

Chapter 1: All stories have a beginning, of sorts ...

This is the testimony of a wanderer. The words of a being who has seen too much, known too little, and at times wondered if there was any mind left ... within him ... any heart left to feel ... any tears left to cry.

I would be inclined to say “start at the beginning”, but most of you, some you, know fragments of this story already – and I doubt that I can tell it any better or illuminate the strange mysteries.

Your beliefs cast beings like me in some magical substance of purity and perfection – if only you understood how very imperfect we are and continue to be. We are but servants, perhaps worse – we are extensions of his power. Not to say this is without grace, but it’s more important to realize that we are not, nor have we ever been, much more than cosmic buffoons, God’s first experiment, attempt, at creating family where none could exist. Some might call “our experiment” a failure – but that would show ignorance as well. Of all the things I now know to be true, I know this: God does not fail.

So here goes ...

An interminably long time ago, before the age of modern man, there was a God that ruled a rather lonely universe. Sure, he had his thoughts which cannot be fathomed. Yes, he had his imagination, which was, as is now, quite powerful and complete. True, he could see across space and time, he could see his own mind and change it – and then see it again. But, and he rarely admits this, he was lonely.

So God decided on one particular day to create a being of light and energy, of resilience and speed, of wisdom, of knowledge – God created angels, and this was the time of the angelic kingdom.

God began his experiments fully knowing what would happen – to this day I cannot wrap my head around this. If you’ve ever seen a Möbius strip, or the depictions of Ouroboros, you might have an insight into this particular paradox – God creates that which he already understands, God understands everything he creates. It gives you a headache.

God created millions of angels, most of whom could be thought of as “craftsman” - angels whose only job it was to “make things a little nicer”. The universe, at the beginning was big, huge, and empty. God, first and above all else, is a minimalist – as all great artists, he did not seek to vulgarize that which was, in its simplicity, quite beautiful. Did you ever wonder about the Beatles’s “White Album”? An album cover, completely white? You look deeply into the infinite color of white, and what do you see? For God, it was a meditation upon himself, folding inward, outward, self-revelation of a mind incalculably expansive. But even God got a little bored with a large, empty, room. So the angels, most them, were in charge of “sprucing things up” - boy did they ever!

The book of Genesis discusses some of this, but much is glossed over, left mysterious, for God LOVED mystery – and this too is paradoxical. A being that can walk across time space as you and I walk across a large room ... how does that being experience “mystery”? I’ve pondered this, I’ve had ample time. I was not the first angel created, but I do have a low number: 6,543 (also my employee ID). This was my first question, after God created me.

“Lord?”

“Yes Sauriel ...”

“You want me to add some ‘spice’ to the universe?”

“Yes.”

“Firstly Lord, what is ‘spice’ ... and secondly, why?”

“I desire, as God, above all else, to be amazed.”

I should have walked away, at that point.

Gabriel once told me about a time he started asking God questions. He said, after about 2 billion years, his head was filled with nothing but noise and chaos and a great deal of pain. He cautioned all angels to be careful when questioning God – not because God was withholding ... it was frightfully the opposite, God does not lie. Because God does not lie he’ll tell you anything you want to hear. You may think this is a great convenience, unless you’ve ever listed to God answer questions.

But God created me, in addition to being a bit of a drunkard, far too curious for my own good ...

“Lord.”

“Yes Sauriel.”

“If you know everything, how are you amazed?”

The answer to this question only took 2.5 million years. In that time, some minor chemical experiments, initiated by one of the many angels “sprucing things up”, had gone from being nothing but muck and organic matter, to becoming bacteria. For God? - that was a very brief answer.

I did not fully understand his answer, I still don’t know if I ever will. I can remember one thing God said with clarity:

“You are not the one to be, you will watch those who are to come.”

A "lower angel" friend of mine, "Chuck", once caught God playing something, his fingers dancing on black and white strips of wood. Chuck asked God what it was – the answer took no time at all: "It's a piano." Chuck asked God if he'd created it ... God stopped playing, looked at my friend Chuck, and smiled ... God would smile like that, sometimes, as if he were in on some grand joke that no other being would ever understand.

So no ...

It can be tricky, perhaps extremely dangerous, to ask God questions. It is a common misconception that God only gave free-will to humans – this is simply not true. Angels, to varying degrees, have always had freewill ... and this was by design. What we never had, can never have, is a soul. Some angels, the fallen ones, supposed this was some greed or malice on God's part, but not at all. Angels were eternal, made of stuff that cannot be destroyed. Angels could be thrown about, blown up, tossed into volcanoes or black holes ... but they always reappear. As God's first children, angels were made, quite literally, indestructible.

Now yo might pause for a bit here and say ... "listen buddy, how can God create something that he himself cannot destroy?" I would caution you: if you live a good life, are kind to your neighbors, have faith in Jesus, PLEASE ... don't ask this question. They say Shakespeare asked him this once ... (Shakespeare is still out there, on the edge of the universe, receiving the answer – his download should be done in about a trillion years).

Angels were made indestructible, but that does not imply they are all powerful. A man can come across a stone, jump up and down on it all day, and the stone could remain unharmed? - does this imply that stone, rock, is infinitely powerful ... or ... more likely ... it is simply the nature of rock that it is not easily broken.

Angels could not be destroyed, but they could be exiled. Hell originated as a place of exile for angels that needed what the fashionable parents of today would call a "time out". Hell did not begin as some ghastly place of pain, misery, eternal torture – it began with the purpose not dissimilar to the "penalty box" in hockey.

God gave angels free-will, most, when they realized this, simply became more creative, more inquisitive, more inclined to bring a certain specialness to creation – as God had commanded. Those that used their free-will for other goals? - the penalty box. After one or two billion years, God would usually have a chat with the fallen angel, and if he could sense their desire for atonement, he would open the gate and let the angel rejoin his brothers and sisters in Heaven. Whatever God might be, he was always a believer in second chances.

But pretty much all of the angels, excepting one or two every billion years or so, fell in line with God's plan. And what an amazing plan it was! We built particles, atoms, molecules ... we created space-time densities and triggered supernova to generate new AMAZING things that had never existed before. Every element of the periodic table is connected to some angel craftsman ... I even have my own element ... something I worked on for 450 million years. I called the element "s'antooz", which is angel-speak for "strong as God's will, almost" - you know this element as titanium. I was very proud of titanium, not so proud of how humans would eventually use it, in some cases ...

This was all well and good ...

God played the piano ...

A choir of angels would accompany him, from time to time, singing songs they did not fully understand, but could feel inside as beauty.

It seemed as if this would last forever ...

Of all the angels God created, none was revered more by the other angels, or loved more by God, than Lucifer.

Lucifer ...

What can I tell you about this guy that you don't already know? - well, actually, a great deal ...

First – he didn't have horns, he doesn't have horns today. No tail ... Not all covered in red ... Lucifer was, and still remains, the most beautiful being in all creation – if you score merely on the basis of aesthetics.

He was tall ...

Golden hair ...

Perpetually 25 years old, but with a mind almost as powerful as God's ...

God and Lucifer would talk for hours, and Lucifer became, at first, a kind of "union representative" for the angels – and this was fine with God, at first ...

God was busy with the mystery of creation, and all great managers delegate – this was why God created Lucifer. God wanted someone who could "focus on the details", while he could focus on the "big picture", Lucifer, being as full of himself as he was beautiful, was quite happy about this arrangement ... at first. Lucifer always suspected something that, well ... was probably true. God loved Lucifer so much, he gave him a purpose. But, God didn't actually need him to do this work – he simply wanted to help Lucifer find his path.

I can't tell you how glorious those days were ... except I guess I am telling you. It was a time of magic and splendor

and a world without end. A universe of light and color and excitement – and there was no death, only God, the angels, Heaven and Hell. In Hell, the fallen angels had whatever they needed to heal, and, eventually, even Hell emptied out – because, well, even angels, as proud, condescending, and stuck as they are, will learn, eventually.

But God was not finished ... it was that damn piano that was the mystery. Even Lucifer asked him about the piano, and God simply looked at him, again with that tiny, majestic, smile ... and then continued to play.

God had built a star, a powerful furnace of plasma ...

God had built a planet, which you know of as Earth ...

God had forged a protector, that we call “the moon”, whose purpose it was to, mostly, shield this creation from calamity.

God picked a spot, not too far away, or too close to the sun ...

God poured water upon the Earth, and then created every living creature you can imagine – many of which are no longer with us ... which I typically use as an excuse to stop writing, grab a beer to drink, and to pour out a little to “those fallen homies from the past”. A ritual I practice, now knowing what I think I know – or don’t know.

The Earth – that was spectacular.

The Earth was so loved, that all the angels, especially Lucifer, would hang out there ... drink of the waters, eat the plants ... heck ... we even figured out how to distill alcohol ... since God did not stop us from creating liquor, and since “God knows all”, we assumed, via lazy logic, that God was ok with it. Even to this day I don’t bring up

whiskey – mainly out of fear that I might not like the answer ... for, as stated, I really do love my whiskey.

The angel that taught us all these tricks – including how to create alcohol – was Lucifer. Lucifer held grand parties on Earth, high in the mountains, where we could sing and dance and celebrate God's creation.

God would visit us, from time to time, but we all knew he was working on "something", but we didn't know what – and other than Lucifer, none of us really cared.

Can you imagine infinite joy? - this was the feeling of that time. Infinite love for God, infinite joy – or it seemed that way. Lucifer would tell us about his "conversations" with God, and we would listen in awe ... if only I had known then, what I know today.

From God's perspective? - conversations with Lucifer became progressively more irritating ...

Lucifer saw himself as the created image of God ...

God saw Lucifer as a petulant child ...

And I mean this ...

When God saw Lucifer, as amazing as Lucifer was, he only saw a child – a beautiful child, an amazing child, a child with potential, but still ... just a kid.

When Lucifer saw God? - he saw an old man, a honky-tonk entertainer ... some old dude, in a large white room, obsessed over some "project" ... and incessantly playing that damn piano.

As the eons passed, Lucifer's view of God soured further, to the point that Lucifer would mock God, in front of the

angels ... Lucifer would say things he would never say in God's presence ... and this is where it gets funny.

Lucifer believed, somehow, he was special ...

One time Lucifer moved a galaxy – only 3 parsecs, not much ... and then he went to see God.

“Lord ...”

“Yes my son.”

“Is everything ok?”

“Yes ... yes ... but I'm very busy.”

“Ok ...”

To hear Lucifer tell this story, you would believe it was some cosmic revelation – in reality, God was simply busy. However, Lucifer's interpretation of this was “God cannot see what I do”. Of all Lucifer's conceits, this was the most foolhardy.

Lucifer began gathering around himself an “inner circle” of special angels. Lucifer began talking about “meetings” he'd had with God – meetings that never actually happened. Lucifer, if you must know, invented all the sins – but his favorite sin was “lying”. And of all Lucifer's talents, and he had many, lying was his greatest gift.

“Guys ... God told me that it was my job to form an army of angels.”

Everyone was quiet.

We did not know what an ‘army’ was ... nor did we completely fathom that queer expression on Lucifer's face.

“Fellas ... gals ... my brothers and sisters ... we have to start organizing ... building weapons and tools of war ...”

My friend, Chuck, had a question:

“Sir, what’s war?”

“That’s a great question ... war is the legitimate means by which disputes are settled.”

Other’s raised their hands ... but Chuck, being blessedly simple in the head, had another question ...

“Lord, are you saying that when I argue with an angel ... instead of drinking and laughing and ‘agreeing to disagree’, we should beat each other with rocks?”

At this point, Lucifer knew where this was headed ... So he asked Chuck to “stay after” the meeting ended.

I never saw Chuck again.

Sure, you can’t destroy an angel ...

But angels can be banished, sent away, to places far worse than even Hell ... There are these infinite rifts in the universe, you can think of them as blank canvas, but that is far too crude an analogy. These are parts of the universe God has set aside as “actuality unknown” - believe it or not, that’s what the sign reads when you get there ... sort of like “stay out, nothing to see here”. Nothing to see there is right ... nothing, empty, just an infinite plane of boredom. I think Chuck sojourns there, I hope he’s ok.

Lucifer was devious, brilliantly clever, and none of us was so close to being “like God” than he – Lucifer knew this.

One night, Lucifer snuck into Father’s office ...

Father's office is beyond the "piano room" - it is a private place for God to consider creation, next steps, to brainstorm ... God LOVED to brainstorm.

In his office, his library really, there were many books ... if you can imagine a million miles of books ... rows and rows ... that would still be many orders of magnitude too small. So many books ... the "Book of Space" ... the "Book of Time" ... the "Book of Creation" ... "Bacteria: what NOT to do!" ... Lucifer perused these volumes ... his mind, being very fast, nearly 1/1,000,000th as fast as God's ... when he wasn't drunk ... looked over most of the volumes, skimming and taking notes.

Lucifer spent years there, in God's library - which was like 5 minutes to God ... it's hard to convert "God time" to "angel time" ... even more difficult to explain this in terms of human time ...

Then, Lucifer came across a volume he did not skim ...

He read the book, from start to finish ...

When he was done, his face became grimaced ...

His aspect angry, rageful ...

He wanted to burn the book, destroy it, but he knew that would be madness - and he would be going to the "penalty box".

Instead, Lucifer placed the book back in the stacks, and snuck back out again ... He spent eons alone after that ... thinking ... meditating ... planning. Sure, to God it was just another 15 minutes ... to Lucifer, it was a cosmos of endless time, in mourning for a lost love.

You may know that God loved Lucifer ...

What you may not know, despite Lucifer's self-aggrandizing bullshit, is that Lucifer loved God.

The book had a rather boring title, "The Book of Man" ... but in it was God's final creation. A being, closest yet to being as God. God was, and is, made of something even more indestructible than an angel ... you could call it "soul stuff" but that would be crude and not at all accurate. God was made of a material that he could never impart to the angels. But God was clever, infinitely so ...

God woke up one morning, in a corner of this new world called Earth, and created something amazing ... something that would keep him entertained until the end of time.

God took the soil of the earth, he molded it, he breathed his life into it ... and from that moment the first man, Adam, was born. The first man.

God saw that Adam was lonely, as God surely had been before the angels ... So God took from Adam part a part, and from this he made what we would crudely call the first Woman. To call Eve the first woman is to call a 1968 Pontiac GTO a "car". Eve was more beautiful, funny, free spirited, quick witted, than God himself had expected. And, luckily, Adam and Eve fell in love – even God didn't pretend to know, for certain, that this would happen (as paradoxes continue to persist).

God created a beautiful garden, water so pure, food so abundant, that Adam and Eve could spend their days eating, drinking, talking, and ... you know ... doing other things as well that are best left to more salacious authors.

This story, unfolding, in real time as Lucifer sulked in the isolation of the universal rift ... this story was all described, beginning to end, in the "Book of Man" ... and with all that, you might wonder, why was Lucifer so upset?

There was a passage in the "Book of Man", which haunted Lucifer, and fuels his rage to this day ... it was from chapter 47, just before David was crowned king of Israel.

"... and of all the creatures God created, it did not love one or all more than he loved mankind."

A simple statement, but when Lucifer read this, in the library, he could no longer see wisdom or reason or logic. If I had read those lines? - I might have said, "holy shit, this 'mankind' sounds very entertaining". But, all Lucifer could think, in his near infinite jealousy, was this: God no longer loves me. This was not true. God loved his entire creation, and perhaps he had favorites. For an uncountable number of epochs, Lucifer had been God's favorite, and he was still loved - but Lucifer could not see this, he only saw red.

"The Book of Man" also discussed Lucifer's role in the creation of Man - "Lucifer shall watch over the garden, he will keep mankind safe". This is where Lucifer found his loophole ...

After Lucifer returned from his hermitage, the "inner circle" asked him what he'd learned?

Lucifer stared bleakly, into the starry night ... he sipped his whiskey ... and then began to speak.

"I regret to inform you that God no longer loves the angels ..." - this was a lie.

"God told me he was bored with us ... that he had new creatures to spend his days with ... that we would be allowed to exist, at his pleasure, to serve these new creatures."

A hush fell about his tiny cabal ...

“My friends, I have a plan ... but for now bring your allies together ... tell them that we need to build this ‘army’ ... we need to fashion weapons in secret ... we need to be prepared for the day that we ... THE CHOSEN ... THE ORIGINAL ... take over Heaven and unseat that pompous, bloated, ass ... formerly known as ‘God’.”

The angels of the inner circle murmured, muttered, ground their teeth ...

They quietly made plans – plans that God was aware of before the first angel was ever created – but the angels knew nothing of this, they were fueled by Lucifer’s deception.

And Lucifer? - he played along with God.

He took over role of “God’s security guard”, seated at the edge of the garden ... watching over Adam and Eve as they talked, and ate, and walked, and swam, and did other things that made Lucifer want to vomit.

Lucifer watched as God and mankind held late night chats and just “hung out”. Sometimes God would bring his piano, and Eve would sing, and Adam would play on logs as if they were drums ... all the life of the garden would gather around, all would fall asleep in the gentle light of God. This really pissed off Lucifer.

Azazel, once known as God’s blacksmith, was put in charge of weapon procurement. Uzza and Azza were generals of Lucifer’s army ... and now, I must admit something.

I was seduced by Lucifer, probably because ... well ... I really loved my whiskey ... admittedly, at times, more than I loved God.

“Sauriel ...”

“Yes sir!”

“What are your thoughts on the rebellion?”

“Well ... I dunno.”

“What don’t you know?”

“In comparison to what?”

Every angel, even the lower angels, had ‘powers’ or ‘skills’ - some of these skills made sense, in the context of creation. Some of these skills made no sense. One of my skills, other than being unnoticed by most because, unlike Lucifer, I was rather plain, homely – other than being voted least likely to be invited to a party, I had the skill of ‘obfuscation’ ... I could speak for hours, say a great deal, without saying much at all. This made God laugh, and infuriated Lucifer.

“DAMMIT ... are you listening Sauriel?”

“Yes ... of course ...”

“Stay focused ... are you on my team?”

“You’re saying God does not love us?”

“Yes!”

“But he loved us once?”

“Sure ...”

“How do you know he won’t love us again?”

When Lucifer was really angry, smoke would start streaming from his ears.

“HE WON’T ... HE CAN’T ... NOW, ARE YOU WITH US OR AGAINST US?”

I stepped back ...

I saw something I had never seen ...

In all the years of joy and partying ...

All the years of laughter and games ...

All the creation – this was something new ...

A rage so powerful it melted stone, darkened the sky ...

“Can I think about it?”

Lucifer’s rage, in a moment, diminished ...

“Come on Sauriel, you know we’re buds! You take all the time you want ... you just need to pick the right side of this fight.”

I nodded, went away, to the edge of the cosmic rift, to think ... I pondered my life thus far ... eons of time ... all of my successes and failures ...

For example: pulsars ...

I thought pulsars were cool, and not JUST BECAUSE I fashioned them for God. But when I showed God what I had done, he didn’t smile, he just shook his head and continued to play his piano. I never thought much of it till that moment, with Lucifer ... and now? Maybe God does hate us. Maybe he was just using us ... as tools ... doing his bidding ... manipulated ... controlled ... treated with simple contempt by his everlasting majesty. So, after I’d had 98 years to think, I met with Lucifer.

“Sir?”

“Yes Sauriel ...”

“If I join you, what do I get?”

And this is where Lucifer lit up ... I would've said 'like a Christmas tree' ... but that Roman invention hadn't come about yet.

“WHAT DO YOU GET! Let me tell you my dear boy!”

Lucifer spun a magical tale of castles, queens, armies, sailing ships, lots of busty women and great sex, jet airplanes (didn't know what they were, but they seemed fantastic!) ... drugs ... tons of DRUGS ... really cool drugs ... later I would realize I had addiction issues.

Lucifer spoke of machines that could think almost as quickly as God, and technology that would allow the angels to create their own, private, universes – he called these devices “ring atomic accelerators”. The world he described was sexy, replete with 10,000 year old aged whiskey and parties and all kinds of fun. Lucifer, if he weren't the Devil, would be the god of salesman, the ultimate closer.

After several years of hearing Lucifer's pitch, I was hooked ...

“I have a special job for you, Sauriel!”

“What is that sire?” - Lucifer wanted to be called 'sire' all of a sudden.

“You will watch the garden, while I wage war in Heaven ... if, for some reason, we fail ... you are part of PLAN B!”

“Plan B, that does sound amazing!”

“Well ... Sauriel ... let's hope we don't need Plan B.”

So ... Lucifer, with God's approval, had me transferred to his “security guard” gig, as Azza and Uzza prepared the armies for war in Heaven. Those were strange days, and God, at least to minds not infinite, seemed oddly absent from the scene ... and Lucifer? - he was coming in to his own.