you find it you will be happy. An emotion, a feeling. A fleeting moment. So, why do you want to find the tree? Just so you will feel happier?”**

She wasn’t sure how to answer, “not ... entirely ...”

**“Exactly. It’s only part of it. Your feeling is a guide. Now, think of the other tree. The one you know where it is. The one you stay away from. What do your feelings tell you there?”**

“ ...To stay away?” she asked tentatively.

Her uncertainty here did not go by unnoticed. **“Your feelings will direct you. They guide but do not pursue them and do not ignore them. You must learn to master your emotions or they will master you. Do you understand what I’m saying to you?”**

She understood. “Adam was right,” she changed the subject, “You do talk funny.”

**“From time to time,”** God concluded for her.

“So what am I supposed to do? Do I let my heart guide my head or my head guide my heart?”

**“Let me guide you,”** he smiled as they picked up their walk again. **“Your head and your heart will follow.”**

She elected to stay behind and let his words sink in for her.

“Your head and your heart will follow” the voice echoed in her mind. She recognized the words but the voice wasn’t her own. It wasn’t His. Even the tone was more mocking than she felt comfortable with. She looked from side to side but there was no one there. Looking again she saw him. In the trees. Wrapped around one of the limbs. It was the Angel. The one Adam had named.

“ ‘Snake’. Yes, it is an unflattering name, isn’t it? Much like yours: Wo-MAN.”

He slid from the branch and landed on his feet before her.

He was indeed more handsome than Adam. They both knew it. Another feeling she didn’t understand began to stir.

“Don’t you hate being talked to as a child?” he preached as though he was giving voice to the silent voices in her head.

“Who are you?” she asked never having encountered a mind reader before.

“A friend,” the serpent lied.

And he did appear to be a snake. Somehow he appeared as both a man and reptile at once and neither man nor animal at the same time. His appearance was altogether confusing.

“Would you like someone to sit with you awhile?” he assessed.

“No ...” she heard her own voice warn her away from him. Feelings weren’t to be trusted.

“Another time,” he sighed. And with that he slipped off the land and glided himself into the water. He swam away into the stream, alluring her with his simple descent into the blue and beyond her view.

Heaven waited. The die was being cast. The King waited, knowing what would happen was inevitable. And still a tear washed over his cheek.

Another day. Another walk. It was early morning and Adam sought some alone time with his mentor.

“God ...” he started sheepishly one dawn.

**“What is it, son?”** He could see the young man fidgeting for his composure.

“I love her.” There he said it. Then he corrected himself. “I think I love her, I’m not sure. I don’t have anything to compare it to.”

**“I see,”** God stopped at a meadow and sat. He offered his knee to Adam.

The man stood. “I love you, too,” Adam continued. “But it’s different. Don’t be mad. I don’t love you any less than I did before. I don’t love you any different than I did before. I love *her* different.”

**“I see,”** repeated the Lord.

“Is that wrong?” Adam’s voice softened.

“**No,**” God matched his tone. He waited for a response but none came. “**You need to tell her.**”

Adam took a deep breath as the Father’s words enclosed around him. Something more was bothering him. “What if she makes me choose?”

God looked deep into the boy. “**Why would she do that?**”

“I don’t know. I told you this is all so new to me now. It’s all...” his words trailed off with his gaze.

“**Would you make her choose?**” God asked aloud.

“Between me and you?” Adam questioned. “No, never.”

“**Are you sure?**” His voice invited an answer.

Adam’s eyes returned to Him. “She loves *you* different, right?”

“**Mm-hmm.**”

“She told you?”

“**Quite a while ago.**”

Adam sat, cradling himself in the crook of God’s ankle. “I’m the slow one.”

“**At times,**” the Lord reassured him. “**At times each of us are the slow one. It’s not a race. Well, it is a race but ... not that kind.**”

“You’re talking funny again.”

“**I do that sometimes, don’t I?**” How alike they were he mused to himself.

Adam sat for a while in thought. God waited. Options ran rampant through the boy’s head. An elaborate chess game of ‘if this then that’ played themselves out. “Do I have to tell her? It might ruin everything.”

“**How so?**” God pushed him further.

“How?” It was all too obvious to the boy. “There’s no going back. Once I tell her it’s all ... uphill or downhill from there.”

“**So,**” God reframed the conversation, “**how do you want me to help?**”

Adam hesitated. “Maybe you could tell her for me?”

“**Some things you’ll have to do on your own,**” God smiled.

“You already told her?” Adam hoped.

“**Some things you’ll have to find out on your own.**”

Adam slouched. "I hate it when you talk like that."

**"Then talk to *her*."**

\*\*\*

*Who is she?*

*I saw another woman today.*

*I watched her from the shore.*

*She watched me from the water.*

*As she drifted there it seemed to me the water wanted to take her away.*

*Four rivers wending four directions*

*Each one away from here.*

*To where?*

*Why wouldn't she go?*

*What lies out there beyond the garden?*

*What secrets does she know that I don't?*

*I could tell she wonders the same about me.*

*What more is there?*

*Where does she fit into the plan?*

*Does she wonder how things would be different if she'd come first?*

*Was she an original thought or an after thought?*

*How can she know the difference?*

*What lies out there beyond the garden?*

*What secrets does she know that I won't?*

*Do the angels watch her the way they watch me?*

*Does Adam know about her?*

*Does Adam care?*

*I want to climb to the highest mountain;*

*I want to swim away to distant shores;*

*I want to sing songs I've never heard before.*

*I don't know why.*

*What lies out there beyond the garden?*

*What secrets does she know that I can't?*

*Does she know God?*

*Does he see her?*

*I want to know all she knows.*

*No.*

*I want to know more.*

*Does He know what she wants?*

*Does He know what she needs?*

*Does He see her from the water?*

*Or does he see her from the shore?*

*Does he see things from a Woman's Point of View?*

*What lies out there beyond the garden?*

*What secrets does she know?*

*Who is she?*

*Who am I?*

\*\*\*

“Are you crying?”

The voice came from somewhere behind her. She looked around. Again there was no one there. She recalled the voice and then she saw him. It was ‘Snake’.

“So, we meet again,” he half smiled in his off setting way.

“Excuse me?” She ran her fingers across her cheeks to smooth her complexion. She didn’t want to be seen like this ... so vulnerable.

“That’s what we do: we meet. We’re meeters, you and I. We meet need. We meet. We talk. We plan our lives.”

“I ...” she was at a loss for words. She didn’t know him all that well. Why was he assuming such intimacy? They had only talked how many times? Once before? “... didn’t know you’d be here.”

“Didn’t you?” he corrected her. “I thought we had a bond. Kindred spirits is what I called it. But if you’d rather be alone ....” he lingered just out of touch.

“No,” she didn’t want to offend him. “I didn’t ... I meant I really didn’t search you out is all.”

He stepped in closer. “My mistake,” his voice bowed. “Maybe I sought you out. I get

confused sometimes.”

She laughed nervously along with him. He was next to her now. “Why?” she wondered aloud all too innocently. “Why would you search me out?”

“Why would I search you out?” he gazed admiringly at her from their reflection in the water. “Look at yourself. Why wouldn’t anyone search you out? Honestly, you are ... breath taking ...”

She peered into the water of his eyes and back at her own longing form. The longer the silence ensued the more uncomfortable she felt.

“I’m sorry. I didn’t know anybody was here I thought I was ...”

“Alone,” he finished her sentence for her.

He was close. So close that she could feel his breath on the nape of her neck. She moved softly away. ‘Snake’ drew back respectfully.

“You’re not alone,” he reassured her.

“I know,” she returned innocently. “We’re never alone.”

‘Snake’ smiled.

“What?” she smiled back.

“Never alone?” he asked.

“God ...” she began to explain.

“Ahh ...” he interrupted. His thoughts became her thoughts ...

*Is He watching you now,*

*Does He know what you’re thinking?*

*Is He listening now;*

*Will He hear if you scream?*

*Come closer—and whisper—everything you’re feeling*

*Does He care what you know?;*

*Does He know what you dream?*

(But ... )

*I do. I’m here. I want—to help you.*

*I’m listening.*

*Speak to me.*

(But ... )

*I'm here.*

*Here for you.*

*Say to me.*

*Pray to me.*

(But ... )

*Shhhh.*

“You’re right.”

Words. He said words. They sounded different. Had he been inside her head somehow? She didn’t understand. How could he ... How could she ... What had just happened? Before he’d read her thoughts and now ... now was she hearing his? But how?

“You’re right,” he continued. “There is more out there. But we’re happy here, aren’t we? In the Garden. Look all around you. All around us. Hungry?” He reached out to a tree nearby to snatch a ripened bit of food.

“Don’t do that!” the girl jumped forward to stop him—He was at the wrong tree!

“What?” he paused briefly, firmly holding onto the fruit as it clung to its branch. She was dangerously close to him now; poised beside him, she stood between the Angel and his poison of choice. Knowingly he plucked the yield from the tree’s hold and brought it down, sliding his arm around her and brushing her jaw softly with the heel of his palm; tender enough to tickle her flesh.

The girl held her breathe, unable to answer the questions that raced through her. “You’ll ...” her eyes met his and watched him as he brought the fruit to his lips. “ ... die.”

“Die?” he took a bite. He followed her eyes as she watched him quietly eat. “What is die?”

She didn’t know how to answer. She didn’t know what to answer.

“Is it bad?” he took another bite. “Are you really sure he said you’d die?”

She watched him. Where was the precocious girl who ran through the grass, who danced in the leaves? Why didn’t she answer?

“Did God really say, “You must not eat from *any* tree in the garden?”

She carefully took the fruit away from him. “We may eat from the trees in the garden,” she found her voice, “but God did say, ‘You must not eat from the tree in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”

“Ahh,” a gasp escaped from his throat as he playfully knocked the fruit from her hands. It fell to the ground.

They both stared at it on the ground. Nothing. He looked at her and she at him. He took her hand in his. She wasn't sure whether she wanted to run or not. He felt her pulse. He then held his other hand to her forehead. His touch was always just light enough to question. She looked into his eyes wanting to find something there. He let go and bent down to retrieve the morsel from the grass.

“You will not surely die,” he concluded.

She saw something in his eyes. Knowledge she wanted. And something else, something she couldn't quite contain. Again she could hear him inside her. Whispering to her. She was curious to follow but she was torn—no, she was confused—she wondered whether this was the right thing to do or not—She didn't know.

He started to offer the last bite of fruit then pulled away again. She wasn't ready. “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

He finished his meal. Nothing but the core was left behind, he cast it off, tossing it into the river to the waiting hands of the girl's reflection.

She tried to step away, he countered to the left. She shifted to the right. He matched her step. She watched his eyes. They moved around the tree in rhythmic unison. She dipped, he dipped. She turned, he turned. He seemed always aware of her next steps, even before she was. As they continued her frustration gave way to music and their awkward movements to abandon. She could sense his direction and he hers. There was an intimacy in the motion as they circled each other around the tree. Then just as she began to lose herself into the promenade he slipped aside, allowing her to retreat.

“Thank you for the dance,” he quipped and bowed. He backed away, losing himself behind the tree.

She stood there waiting for his next move. She wanted a next move. He was gone. She realized then that her gaze was on the tree. The fruit still hung there. She wasn't dead. She wanted more. She wanted so much more.

There was movement in the leaves. A snake slithered along a branch. ‘This must be a sign,’ she thought to herself. Her thought. Her voice rang through her head. She had to tell

Adam.

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#### **I V. AROUND THE TREE**

*"Everything is permissible"  
--but not everything is beneficial.  
– 1 Corinthians 10:23*

They met in the glen overlooking the Gihon. They were excited to meet each other.  
They each had so much to share.

“You go first.”

“No, you.”

“No, you.”

“No, you, I insist.”

“No, please.”

“Please, go ahead.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes, I’m sure.”

*(“Oh, get on with it, already.”)*

“Ok, ok. Come with me.”

“Where?”

“I’ll show you.”

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“**T**his is it!” the Prince announced to the followers he had gathered together. “Our

opportunity has come. The king will be resting now. We must create a diversion. Who's up for the battle?"

"Battle?"

"This is the moment we have been waiting for," the prince reputed.

"We can't win a battle," they whined back.

"I have no interest in *winning* a mere battle," he mused aloud. "There is a higher prize at stake. We will concede them the battle. We will win the war. This is where it starts. And this is how it must be played out. You're either with us or against us. You are with us or with Him."

The Prince began to unveil his plan. The kingdom would not be taken by force but by deception. For the prince the first campaign was here and now; to win over their hearts and their minds; their allegiance would follow. Those he could whip up into a frenzy of violence he whipped. Those he could entice with their own dissensions of jealousy and greed he enticed. Those who needed cajoling he cajoled. Those open to seduction were seduced. He was all things to all.

Some were taken in merely by his charismatic charm. Logically they could see the flaws in his plans but they were caught up in the dream. A kingdom of their own. Either kingdom would do. In its simplest form the King would be caught unprepared and in defending one kingdom he would lose the other or if the plan ultimately succeeded the king could invariably lose both.

Time, however, was of the essence. The time to move was now. There was no room for lengthy debate and he knew this. Though he wouldn't let on to his gathering he knew too well that his time was short. To watch the Prince at work was either exhilarating (or exhausting depending upon where you stood) but all the same it was entertaining and in that fascination the spider wove his web. He was far more cunning than any had ever given him credit for. He relied on each of his skills, his talents, and his charms but when all was said and done he still hadn't won over as many as he needed for his rebellion.

"Winning isn't the only thing," one of his minions offered when she saw what she thought was defeat in 'Snake's' eyes.

That's when he smiled. "Of course, she was right," he thought to himself. "Winning wasn't the only thing. Not losing was the only thing." He had an immediate change of plans.

Calmly and quietly he addressed this last and largest group of procrastinators. He held no

grudges. He understood them. In fact, this final regiment before him was to be the kingpin to the reformation of his entire plan. He didn't ask them to take up arms or banners. He didn't ask them to stand in the barricade. He didn't even ask them to take sides. He asked them, literally, to do nothing. Specifically he asked them *not* to take sides. He asked them simply *not* to interfere. This was, after all, family business. Sides could be chosen later. They should simply stand out of the way then join forces with the victors. He (the Prince) would not take offense with the undecided. In his new kingdom there would be room for everybody.

“But what about the king?” they asked. “What will happen to him?”

“There will be a new king,” he assured them.

“And what about the old?”

“He is old, isn't he?” the prince voice drooped into a mock sadness. “But there will be room for him as well,” he conceded. “He has proven quite creative. He will simply learn to serve his creation now rather than the other way around.”

“And if we lose?”

“We won't lose. I won't lose.” He searched their minds and waited for the moment that grows with anticipation ... “So, who wants to win with me?”

The cheer went up.

Heaven braced itself.

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She took him back to the center of the garden. He was giddy with her laughter. He wanted to scoop her up in his arms. ‘Why would he want to do that?’ he thought to himself. She raced him to the tree and beat him there by two yards.

“This is it,” she echoed Heaven.

“What is?” he asked incredulously.

She gently touched the bark.

“Stop!”

She smiled sweetly even as Adam grabbed her by the waist to pull her back. She simply reached out with her other hand to the branch looming above them.

“No,” she showed him quietly, it was everything she could muster to contain herself. She ran her hand across the bough and then presented her palm to him. “See? Nothing.”

While Adam stood there silently trying to put together the right words she moved on to

the next point of her demonstration. She stepped into the river and searched for the remnant.

“OK, look, look, look, look, look, look ...” She spoke to keep control of the conversation. She knew what he was going to say but first she had to show him. She found the discarded bit of fruit floating against the river’s shore, bobbing quietly in the stream against the rocks. She fished it out like a grand prize and carried it cupped in her hands to present it to Adam. “Look.”

Adam watched her step dripping from the river. The ends of her hair melted onto her shoulders and her hands formed a half shell to the shriveled core she held before her. She was at once a vision of womanly beauty, a little child displaying her secret treasure and a crazy lady absorbed with a piece of garbage.

“Look,” she repeated.

“It’s trash,” Adam observed aloud.

“No, silly,” she giggled still delighted with herself.

“It’s not trash?” he quizzed back.

“It’s from the tree.”

“The tree?” he thought the words to himself. He couldn’t imagine she could have ... “No, wait ...”

She could see somewhere behind his eyes an entire conversation taking place in his mind: “She couldn’t mean *this* tree. *This* tree in the center of the garden? She knew not to eat from *this* tree. Better not to even touch the tree. But she had touched the tree. He’d seen her touch the tree. Why did she touch the tree? Why didn’t she die? Why is she holding this fruit from this ...? Wait, wait, wait ...” He started to smile ... the thoughts were coming together. “She had found the other tree. The tree that gives eternal life. Of course, that had to be it. She found the other tree. She ate from that tree so this tree had no power over them now. It was so simple. Of course she wanted to share this. But why did she find it first? He’d been here longer—why hadn’t he found the tree?”

“Why are you making those faces?” she asked. “Does it hurt?”

“You found the tree?”

Now she looked at him like he was the loony one. “What?”

“The tree of life?”

“No ... maybe.” Why was he trying to confuse her?

“Where?” he took it’s fruit and looked at it.

“Duh .. Right there,” she pointed.

He dropped the shriveled core. She reached down and picked it back up. She could sense all the wrong thoughts were coming to him now. His mind was racing with every worst case scenario he could summon. She stepped toward him to explain before it was too late. He backed away. She countered. He stepped. She countered again. She laughed. They continued in a ridiculous repeat of history. She stopped (just as ‘Snake’ had stopped.) Adam looked at her differently now. He didn’t see the child nor the woman; no, he was clearly focused on ‘crazy-lady’.

“We danced,” she beamed in her girlish innocence.

It was her tone that brought him back into focus. He saw her again. He saw the girl in front of him now. The woman he loved. But he had to know the truth.

“You didn’t eat that from that tree, did you?”

“Noooo,” she retreated back instinctively. “But ... ” she stepped forward again, “ ... someone did.”

“Who?”

“And he didn’t die.”

“Who?”

“And I figured, this tree has knowledge—”

“Who?” he tried again but she was already off and running.

“—and wisdom, you know and after all, why else would God call it the tree of knowledge?” She paused only a moment to be sure Adam was tracking along with her chain of thought. All aboard! Her train proceeded to leave the station: “So, that being the case, I figured if we ate from *this* tree we could use that knowledge and find the *other* tree. And if we found *that* tree—we could eat from that tree too and then we could have both trees. See, I think this is a test—not a test like—‘Don’t do this or else’ but ‘See if you can figure this out’ test—you know what I mean? From this tree we will know. We will know things we never knew we could know. But how will we know if we don’t try?”

“But ... ” he was still trying to piece her logic back together into something that made sense.

“How will we know?”

“He said to leave this tree alone.”

“He said we’d die.” She looked him square in the face. “Do I look dead?”

“But ...”

“How will we know?”

He didn’t even say anything.

“How–will–we–know?” she sounded out each word. She then reached above them into the tree. The snake shifted on the branch. Adam jumped. “It’s nothing,” Eve reassured him. She grabbed hold of a fruit. She took hold of his hand. She pulled.

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“Now!”

The first volley began. Swords drawn the prince’s legions launched their attack.

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The couple stared at the piece of fruit in her hand. If he wanted to say, “no,” he didn’t. If she wanted to say, “no,” she didn’t.

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**T**he clash of their wills pierced through Heaven. The element of surprise was almost over. The ambush had ended. The battle had begun.

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They took a breath unsure of themselves but together in their discovery. She took a bite. He watched. Having finished her bite she handed the fruit to him. She held her breath as he hesitated. The snake in the tree seemed to smile. She waited for Adam’s response. He held her hand again. If he were to die he wanted to be touching her when it happened. He took the bite.

There. That was done. He took the remainder of the fruit and threw it as far as he could. They took each other’s hands. They stared into each other’s eyes.

“What now?” she asked.

“We wait.”

\*\*\*

**C**ountryman fought with countryman. Countrywoman fought with countrywoman.

Countrymen fought with countrywomen. Gender was not an issue. Gender had never been the issue. What was at issue was the King. Where was the king? How could he let this happen?

Heroes rose on either side. Michael, Gabriel, Azreal. Apolyon, Mammon, Beelzebub. The prince, surprisingly enough, was also nowhere to be found in the struggle. He was busy attending to other matters.

\*\*\*

They watched each other without blinking; waiting to see what the other would do. It was the first time either had thought of themselves first. She wondered what he was thinking of her right now. He wondered the same of her. Suddenly they didn't want to touch each other. And then they had to touch each other. Everything was changing. They clung to each other. They closed their eyes. The touch was different.

"Are we dead yet?" they whispered.

They were in each other's arms. They needed to escape and they needed each other. Their embrace twisted. Suddenly there was so much about each other they didn't know. Suddenly there was so much more they wanted to know. Suddenly there was something to hide. They embraced again.

Beneath the tree they fell. Each into the other—each losing themselves and finding themselves—and losing themselves again.

*"For with much wisdom comes much sorrow;  
the more knowledge, the more grief."*

-- ECCLESIASTES 1:18

They were naked. They knew that now. They had shared a beauty, a oneness, that they had never known before. And in that oneness they were acutely aware when they had separated. They looked away from each other. Her thoughts raced. His numbed. They both drifted off to sleep. Perchance to dream.

*"For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness;  
and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control;  
and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness;  
and to godliness, brotherly kindness;  
and to brotherly kindness, love."*

-2 PETER 1:5-7

The prince stared down at the caretaker and his wife, soon to be dead, soon to be gone. He watched them breathe in and out. Their chests lifted and fell as life continued inside them. “Who is the liar now?” he thought to himself. The war above and beyond him continued in haste. The prize at his feet remained guarded by each murmur and sigh of the sleeping couple. He bent down over the woman. God had finely made a beautiful creature after all. One worthy of his own attention. ... Oh well. Soon they would be gone. He gently closed his eyes to breathe in the last of her perfume.

There was a noise. A rumbling on the earth. This could be it. He opened his eyes to witness the end:

“He’s snoring,” the Prince sighed at the irony of it all. This was all too much. He returned to the tree and waited.

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*(A quiet moment – midday – The WOMAN and ADAM both lay spooning, side by side on the lawn under the tree. The shade of the tree guarded them from the full heat of the sun. They faced each other as they rested there on their sides. ADAM propped his head up on his hand [his arm serving him as a tripod at his elbow]. He watched the WOMAN’s sleeping form. The moment was almost perfect.)*

ADAM: Woman?

WOMAN: Hmmmm ...

ADAM: Woman?

*(Again: no response.)*

Woman?

*(HE reached over and gently nudged her. SHE turned. One eye opened slowly and then the other followed. SHE could see that he was staring at her with a sheepish grin on his face.)*

ADAM: Woman?

WOMAN: What? What are you staring at?

ADAM: I’m hungry.

*(SHE rolled away. SHE lay on her back and let her gaze wander off into the sky.)*

ADAM: Did you hear me?

WOMAN: I heard. There're trees everywhere.

*(A PAUSE. ADAM continued to gaze upon his wife's loveliness.)*

WOMAN: Don't look at me like that.

ADAM: Look at you like what?

WOMAN: You know ... like that ...

ADAM: Oh ... 'like that' ... How do you know I was looking at you 'like that'?

WOMAN: A woman knows.

ADAM: Oh.

*(HE lay back as well, matching her repose.)*

Then ... You don't look at me 'like that' either.

WOMAN: I wasn't.

ADAM: How can I know you weren't?

WOMAN: (You mean beside the fact I'm staring at a tree?) You can't.

ADAM: Oh.

*(Their pause continued without words. The WOMAN's eyes fell upon something different in the garden. SHE closed her eyes and opened them again. SHE sat up. ADAM leaned up on his elbows.)*

ADAM: What? What is it?

WOMAN: Did you see that?

ADAM: What?

WOMAN: I don't know. I never—

*(SHE looked all around her)*

—Did you notice anything different?

ADAM: What? What do you see?

*(HE suddenly stopped in mid thought.)*

Are we dead?

WOMAN: No, we're not dead—

*(SHE stopped in thought as well.)*

... I don't think so. It's just different. Do you see it?

ADAM: What? I don't see anything.

WOMAN: Look harder.

ADAM: At what?

WOMAN: Everything.

*(SHE looked again.)*

Oh my word .. They're everywhere.

ADAM: What? What is it? What do you see that I don't?

*(SHE followed their lines—or their outlines, she then looked directly at the patch of ground around her.)*

WOMAN: Oh my word.

*(SHE instinctively brought her knees up to protect herself. ADAM remained prone and blissfully unaware. She jumped and ran out from the shade to where the sun kissed the grass. ADAM watched her warily as she moved about in the light. SHE, in turn, looked back at him in horror.)*

ADAM: What? What is it?

WOMAN: It's all around you.

ADAM: What are you ...

*(SHE said nothing: her mere stare should have told him that something was wrong. HE could see by the look on her face that SHE was serious. ADAM quickly got to his feet and joined her. HE stopped just under the branches. The WOMAN was now holding her arms around herself, wrapping her hands under her arm pits as she moved nervously about.)*

ADAM: What is it?

*(SHE backed away from his reach until he stepped out fully from under the tree. HE did.)*

ADAM: What?

WOMAN: Look.

They looked. She remained quiet as Adam surveyed the landscape. Nothing looked too unusual ... nothing really stood out ... and then he saw it. When he looked back at her it was

there. The sun being directly above them cast a halo of light on the top of her head but it also cast a shadow over her eyes. Under hers nose, as well. He could make out a small trace of darkness falling onto her upper lip. His eyes grew wide. Could she see it too? *Oh, my word, was it on him too!?* Their eyes met. Adam looked back at the tree. On the grass where they laid was a large patch of dimmed green while where they stood was a bright blanket of color.

Maybe it had always been there. Maybe they had just never seen it before.

They looked at each other. All around them; everywhere they turned, they saw them. Shadows cast in different degrees by every object their eyes laid sight on.

“Did we do this?” the Woman asked in a sotto voice.

“I don’t know,” Adam replied in kind.

They tried to look at the sun but it was too bright. It hurt their eyes now. Something had changed.

The snake slid forward on it’s branch to get a better look.

They turned to each other. There were no words for what they were feeling.

“What do you call them?” the Woman asked.

“I don’t know,” Adam stepped back, “I’ve never seen them before.”

“Then name them.”

“Why?”

“That’s what you do.”

He looked at her incredulously, “How is that supposed to help?”

A slight wind rustled through the garden. The leaves and their shadows shimmered across the ground. The Woman jumped. Adam jumped because she jumped. Which in turn caused her to jump once again. Which in turn ...

“Why’d you do that?” she snapped.

“Why’d *I* do that? Why’d *you* do that!?”

“I didn’t do anything.”

“Well, it wasn’t me!”

They stopped. What *were* they doing? They needed each other now.

“... I’m sorry.”

She moved toward him to share a hug.

“I’m sorry,” he turned to receive.

It was awkward. They were naked. They tried to embrace but their exposed skin touching was ... was ... in the way. They tried to move themselves into a more conservative position but found that they were still awkwardly aware of their own nakedness. This was something else that was new to them. They stood apart from each other and shaded their eyes.

WOMAN: I'm sorry.

ADAM: Me too.

WOMAN: What are you sorry for?

ADAM: I don't know; what are you sorry for?

WOMAN: I don't know; what are you sorry for?

ADAM: I'm sorry for ... I'm sorry that .. I'm sorry that we're in this mess. That's what I'm sorry for.

WOMAN: Yeah ... me too.

*(They tried to touch each other but again it was still awkward.)*

WOMAN: Maybe I should ... Maybe we ... should put something ... on.

ADAM: Yeah ... maybe that will help.

WOMAN: Yeah .. You find something.

ADAM: Yeah .. Yeah ... that's what we'll do.

WOMAN: Yeah ...

They used leaves from a nearby fig tree to create cloth. They braided the leaves together using vines for thread, then strung them with bamboo cords.

It took most of the day but when they were finished they'd succeeded in covering themselves. They then sat there in the silence, realizing that they had no idea what to expect next.

“Woman?” his voice had lost the confidence she had fallen in love with.

“What?” (She hated that name, but she had become accustomed to it.)

“Never mind.”

They sat there waiting as the shadows grew with the cool of the day. They could hear movement somewhere. They could sense who it was. They knew what would come next.

Without acknowledging each other they hid; separately; behind a shrub or in a cave or wherever they could conceal themselves. For God was coming. And God would know.

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**T**his was not just another day. The King knew everything that was going on. Still he passed through Heaven as the battle waged all around him. The fighting could not touch him. It could not reach him. He continued on through the battlefield to keep his own rendezvous.

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Stepping into the garden He knew this wasn't another game of Hide and Seek. This was, again, a turning point for all time.

**Adam,  
You were my favorite child  
Eden was undefiled  
And here we talked and here we laughed our time away  
Adam,  
But still you had to grow  
And childhood has to go  
As surely as the night completes the day  
And there, by the light of the moon  
You would wait  
And you wondered just what you would do  
With your life all alone  
Where are you, Adam?  
Where are you?  
Adam,  
You slept into the dawn  
You woke and gazed upon  
The woman I had brought there to your side  
Adam,  
You took her as your wife  
She would complete your life  
Receiving all the love you held inside**

And there, by the light of the moon  
You would walk  
And you talked about what you would do  
With your lives on your own  
Where are you, Adam?  
Where are you?  
Eve,  
It wasn't I who brought you out here  
To deceive you  
Then to leave you  
With a longing  
For the truth to  
Set you free  
Where were you, Adam?  
Where are you?  
Children,  
Both hiding from your shame  
A childish lover's game  
If only you were still two kids at play  
Children,  
I long to dry your tears  
And wash away the years  
Come to me now and speak the truth today  
And there, by the light of the sun  
You both hide  
Scared and frightened for what you have done  
When I find you alone  
Where are you, Adam?  
Where are you, Adam?  
Where are you?  
Adam?

## Adam?

*Adam, Where are you?*

– *Genesis 3:9*

Who came out first was unimportant. God waited. He surveyed the landscape knowingly. There was no more need for ‘looking’ for them. He knew where they were. And in their hearts they knew that He knew. They could feel His mere presence drawing them out. Was it Him calling to them or was it their own yearning calling out to Him? Either way, they were like magnets pulling north. God waited.

The man and the woman emerged from the shadows and stepped into what was left of the light.

God’s eyes looked into the tree, finding the ‘snake’ unmoved from his perch. The asp pretended not to notice. God sat down on a rock, facing them all, as His wayward couple shared and avoided glances. He couldn’t help but notice their garments.

“I heard you, so I hid,” Adam spoke up trying to display an heir of confidence. This was followed by silence.

Now silence can be a funny thing. It can befriend the righteous man and condemn the guilty. It can cause the greatest excitement in anticipation of a blessed event or the worst panic and incite us to say things we might later regret.

“I was afraid because we were naked,” Adam added.

God never raised His voice or accused them of any wrong doing by His tone. He simply asked, **“Who told you you were naked?”**

Nothing. No response. No admission. She didn’t look to him. He didn’t look to her. Just silence ... dead silence.

**“Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”** He followed.

The silence continued. The pressure of the same increased. God bent down and wrote something on the ground with his finger. ‘Snake’ wriggled to the end of the branch gleeful with anticipation.

“Yes,” Adam admitted.

There. He’d said it. It was over now. Nothing left to do but ... but wait, there was more—

Maybe there *was* a way out of this after all—he had to try. “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”

God let him finish his say. He then let this sink in slowly.

The Woman stood there in bewilderment. She could barely believe her ears; betrayed by her own husband. She felt God’s gaze fall upon her. He wasn’t done with Adam yet, she could tell, but now it was her turn. A million responses raced through her mind. She had to choose just the right words.

**“What is this you have done?”** God asked for her story.

He never moved from his position. He knew what they were going to say even before they knew themselves they were going to say it. *“So why bother saying anything at all?”* she thought to herself. After all, He had to know it wasn’t her fault. She never knew between good or evil. How could she know between right and wrong? How could she know it would all turn out this way? She looked up, trying to find some hope of guidance or maybe she’d settle just for an escape. She caught herself looking back into the tree. And, she could see, a pair of eyes looked back at her.

“It was the serpent,” she declared. “He deceived me and I ate.” She stopped. She didn’t know what else to say.

The Lord widened His attention to include the tree. (His attention never left the couple—it only increased to add focus to the tree.) He knew who was there. He had seen the ‘reptile’ from far off, before He had ever even entered the garden. He didn’t wait for a response. He didn’t need to. He knew the truth wouldn’t be told. He knew the angel wouldn’t even take his own form.

**“Because you have done this,”** He played along as he addressed the ‘serpent’, **“Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals. You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life.”** He moved in closer, within inches of the reptile. Enough regarding his outward appearance. The Lord addressed the individual inside. Without raising His voice He made this solemn promise. **“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike at his heel.”**

‘Snake’ remained silent.

The woman’s heart lightened. Had she heard correctly? She was going to have a baby?

She wasn't going to die? She would be mother to an entire nation (Whatever that meant). She had seen the animals in their deliveries but now it would be her turn.

And now it was ... God turned to her and met her thought just where they had raced to. **“I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children.”**

He looked back to the tree. ‘Snake’ was still there. It was just as well. God knew about their dance around the tree. He knew how the Angels had spied upon the woman. And He knew of her own reaction to them as well.

**“Your desire,”** he addressed the woman, **“will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.”**

That said, He turned to the boy who thought himself a man.

“Was that it?” she thought to herself, “was He done with her?”

Adam prepared himself to die. Never mind what the Lord had told the woman or the ‘snake’—Adam hadn't really been listening anyway. He knew he was responsible for whatever happened here. God had given him that. His life had been so carefree and his duties so light. If he wanted to be a man, God decided, it would be hard work that would provide the fuel for such a transformation.

**“Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat of it,’ Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field, By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from the ground you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”**

There it was: death. Not right away but imminent, eventual, looming ahead of them.

They stood there, the man and his bride, silently waiting for the full measure of God's wrath to fall.

But it didn't; not as they expected. Anger and fury were empty. They had hurt him much deeper. He had always know it would be it would be inevitable. It had always been just a matter of time. Now ‘time’ was all that they had.

God stood. There was silence. Heaven stopped. The battle over glory, as well, was over. Not by might, not by power, neither sacrifice nor submission but by God's will and creation's blind obedience, the assault was brought to an end. God had had enough.

“Is that it?” ‘Snake’ thought to himself. “They’re not even dead.”

“**Yet,**” God corrected him. “**I still have plans.**” He surveyed Eden one more time. He chose His path and began his final stroll through the garden.

“When does this all start?” Adam stammered out the words.

“**It already has.**” God stretched his legs.

The Woman debated speaking up but the questions kept coming and she couldn’t let Him go without asking, “You mean ... I’m going to have a baby?”

God sighed. (In time, yes.)

“You’re going to have a baby?” Adam repeated. “Oh ... wow.”

God tarried a moment longer.

“This is ... ” Adam didn’t know how to respond. “This is ... Is this a punishment?”

God didn’t answer but started on his way, pausing only a moment to look to ‘Snake’, still nestled in the tree.

“Woman,” Adam was at a loss for words. “Oh ... Woman ... ”

“**She doesn’t like that name.**”

Adam turned hopefully, “What?”

God was gone but His voice remained. “**She doesn’t like the name. Every being, every child that comes forth will be in direct ascension from her. She deserves a name that befits her position.**”

Adam stood perplexed. Generations were to follow. It wasn’t about himself anymore. He had to understand that now. Somehow this was about her. Her and everyone to follow.

“Everything will follow you,” he said to her softly. “Everyone through you. And you are first, you are the beginning of *Everything*. May I name you Eve?”

“**Her name is Eve,**” God repeated to the Host as if announcing that He was on His way.

“I’ll see you in Heaven,” ‘Snake’ confided as the Lord passed.

“**No,**” God responded back in his same casual style. “**No, I don’t think you will.**”

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## V. FALLING

*"I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.*

*I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."*

*--LUKE 10:18-20*

Surveying the land, the Lord caught sight of it on the north end of the Euphrates tributary. The wind curled just a few degrees beyond what it had yesterday. If this continued (and it would) the garden would never be the same. The foliage didn't yet show the signs of change but the animals knew. Animals instinctively know when their environment has been altered or may be on the brink of the same.

He paused at the sight.

Pure carnage. Animals in fear had attacked each other and trampled one another in their attempts to escape.

**"The Wildebeest is so gentle a creature,"** He thought aloud. He reached down and stroked the animals hide. **"I am sorry, my friend."** His eyes followed the trail of blood as his heart heard it sing out to Him. The blood, in turn, mixed with His tears.

Rain fell.

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The soon to be expectant couple found themselves caught off guard in the downpour. They hurried under a tree to keep dry—any tree (any tree but *that* tree). Their "clothing" offered

no resistance to the elements.

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“What happened?”

He knew who it was. He chose not to answer.

‘Snake’ meandered alongside Him to see what He was doing. “What exactly did you mean to me by what you said back there?” Again, no response. The Lord was obviously preoccupied with the creature on the ground. “Will you bring him back to life?”

“No.” God didn’t look up.

“Create another one?”

No reply again. ‘Snake’ watched with increased fascination as the divine tailor set about to the task at hand.

SNAKE: You asked for their versions of what happened—Do you want to hear mine?

GOD: No.

SNAKE: Well, you should know that this wasn’t all my fault.

*(GOD almost stopped—yet only for a moment; almost turned; but didn’t. His words were careful and few and clearly not open for discussion.)*

GOD: In them I found shame and guilt. They clothed themselves in blame shifting in order to protect their individual pain. You, on the other hand, felt no shame, no remorse, no regret, no conflict; only pride and ruthless abandon for your own greed. What had begun as ambition has evolved into something wicked and you will not return to Heaven.

*(HE paused, allowing ‘SNAKE’ the full impact of His decision. The “Angel’s” mind calculated his next response.)*

GOD: You hate.

*(Now it was ‘SNAKE’ who didn’t reply.)*

GOD: You would have dominion at any cost. Had you only asked me I may have granted you the same. Now you will never know. You have assumed too much. I have little more to say to you.

*(The silence continued. GOD continued to work on the task before him.)*

*'SNAKE' tarried. The rain stopped. GOD undertook to dry and tan his handiwork. 'SNAKE' loomed in the background.)*

'SNAKE': You would have given me dominion? You wouldn't give me a piece of dirt.

GOD: May. "May" have given you dominion.

'SNAKE': Over who – where?

GOD: Over worms.

*(As HE expected there was no verbal response.)*

Understand that I have already given my word that you would crawl upon the ground, therefore your dominion would have to remain within your reach. Your own realm as it were.

*(The stillness in the moment was balanced only by the racing of his thoughts. It took all he could for 'SNAKE' to quell his emotions.)*

'SNAKE': "Worms?" And you wonder why I loathe you?

GOD: Rescinded. And noted.

*(He returned his full attention to the work before him.)*

Worms are the lowest end of the food chain. Life, however, works its way from the beginning point. Worms also turn the soil which allow the vegetation to grow and thrive. Without worms all life forms would eventually die. But you'd rather have your show. You would rather be seen than to serve. You prefer the rhinestone trophy to the uncut diamond. He who has dominion over the least of my creatures is the greatest in my kingdom. And he who serves them is even greater still.

*(Finished with His work. He paused to gaze down upon the carcass at His feet.)*

This was the consequences of your actions. As well as their choices. The innocent always suffer. But only for a season.

That said. The Lord turned and left without giving the "angel" so much as a glance.

'Snake' felt his spirit's blood foam inside as he watched Him go. Then it struck him. The words echoed thru his entire being. How could he have not realized this before?

"You knew her name," he called out.

But God did not respond. He continued on back the way he had come.

“You knew it before the man ever said it. You used it. You knew this would all happen and you didn’t stop it! This is all *your* fault!!”

But God was gone. And ‘Snake’ was left alone to consider his next move.

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The rain had let up but the man and his wife were still soaked to the bone. They stepped away from the refuge under the trees and back out into the open areas of the garden. They progressed out to the rock and stood upon it in an attempt to keep their feet from sinking in the mud or freezing in the grass. It was then they looked down to read the words the Lord had written down earlier. Two words remained—or maybe that was all there ever was.

### **The RU les**

Eve shrugged, obviously whatever else had been written there had been washed away. For Adam, however, the two words were enough. His heart ran back to being a boy again. He wasn’t a boy any longer. And ‘the Rules’ were changing.

Eve saw Him first as He stepped into their view again.. It was God. He was carrying something in His hands. She couldn’t say what He held but knowing He was still there was all she needed.

**“We need to get you out of those wet scraps and to put these on,”** the Lord said, offering the garments He had fashioned from the skin of the Wildebeest.

The outfits were seamless, dried, tanned and warm. The couple put them on willingly (Although they did turn their backs in order to redress).

**“I made you,”** the Lord argued. **“Why should you be ashamed of what I am not?”**

Adam finished dressing first. God looked him over in his new outfit. He nodded His head in approval, Adam spoke up as the Lord examined Eve in the same fashion.

“Lord? I thought ... ” he tried to use just the right words, “we thought... Does this mean—What *does* this mean?” (OK, so the words didn’t come out as eloquently as he’d hoped but God was there and they were there and maybe now everything could just go back to the way it was this morning.)

“I’m ... “ she couldn’t bring herself to finish the words.

**“I know,”** said the Lord.

“So,” Adam had found his voice again, “things can go back to they way they were then?”

**“Things are the way they are,”** The Lord said approving of Eve’s attire as well.

“But ...” the clothing they were wearing. That had to mean something, didn’t it?

**“It means, ‘I love you.’ I have never stopped loving you.”** With that having been said He turned from them again to leave.

“What are you doing? Where are you going?” Adam asked nervously. “You just got—”

**“I have other matters to attend to,”** the Lord moved on again. **“Other sheep that you know not of ...”** His words trailed off along with Him.

“Will you be back?”

But He was gone. Or, if He was there, He didn’t answer.

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**T**he King entered the throne room to an explosion of fanfare and celebration. The musicians, singers and dancers erupted into song. Though their conductor was noticeably absent the orchestra carried on with a joyful noise.

The King sat. A hush fell over the room. With a quick overview He could see his entire kingdom had assembled. All but one. This came as no surprise.

There was a brief moment of silence.

“The man,” the King began (speaking of both the caretaker and his wife), “has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.”

The kingdom paused. “Why was this the first order of business?” they wondered. They had been assembled into three groups. The ‘heroes’—the brave and gallant warriors who had faced the opposition head on. The ‘traitors’—those who had ambushed and fought the King’s army. And the rest. The majority of his kingdom fell into this uncommitted group. The ‘traitors’ mumbled to themselves regarding the King’s last remark, “See? This is the proof we needed to know that he doesn’t care about us.”

The King looked from one group to another. He then spoke to the ‘traitors’. “My caring is for all my children,” he began. “And when one child victimizes another should I not be first to the victim’s rescue? But as for you ... You have chosen foolishly. But you have made your

choice all the same. You desire your own kingdom and that you will receive. As far from the light as the east is from the west. You have in turn chosen your leader, who now, at this very moment, though he has been banished from this kingdom is attempting to scale the walls and regain entry. He shall lead you indeed. He shall fall from that wall and you shall follow. My heart is heavy for you for I know you shall regret this day.”

“You have chosen favorably,” he turned softly to his ‘heroes’. “I chose you from before the beginning and you have chosen me in return. Those who have served me well will be greatly rewarded. Each according to your ability. I honor you each and I thank you. But first there is the matter,” the King turned to the largest group assembled, “of the rest of you.”

The King then stood to address the remaining throng, “Each of you have chosen as well. Some fought without weapons; without fanfare but defended the kingdom all the same. I thank you for your selfless efforts. You, too, shall be rewarded. Now, some of you knew this mutiny was going to happen and yet you did nothing. I tell you, as assuredly as these to your left, you have chosen against me.”

He nodded to the ‘heroes’ and sat down. They then began the arduous work of separating what he called ‘the sheep’ from ‘the goats’. Each citizen was judged individually and each allowed their moment before the King. The wise King judged appropriately and oversaw each step of the process. No one was denied his or her moment before the King. When all was done one third of his kingdom were branded as ‘traitors’.

With nothing more to say, the King stood and glanced to the wall overlooking both kingdoms. The entire Host took over the sentinel. The king sat and waited. The silence of what would happen next filled the air. And just as the silence was about to break there was a blinding flash of light—followed by a scream—which in turn was followed by the fall and scream of every ‘traitor’ gathered before them

Heaven wept for their lost brothers and sisters. The King then called for a bearer of light.

\*\*\*

Adam and Eve, as she was now called, had hardly recuperated from the day’s events when the sky broke loose. Thunder cracked and the sky lit up so brightly that they were certain for a moment that they had gone deaf and blind. The earth shook with a terrible roar. The entire world felt on the verge of collapsing right from under them. Peal after peal of lightning and thunder streaked the sky. They would run for shelter but the trees offered no sanctuary from the

explosions happening all around them. Cedars went up like match sticks. The caves, as well, presented no refuge as, though they were safe from fires, the trembling of the rocks would just as likely bury them alive.

They ran this way then that. Adam took the lead then Eve. They shifted together as one. Adam's mind leapt back to the flock of birds he had seen before Eve's arrival. He could understand now how they, though so many, could turn as one unit. It was instinctive; they loved each other. Why would he think about that as such a time as this? Why would his mind escape there while every other part of his being scrambled just to stay alive?

"Are we dying now?" Eve screamed as they ran.

Her voice brought him back. He stopped and grabbed for her just as a fissure in the ground ahead of them split wide open. The roots of an olive tree were laid bare before them. There was no time to cling to each other as the great tree fell where they stood. They dove to avoid its reach.

Lying there prostrate on the ground they prayed God would deliver them. They were unworthy, they knew that, but they also knew He was their only hope.

**"I am here,"** He said. **"Walk."**

"I can't see you, Lord!" Adam cried.

"To where?" Eve called out to Him.

**"The river."**

"What did He say?" Eve could barely hear above the confusion.

"He said to follow the river," Adam shouted back to her. He helped her up and saw that she was limping.

"I twisted my ..." she stopped in desperation. "What do you call this?" she showed him her foot as the tears came.

"Your ankle," Adam answered. He took her arm, pulled it across his back and over his shoulder. He supported her weight as they began their way to the river. The sky continued to burst all around them. The rain returned and competed with the fire for territory. The sky was now a mixture of light, water and steam.

"I'm sorry, I'm slowing you down," Eve wanted to cry.

"He said to walk," Adam reminded her.

And so they did. They paused briefly at the sight of a unique tree; somewhat of a bush. It

too was on fire but not consumed by it. No smoke or steam emanated from it's flames kissing the rain. They were drawn to it. There was safety there.

A flash of light burnt through the ground in front of them.

"You may go no further," a voice demanded. It was the voice of an Angel. Not 'Snake' (No, they would know *that* voice anywhere). This was another bearer of light. The flames passed by again. The couple could make out the distinct shape of a sword—if for only an instant—within it's fiery outline.

"Why?" Adam asked. "We were told to 'walk'."

"It is time to leave."

"Leave?" Eve spoke up now. She looked to her husband as if he could answer her heart. They stared at the burning tree. "Where are we to go?"

The sky filled with fire again. A pillar of smoke and ash walled their path.

Adam looked to his bride. There were no words—none were needed. They turned again and continued their walk to the river.

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They landed, if that's what you would call it, in total darkness. 'Snake' looked around intuitively for something to see. But, as there was no light, there was no 'seeing' anything. He felt his way along the edges of wherever they were until he could find himself somewhere to sit.

"A temporary setback," he thought to himself.

All around him he could hear the moans and groaning of his compatriots.

The irony of his present circumstances didn't escape him. He, who had been the minister of heaven's choirs, who had established symphonies which became the standards by which all other songs were judged, who composed the tunes of the birds of the air in harmony with the wind, was now subjected to the dinful noise of suffering to be the only music to his ears. He, who had treasured his own beauty above all else, was now unable to even see his own hand held in front of his face.

"Temporary," he repeated to himself, "temporary."

He pulled out a sheet of music he had written earlier for the occasion of triumphant entry. Unable to read his own writing he penned his thoughts (hopefully on the back of his orchestrations). He remained committed to the notion that this was all so temporary.

## Day One

### Note to Self:

I must accept **this hole** to be the birth place of my new kingdom. Heaven, it turns out, is not all that it promised to be. **God** is not all He promised to be.

He cannot last forever. I will build my army. Here. Out of His sight.

For He will, again, rest.

And when He does ... I will be ready.

**The war will be mine!**

I can not hurt Him now.

I would not be so foolish as to aim my bows and arrows upon his head. I will strike, instead, at his heart.

\*\*\*

Eden was behind them now. The earth had stilled. The fires had given up their fuel to the rain, which in turn had also come and gone, leaving in it's wake a freshly washed sky and the perfume of a new, if uncertain future. The grass of Eden would grow back. So would the trees and the flowers. But they knew that they would never see them again.

Though the quaking had stopped they chose to camp in the middle of a large open field.

They were hungry and cold. Even though Adam had managed to dig up a meal of carrots and potatoes for tonight's dinner they could already tell that their future would be a far cry different from their past.

For now they laid there on the soft grass and stared up at the sky. The stars seemed to laugh at their fate. Either that or hold the promise of a better tomorrow. It boiled down to winking or laughing.

They said nothing to each other for the longest time.

Eve winced quietly as she tried to turn her ankle from the right to the left and back again

"It'll grow back," Adam tried to comfort her.

"Are you sure?" she asked. God had promised them death but she had never imagined it would take place in increments, a piece at a time. Now she wasn't so sure.

"I'm sorry," she sighed.

"Me too," he whispered.

Their eyes remained on the Heavens while their thoughts sifted through the turning points of the day. He placed his arm around her. She laid her head on his chest.

"What is it you were going to tell me?" she asked softly.

"Tell you ... ?"

"Earlier today," she continued to watch the sky. "Before we went to the tree; you were going to tell me something. What was it?"

Adam closed his eyes and remembered a more innocent time. "That seems like such a long time ago," he murmured.

"But it wasn't," she added. "I'd like to know. You were so happy then."

Adam shared her gaze of the stars. He still feared the unknown ...

"I wanted to tell you," he held her a little tighter in his arms. "I needed to tell you ... that I love you."

Silence. The stars bowed to the moment. Countless cameras flashing countless pictures to capture their response. Heaven waited.

"I know," he began to ramble quietly, "it really doesn't seem like that much of anything right now, after all that's happened, does it?"

She held him closer still and closed her eyes. "It does to me," she breathed.

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**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.

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*“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?

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

3<sup>RD</sup> 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.)*

4<sup>TH</sup> VOICE:           Where are we?  
6<sup>TH</sup> VOICE:           In a pit.  
4<sup>TH</sup> VOICE:  
*(Yelling over the din:)*

I said, "Where are we?!"

6<sup>TH</sup> VOICE:

*(Yelling over 4<sup>TH</sup> Voice:)*

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

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

5<sup>TH</sup> VOICE: OH MY GOD, ARE WE GOING DEAF TOO?!

6<sup>TH</sup> 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.)*

11<sup>TH</sup> VOICE: How long are we here for?

2<sup>ND</sup> VOICE: I don't know.

3<sup>RD</sup> VOICE: What is this place?

4<sup>TH</sup> 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.

5<sup>TH</sup> VOICE: Someone get us out of here!

'SNAKE': I'm working on it.

6<sup>TH</sup> VOICE: I'm cold. Why's it so cold in here?

'SNAKE': Just be patient.

7<sup>TH</sup> VOICE: I can't see!

8<sup>TH</sup> VOICE: It smells.

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

9<sup>TH</sup> VOICE: Sorry.

'SNAKE': Ok, I know this looks like a setback.

- 7<sup>TH</sup> 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.
- 8<sup>TH</sup> 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.
- 9<sup>TH</sup> 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!
- 2<sup>ND</sup> VOICE: If you really know how to get us out of here then do it.
- 3<sup>RD</sup> VOICE: Where are we?
- 'SNAKE': The pit. This is where He cast off the waste from his "creating" the world.
- 5<sup>TH</sup> VOICE: What happened to Heaven's waste?
- 2<sup>ND</sup> VOICE: There wasn't any.

8<sup>TH</sup> 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—

3<sup>RD</sup> 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.

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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.

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**T**he 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.

9<sup>TH</sup> 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.

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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.