

# *Ladies in Hades*

## *Chapter I: Eve Steps Out*

EVE had been terribly bored with Hell for quite a while, she told her friends, which was perhaps only natural, since she had been there longer than anyone else. Then, too, she was a woman.

Even Satan, she complained, was less attentive to her than usual, although it was true he *had* been away in Hollywood a great deal during the winter and was seriously thinking, the newspapers said, of going into the picture business himself.

Not that the lovely ladies of the screen attracted him, he confided to Adam, even though when viewed from certain rather oblique angles he found their technique clever. . His interest in pictures was a professional one—he realized

## *Ladies in Hades*

---

their great educational value and was convinced he could make excellent use of them in his efforts to keep in touch with the public.

Women, as women, he said, no longer interested him, now that they had become so much like men. He found them entirely too sophisticated for ordinary, practical purposes and much preferred good honest demonesses of the Lilith type, who were content to enjoy normal, sensible things in a normal and sensible way. They might be a trifle old-fashioned in their methods but at least they did not try to convert you to their ideas regarding birth control, or show how much they loved you by putting arsenic in the soup. Adam admitted that he felt exactly the same way himself, but hoped Satan wouldn't say anything about it while Eve was around, as she always made such a fuss whenever he wanted to go out, nights.

"I used to think," His Majesty went on, looking very much worried, "that I was a past grand master of all the arts of wickedness, but the way things are going now it wouldn't surprise me a bit to see some bobbed-haired blonde with a baby smile given my job overnight. Well,

## *Eve Steps Out*

---

maybe a woman *could* handle it better. I've always been inclined to be too tender-hearted, myself." He took up his hat and hurried out.

"May I see you for a moment?" said Eve, who was waiting for him in the hall.

"If it's about pictures," Satan remarked hastily, "I may as well tell you there's nothing doing. The public demands youth."

"I'm not interested in pictures at present," Eve went on, sticking out her under lip in a way that always annoyed Satan excessively. "And I must say it is not very polite for a gentleman to remind a lady of her age, even if she does happen to be the oldest inhabitant."

Satan laughed.

"When, my dear girl," he asked, "have I ever claimed to be a gentleman?"

"You know what I mean. Can't you sit down for a moment? I want somebody to talk to."

"I shouldn't think you'd have any trouble on that score," Satan replied, a bit absently because he was on his way to a prohibition meeting and was thinking of his speech. "There is scarcely a man in the place who isn't eager to have you tell him the story of Adam's—and his

## *Ladies in Hades*

---

—downfall. They're mad about it—especially the new arrivals. I was talking to a batch of fundamentalists down at the ferry landing this morning—simple, honest moonshiners, just in from the mountains of Tennessee—and you were the very first person they asked for. Why not talk to them?"

Eve continued to pout, dusting her nose with the latest thing in asbestos face powder.

"Sometimes, my dear Satan," she said, "you show, for one of your large experience, a strange lack of knowledge of our sex. When a woman really wants someone to talk to she doesn't want a man—she wants another woman. You ought to know that."

Satan glanced hastily at his watch. He was already a few minutes late.

"I thought women liked to talk to men," he ventured, wondering what new mischief was stirring in Eve's small head.

"Not when they want to talk honestly—to tell the truth. You can't tell the truth to men—at least not about anything important. The poor dears wouldn't understand it. Take our little affair in the Garden of Eden, for instance.

## *Eve Steps Out*

---

You know very well that my story about the apple——”

“Just a moment!” Satan raised his hand, then glanced swiftly about the hall. “I trust it is unnecessary for me to remind you that what really happened in the Garden is a matter between ourselves, not to be discussed in public. At least so far as my part in it is concerned. As the head of our extensive organization, I am obliged to be careful of my reputation.”

“Isn’t that just like a man! Anyone might think——”

“Precisely. They might. And my experience is that in such cases they usually do. But between thinking and knowing there is a pleasant, if not a very wide, difference. If you want a woman to talk to, why bother me? Our latest census shows a considerable preponderance of your delightful sex here in Hades, any one of whom, I am sure——” He paused. Eve, instead of listening to him, was scribbling something on a platinum pad.

“What I really wanted to see you about is this,” she said, glancing up. “I have decided to organize a woman’s club.”

## *Ladies in Hades*

---

“Splendid!” Satan breathed a sigh of relief. It might have been so much worse. “You are just the sort of woman to form a *salon*. Gather painters, musicians, writers about you—people like that. There must be any number of women down here with the creative instinct who would be glad——”

“There you go again!” Eve tilted her delightful nose. “What makes you so stupid this morning? You know perfectly well that God, who is I am told a very masculine sort of a person, took good care to see that no woman was ever given the power to create anything, not even a child, without the assistance of some man. Those little fables may go down with the younger generation, but why inflict them on me?”

“All right—all right.” Satan gave a slight cough. “I confess I occasionally forget that during the early phases of our affair in the Garden I was indiscreet enough to confide to you certain higher truths which no woman should ever have been permitted to know. But to come back to your club. If you don’t want artists——”

“I haven’t said I didn’t want artists. I said

## *Eve Steps Out*

---

the idea of women having any creative ability was ridiculous. The only art that our sex really knows anything about is the art of love. In that we stand supreme. My club is to be made up of experts in it—of women who have distinguished themselves throughout the ages as mistresses of a very ancient if somewhat questionable profession.”

“I see.” Satan regarded his companion with a sardonic smile. “A gathering of great lovers. If you haven’t decided on a name for your club I might suggest Hell’s Belles——”

“Do try to be serious. What I have in mind is to bring together for purposes of frank and honest discussion, those few women who have really made a name for themselves—done something worth-while in the world. They are all here of course but the place is getting so crowded I never see them. I’ve made a little list for your approval”—she handed Satan her pad.

“I see you have put yourself down first,” he laughed.

“Of course. And quite right, too, because if it hadn’t been for me there never would have

## *Ladies in Hades*

---

been any such thing as Original Sin in the first place, and no Hell for you to rule over, either, if you come down to that. I think you owe me a great deal for all I've done although I must say I get precious little credit for it."

"I always thought," said Satan, raising an eyebrow, "that the Original Sin idea was mine."

"Well, you couldn't have made a success of it if it hadn't been for me. But there's no point in discussing that. What I want you to do is help me with my list of names. I've put down Cleopatra, of course—a delightful creature—I haven't seen her for ages. And Sappho, the original Lesbian. And that delicious Helen of Troy. By the way, I hear she is having quite an affair with Lord Byron just now. Do you know anything about it?"

Satan frowned.

"My dear Eve," he said. "I have been accused of almost every crime on the calendar, but there is one infamy to which I have not yet descended—I never gossip. Even a devil must draw the line somewhere. I leave scandal-mongering to women."

"Oh, well, you needn't be so nasty about it,"





*"If you ever attempt to make your insidious discussions public, I shall certainly suppress them!" said Satan.*

## *Eve Steps Out*

---

Eve sniffed. "I can easily find out for myself. Do you think Salome would be a good one to ask?"

"She has certainly had a great deal of publicity."

"I know. As a dancer. But somehow I have never quite believed that story about her having refused half of Herod's kingdom just for a crazy prophet's head. No man ever had a head that was worth it."

"I admit, my dear Eve," Satan laughed, "that a man's head is not what I should expect a lady to value most highly. And now, if you don't mind——"

"Just a moment. I'm asking the Queen of Sheba, of course, because I want to hear the details of her famous visit to Solomon, but I have never been satisfied that a man as well-equipped with wives as he was could possibly——" she paused, frowning. "Of course, my dear Satan, I may be boring you, but even so it is hardly polite to yawn in a lady's face."

"Sorry. Must be the heat. A bit sultry today, even for me. I'll speak to the Head Janitor

## *Ladies in Hades*

---

about it. And now, if that's all, I'll be running along——”

“Very well. But you get the idea, don't you? A woman's club. I might even say a super-woman's club. No men allowed, of course. That will give us a chance to discuss our love affairs quite frankly—something we could never do with a lot of males about. Why—if our minutes are ever published——”

“They won't be, my dear—I can promise you that.”

“Why not, may I ask?”

“The reason should be obvious, I think, even to you. Please do not forget that among my many titles I am known as *The Father of Lies*.”

“I don't see what that has to do with it.”

“You should. Take this matter of love, for instance, about which you say you and your friends propose to talk. Don't forget that a very large number of my male guests are here because of certain beliefs they have cherished concerning women. I am stern, perhaps, in my punishments. I have stripped these poor devils of nearly all their illusions. But their faith in women I have left them—not from sentimental

## *Eve Steps Out*

---

reasons—I trust I shall never be accused of anything so banal as that—but because they had to have something to cling to in order to make even Hell possible.”

Eve’s eyes opened very wide.

“Really, Satan,” she exclaimed, “I have never seen you so excited.”

“I have reason to be. These poor wretches think that in having sinned, as they call it—in having renounced their hope of Heaven for the sake of some woman—they have committed a praiseworthy act—have sacrificed themselves on the altar of Love. Imagine what would happen if I were to allow you and your friends to undeceive them by telling them the truth! I’d have a revolution on my hands at once!”

“Of course, if you put it that way,” Eve murmured.

“It’s the only way *to* put it. Why knock all the props from under these poor devils by letting them see they have been duped—that what they call love is merely a divinely clever trick to keep up the population, and that there is not and never has been any such thing as Original Sin? Only a woman could be sufficiently cruel

## *Ladies in Hades*

---

to suggest it. Instead of being able to blame their downfall on what you and Adam did, they would be forced to question the truth of the Book of Genesis! A pretty kettle of fish that would be! Fancy trying to convince a lot of innocent people that they should enjoy being martyrs to the cause of Jewish mythology!"

"I begin to see your point more clearly," Eve said.

"I should hope so. Why, of all Hell's cherished institutions this fable about man's downfall in the Garden of Eden is the most sacred. I will even go so far as to say that I have based the success of my administration upon it. If I were ever to allow the truth about that, or any of our other great fundamental fictions to secure a foothold here in Hades, the place would soon become so much like Heaven that there would be no point whatever in keeping up both institutions! Form all the woman's clubs you please. Tell each other the truth, if you want to. But if you ever attempt to make any of your insidious discussions public I shall suppress them as sure as my name is Lucifer! Good morning!"

## *Eve Steps Out*

---

“If that is a threat, old dear,” Eve called after him, “it is the very nicest thing you have said to me to-day. Run along now and make your speech in favor of more and better bootleggers or whatever it is, but don’t forget to return me that list. I have decided on twelve charter members——”

Satan, however, had already disappeared through the doorway, leaving behind him a faint odor of brimstone. The last Eve saw of him was the tip of his very erect and permanently-waved tail, and it reminded her so forcibly of certain piquant but rather shady episodes beneath an equally shady tree, early in her career, that she failed to hear Adam when he came into the hall, asking if she had seen anything of his pipe.