

The Snake

By Daniel Sullivan

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This story is very distant now – marred by years of struggle, fear, loss, wandering. But the story is everything because of what you can learn from it ...

It begins in a time when the world was simple, we lived so simply – myself, my wife, our garden. Such a vibrant world of beauty, sensation and sublime connection. Food was abundant, the waters flowed crystal clear, cold, quenching the thirst of a thriving world.

There was no limit to our happiness, and we knew the love of God.

I can't say how long this lasted, countless epochs of time I'd say ...

... and then, one day, a stranger appeared ...

The stranger spoke to my wife first ...

The stranger met my wife while she was out on one of her morning walks. They spoke, for an hour or two, and then they both came to speak to me ...

“Have you heard, my dear boy, that you can have heaven on Earth!”, the stranger said.

“Sir, I don't understand what you're saying.”

“Listen, you can have heaven on Earth ... become your own gods!”

I looked at my wife, and her eyes were glazed over – that same expression when she first saw me, a sign of desire not yet formed. Something had happened to her, on that walk, some word or deed or action. She was under the stranger's sway, and he knew this.

“I bring you great tidings of power and empire and worlds without end!”, the stranger spoke on, he told us of exotic metals, devices, machines ... he spoke of groups of men, large hordes, called *“armies”*, and that *“all great men had an army”*. The stranger spoke of wizardry that would allow a man to fly, to speak to other men thousands of miles away, to calculate any number in the palm of their hands ...

All of these amazing things ... they seemed beyond what the garden, in all its natural beauty, could provide. Certainly, we lived in this wondrous place with God as our overseer and protector. But what if we can be our own god? As the stranger says? All we need to do is build armies, cities, have taxes and governments, fund technologies and new weapons! All that is required is to renounce God, to become god!

The stranger, he wore something on his body ... he called them “*clothes*”. Eve, my wife, and myself ... we did not understand the need for the “*clothes*”, but they intrigued us as well.

“... well, I wear these to ‘*stay in fashion*’ ...”, the stranger said when I asked about his clothes. “*stay in fashion*”, what was this madness? Or ... was it amazing? Eve and I both looked at him, then looked at ourselves ... we wanted clothes now.

We listened to the stranger all day, and when evening came the stranger pulled some strange wood and paper from his pocket, and created something quite extraordinary ... it was orange, and yellow, and gold, and red, and hot ... very hot ... as if the stranger had the sun in his pocket, and all it required was a few sparks ... and the sun could be made to appear at all hours.

Eve and I fell asleep, together, not far from where the stranger lay down for the night.

In the morning, the stranger was gone ...

The plants, the trees, the life of the garden was turning brown ...

The river, the waters, which fed the garden, were drying up ...

God appeared above us, and asked a simple question “*my children, what have you done?*”

We knew ...

We covered ourselves with branches, because we now knew our shame ... “shame” wasn’t even a thing before this moment ... now it was.

“*MY CHILDREN ... WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?*”, God’s voice shook the garden, the mountains that surrounded the great valley, the pillars of the world itself ...

I looked at Eve, Eve looked at me ...

“*Lord in Heaven, protector of the garden, giver of life and all that is good, we spoke to a stranger yesterday ... but, why would you let a stranger into the garden?*”

There was silence, and then God spoke ...

“I did not let him in, he had always been there ... the stranger, the serpent, with his skin which he sheds to ‘stay in fashion’ ... he was always meant to be waiting, to tempt, to taunt, to spin tales of great power and possibility ... all that would be required was to entertain the question - ‘can I be a god too?’ ... you have free will, why wouldn’t you ask the question ... no sin in asking, it’s the answer that is the problem.”

I knew what he meant ...

Eve and I were not simply talking to the stranger, in some detached way – he had handed us a fruit from the ‘tree of knowledge’, a powerful gift of seeing the world in a different way ... and we could have rejected this, in the end, and asked the stranger to leave the garden and to be on his way. We did not reject the stranger. And now, in this harsher world, the ‘stranger’ is everywhere ...

This world, the world beyond the garden, is one of toil without end. We are constantly told by kings and generals and senators and every manner of public servant that *“paradise is near”* - but we know, Eve and I, that paradise is long gone.

Those that make promises and give speeches?

Those that stand in judgment at court houses?

Those that organize their fellow brothers and sisters into mobs, to vote, to deliberate, and then to wage war on their neighbors?

These are the ‘strangers’, the snakes, and they flourish in this harsh ‘new world’, while good men perish, and the dusty nothingness stretches to the horizon ...

God still watches, still loves, but we must fend for ourselves now in this land of scorpions and stony paths ... since we *“asked the question”* and then answered *“yes, we want to be gods ...”*.

So if a stranger comes by, selling *“the amazing and the powerful”*, tell the stranger you already have that stuff ... no more is required.