

## *Chapter 2: The Truth about the Garden of Eden*

**E**VE'S house in Hades was a rather gloomy structure in early Biblical style which she had persuaded Satan to have the under demons build for her while waiting for additional sinners to come down.

There was no sense, she argued, in having so many able-bodied imps sitting about doing nothing, even though the Curse of Adam had not been placed upon them, and besides, she thought that as the First Lady of Hades she deserved a little consideration.

The eleven invitations she had sent out had brought immediate response; there was now assembled in her brilliantly illuminated reception hall as gay and distinguished a company of ladies as had ever been gathered beneath a single roof.

Along one side of the large center table sat

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Cleopatra and that other famous siren from the Nile country, Mrs. Potiphar, chatting with Balkis, Queen of Sheba, Phryne the Athenian artists' model and Sappho from Lesbos, the poetess of passion. At the other were gathered Thais, erstwhile traveling companion of the great Alexander, Helen of Troy, Lucrezia Borgia of perfumed poison fame, Delilah from Gaza and Scheherazade, heroine of so many exciting Arabian Nights. At the head of the table sat the First Lady of Hades herself, but Salome still lingered over the radio.

"Would you mind shutting it off, dearie?" Eve exclaimed, as she took her seat. "We really must get started. And with all that racket going on, I don't see——"

"Sorry!" Salome dropped into a chair. "I just wanted to hear the latest details of that new society murder on Long Island. The lady, it seems, who must have had rather a nasty temper, brained her husband with a cocktail shaker because he refused to let her have another drink. The liquor certainly went to *his* head."

Lucrezia Borgia disdainfully elevated her patrician nose.

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“Such an affair *would* interest a woman like you,” she sniffed. “I call it disgusting, myself. So crude. In *my* day ladies were far more particular about their murders. I remember a little shop in Rome, not far from the Colosseum, where you could get the most delightful perfumes. One drop on a handkerchief, a rose, and the thing was done. Absolutely deadly, my dears. Husbands were no more trouble to get rid of than old shoes.”

“Please come to order, ladies,” Eve cried, rapping sharply on the table. “I think I explained quite fully the purpose of our club, in my letters of invitation. And since we are to be perfectly frank about our love affairs, I suppose I had better start matters going by telling you girls what really happened in the Garden of Eden. There has been a lot of talk about apples, and snakes and things like that, but the truth is quite another story.

“In the first place, I may as well confess that I never really liked the Garden. It was pleasant enough for a time, but I found the life there dreadfully unexciting. It seemed to lack something, if you know what I mean.”

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“That, I think,” murmured Thais, “is an experience common to most women. Still, you had Adam——”

“Adam,” Eve remarked scornfully, “didn’t understand me at all. Being a woman, he said, it was perfectly natural that even Paradise wouldn’t satisfy me. So far as he was concerned he liked the place, he claimed, and got a great deal of pleasure out of looking after it. Which was absurd, because he never really did anything but sit about and play with the animals. I couldn’t even get him to cut the grass.

“In the daytime, that is. But he seemed to be very busy, nights. When I first asked him what kept him out so late he told me he had been sitting up with one of the dinosaurs, who was sick.

“I believed him, for a while, but when I pointed out that the dinosaurs couldn’t be sick all the time he said he was looking after a tree.

“‘A tree?’ I asked. ‘Since when this sudden interest in horticulture?’

“‘This is a very particular kind of a tree,’ he replied, and went on to explain that it demanded

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a lot of attention and had to be pruned and watered and dug around constantly or he would never get any apples off of it.

“I told him that if he wanted to be wet nurse to an apple tree he had better arrange to do it in the daytime, instead of ruining his health sitting up until all hours; but he said no, this tree was a very unusual sort of a tree and could only be cultivated at night. He was sorry, but it wasn't his fault if it was that kind of a tree and as for his health he had never felt better in his life.

“I couldn't understand why he should want to bother about apples anyway, with all the other fruit we had on the place, but when I told him so he only looked mysterious and said these apples he was raising were something very special and if they turned out as well as he expected they would, he was thinking quite seriously of going into the apple growing business on a large scale. There was a young demon he had met, he said, who had very kindly offered to explain all the details to him, but there wasn't any use in trying to discuss it with a woman, and anyway, it was a business matter and no woman

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could be expected to understand anything about business.

“That made me rather peevisish and I said there was one kind of business I felt sure I could understand, and that was monkey business, and if he thought I was going to spend the rest of my life sitting up nights waiting for him to come home he was very much mistaken.

“‘I would like to taste one of these fancy apples you are always talking about,’ I told him, but he only became more mysterious at that and said they weren’t ripe yet, and that anyway, you weren’t supposed to eat them even if they were.

“‘What are they, crab apples?’ I asked, but he wouldn’t answer me, just put on his hat and went out.

“The whole affair struck me as peculiar, to say the least, so when Satan, who was really very much nicer to me in those days than he is now, stopped in after supper to see how we were getting along I told him the story.

“‘Do you know anything about this apple tree?’ I asked.

“Satan said he certainly did and if I hadn’t

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any engagement the next evening he would be glad to show it to me. So I told him to stop by for me about eight.

“When Adam got home that night he seemed all tired out.

“‘Tough job, this apple raising business,’ he said.

“‘Are you sure that is all you are trying to raise?’ I asked, picking a blond hair off his shoulder. ‘Where did this come from?’

“He seemed very much surprised at that and said it looked like an elephant’s hair, to him. The blonde kind of elephant, he said, with the long curls. He had met a couple on the way home, he explained, and stopped to play with them.

“I didn’t say anything more at the time, but when Satan came along the next evening I told him about it.

“‘Blond elephants, eh?’ he laughed. ‘The boy is learning.’ But he would not tell me what he was laughing about.

“‘If you are ready, we will go and take a look at that tree,’ he said.

“‘I am quite ready,’ I replied, ‘and very

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anxious to try one of these wonderful apples of Adam's. They certainly have an astonishing effect upon the imagination.'

"Satan only smiled, and took me for a long walk through the grounds. After a while we came to a big tree, all surrounded by bushes.

"'Look through,' Satan said to me, pointing.

"I did. There was Adam with a creature I had never seen before, sitting on his lap. She was kissing him.

"'Well,' I whispered to Satan, 'so this is the way you raise apples, is it? So far as I am concerned the fruit business is picking up. But who is this blond little hussy I see over there, and why is she kissing my husband?'

"'She is a very particular friend of mine named Lilith,' Satan said, 'and she is teaching your husband the art of making love.'

"'Is that so?' I snapped, feeling decidedly annoyed. 'And why, may I ask, is Adam being given all this attention? I should like to know something about this art of making love myself.'

"'I consider that, for a woman, a very reasonable request,' Satan laughed, 'and if you will





Adam Ross

*Lilith was devoting her spare time to teaching Adam the art of making love.*

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come with me I promise to teach you all about it on the way home.'

" 'Is it necessary to sit under an apple tree?' I asked, 'with bushes all around it?'

" 'It is not necessary,' Satan smiled, taking me by the hand, 'but it is usually safer. As for the kind of tree under which you sit, it makes no particular difference but I happen to know a very nice fig tree which will answer all purposes. Suppose we go there. I am sure you will find the experience interesting.'

" 'I did. Very interesting indeed. And every time I thought of Adam and that Lilith creature I became more angry, because I suddenly realized what I had missed.

" 'Shall I say anything to my husband about this?' I asked Satan, when we got home.

" 'Not in so many words. I prefer to have my name kept out of it. But actions, you know, frequently speak with even greater effect, as I am sure you will admit by now, and between you and me, I am hoping that I have shown you at least one way to keep your husband at home, nights, because it does not suit my plans to have him running after Lilith and the rest of my at-

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tractive little demons. They are not human, you know, and the results might be awkward if he should happen to go too far. But those are matters which you are not at present able to understand, although you will find out all about them, later on.'

"It was after twelve when I reached home, but luckily Adam hadn't arrived yet, so I pretended I'd been asleep.

"When he came in he glanced about the room.

"'What are these two fuzzy green leaves doing here?' he asked, 'hanging over the back of your chair?'

"'They are fig leaves, darling,' I told him, 'which I gathered this evening in our garden. Like you, I am beginning to take quite an interest in the vegetable kingdom, and while I do not claim to know all about it I have learned some very important truths.'

"'What truths?' Adam grumbled, looking at me suspiciously.

"'Well, for one thing, that familiarity breeds nothing but contempt. Also that there is no charm whatever in the obvious. In other words, it appears that while some things must be seen

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to be appreciated, they should not be seen too often. Hence the fig leaves.'

"'But—why two?'"

"'Because, my love, one of them is for you. It is a bad rule that does not work both ways.'

"'If that is all you have learned,' Adam said peevishly, 'I think you have been wasting your time.'

"'Possibly!' I exclaimed, sitting up in bed, 'but just the same I have decided that from now on you are going to conduct your horticultural experiments at home. And to pay you back for the dreadful lies you have been telling me I have made up my mind that instead of apples, you had better devote your spare time to raising a few beans and potatoes and cabbages and things like that, by the sweat of your brow. I am convinced that it is unwise to live exclusively on a fruit diet and anyway it will keep you out of mischief to practice your daily dozen with a hoe.' So I put him to work and he has been at work ever since. He raised quite a nice kitchen garden that summer. Satan and I used to lie on the grass and tell him how to do it.

"'He asked me, once, after we had moved

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away from the Garden and taken a nice little place of our own on the Euphrates, how I came to know so much about the art of making love. He had been thinking about that a great deal, he said, and wondered if he had not made a mistake in devoting himself to apples, instead of figs.

“I told him that one night, while I was out walking, I had met a very wise old serpent, who had given me private lessons, which after all wasn’t a bit worse than his story about the blond elephants.”

Delilah, who had been listening attentively, began to laugh.

“What you have told us is interesting, of course, my dear,” she said, “but if that is what you call original sin I must say I do not see anything so very original about it.”

“Maybe not,” Eve retorted, running a comb through her bobbed hair, “but just the same I have never heard that anyone has improved on it. If you girls are ready suppose we adjourn to the dining room. I’ve fixed up a little supper, and Satan has very kindly sent me over a case of champagne.”

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"Delightful," the Queen of Sheba murmured. "Solomon used to say that wine was a mocker but I venture to say it has helped many a poor girl give up gin."

Eve's maid, a young French girl named Marie, threw open the dining-room doors, her eyes round as gooseberries. She had been listening at the keyhole and what she had heard had upset her completely.

A brief but delightful interlude with a young American aviator in Paris, some years before, had been the cause of Marie's downfall, and while she regretted her misstep she had been too much in love to repent it.

Now, after hearing these great ladies' opinions, she began to question the justice of the laws by which she was so summarily damned.

She and her aviator had loved each other passionately.

Everything would have been entirely respectable if only they had had time to get married, before duty carried him back to the trenches.

Hell without one's sweetheart was double punishment. She wondered whether Eve and

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her friends might not be able to assist her in finding him, and listened intently to their conversation as she served the champagne. Most of it, however, was over her head.