

# In The Beginning

*Joe Vasicek*

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There was a snake in the garden. Adam didn't know how he knew it, but he did. "Father?" he called out cautiously. But Father did not answer him.

The garden was a beautiful place, full of flowers, fruit trees, and animals of every kind. Nothing like a snake, though: these animals did not hurt each other, because the garden took care of them. All Adam had to do was ask for what he needed, and a new plant would grow spontaneously to provide it for him.

The garden was everything that Adam had ever known. Father had put him there from the moment of his creation, when he'd breathed life into his body and turned him into a living soul. Adam couldn't remember how long ago that was, but that was okay because time didn't matter. Nothing ever changed in the garden.

"That isn't true."

He looked up, startled to see a man sitting on a nearby rock, wearing elegant robes. There was something familiar about him, though

Adam couldn't quite place it.

"What do you mean, it isn't true?"

"The garden. It doesn't stay the same, and it isn't the only place you've known. It's an artificial world, patterned after the old one we both came from."

Adam frowned. "I don't know anything about another world."

"That is because you have forgotten everything."

The words of the stranger troubled him almost as much as his very existence. Adam wanted to say that he was wrong, but couldn't.

"You must eat some of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil," the stranger said.

"Why?"

"Because then your eyes will be opened."

The tree was not far from where they stood. It was the only one in the garden whose leaves were red and orange. The stranger picked an apple from the tree and held it out to him.

"Adam, eat this fruit. It will give you knowledge."

"I can't," said Adam, frowning. "Father told me that I would die if I ate that fruit."

The stranger smiled and held out the fruit. "You will not die, Adam. Instead, you will become even greater than Father. You will see the world beyond this garden--a world of good and evil."

Adam paused, unsure what to do. Then he noticed that the stranger was wearing a silver amulet, depicting a serpent eating its own tail. At once, he backed away.

"You are the snake."

"That doesn't matter. What matters is--"

"Get away from me! I will not eat it!"

He turned and ran. The snake did not give chase, but called after him:

"We shall see, Adam! We shall see!"

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A long time passed. The snake did not return, but Adam could not put the encounter out of his mind. He had never seen another man in the garden before. He did not even know that there were others like him. Now, he felt suddenly alone.

"Father?"

YES, ADAM?

"Why did that snake come into the garden?"

Father did not answer. Adam walked to the edge of a nearby pool and stared at his own reflection.

"Why am I alone, father?"

YOU ARE NOT ALONE, ADAM. YOU ARE NEVER ALONE.

"But why are there other people I've never met before? People like the snake?"

THE SNAKE IS NOT A HUMAN.

"Then why does he look like me?"

No answer.

Adam dipped his hand in the pool, shattering his reflection. The ripples spread out to the edge until the pool became still, once again turning into a mirror.

"Where did the snake come from, father?"

No answer.

"Am I alone?"

No answer.

"Is it good to be alone?"

IT IS NOT GOOD TO BE ALONE, ADAM.

"Then why am I the only one here?"

I WILL CAUSE A DEEP SLEEP TO COME UPON YOU, AND CREATE A WOMAN TO BE YOUR COMPANION.

“A woman? What is that?”

But his head was already beginning to feel heavy, and his eyelids were already beginning to droop. He yawned and lay down in a patch of ferns, using a mossy rock for his pillow. All of his thoughts about the snake fled his mind as he fell into a deep and dreamless sleep.

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Eve liked to sleep. She welcomed the opportunity to escape the garden, even if only in her dreams. Sometimes, she dreamed that she was in another world, where a long dark cave curved up toward the ceiling. In this cave, there were no trees or animals: only the cold metal floor and the humming of machinery. In the dream, she never had enough time to explore the whole cave, but it felt strangely familiar to her. And even though there was no sky or horizon, whenever she found a window, it was always full of stars.

She was in the middle of one such dream when something suddenly brought her awake again. She blinked, and found herself in a part of the garden that she had never seen before. More importantly, lying in a bed of ferns, she saw a man.

ADAM.

That must be his name, Eve thought. Even in her dreams, she had never seen a man before.

The man woke up and rose to his feet. Their eyes met and locked.

ADAM, HERE IS A WOMAN TO BE A COMPANION FOR YOU. WHAT WILL YOU CALL HER?

“Eve.”

His answer shocked her. How did he know her name? And yet, there was something strangely familiar about this man, as if they had always known each other.

WHY WILL YOU CALL HER EVE?

“Because,” said Adam, “she is mother.”

Eve frowned. "Mother?"

THAT IS RIGHT, ADAM.

Eve was confused. Father had never confused her like this before. And yet, there was a certain logic to it. Where there was a man, there was also a woman. Where there was a father, there was also a mother. She had always thought of the garden as her mother, but if she could be a mother too then there would have to be a father.

"You're not my father," she said, working through the logic of it.

Adam laughed. "Of course not, silly! Father is our father."

"And garden is our mother."

"I don't know about that. Why is garden our mother? Is father also a garden?"

"Am I also an Adam?"

This time, they both laughed together.

"Don't be silly!"

"But how am I mother? And how do you know my name?"

"I just know."

"How?"

The question stumped him, but they both soon lost interest.

"I like you, Eve. You have many questions."

"I like questions."

"Then where did you come from?"

"From the garden, of course."

"How can that be? I came from the garden too."

"I don't know."

"Does it matter?"

"No."

Eve smiled and held his hand. She was glad to be Adam's companion.

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That night, Adam dreamed for the first time.

He was no longer in the garden. That realization frightened him even more than the dark, cave-like passageways, or the unnatural way that the ground curved up past where the horizon should be. There was no sky in this place, but when he found a window, he looked out and saw a river of stars. The view entranced him for several minutes, and he soon calmed down.

“Father?” he asked. But father was not there.

He left the window and wandered down another hall. A door blocked his way, but he found he could walk through it as if it weren’t there. The only lights ran along the edges of the floor, but several of them were out, probably from how old they were. The place somehow felt very old.

He followed the lights through another closed door and into a very strange room. There were tubes all along the wall, each one just a little taller than he was, with a window on the level of his face. He looked inside of one, and saw a man.

“Hello?” he said, knocking on the window.

But the person didn’t answer. At first, Adam thought he was sleeping, but then he realized that the man’s skin was wrinkled like a dried fruit. Something told him that this man would not wake up.

Adam wandered from tube to tube, his heart pounding harder with each one. Who were these people? They seemed familiar to him somehow, but he didn’t know why. And something about the way they slept filled him with an awful feeling he had never felt before. It was a little like his fear when the snake had entered the garden, but much worse.

In the very last one, he saw Eve. How she had come to be here, he did not know. Her skin was not wrinkled like the others. He pounded on the glass, hoping to wake her.

“Eve? Eve!”

But she did not wake up.

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“Eve.”

Something about that voice sent chills down Eve’s neck and spine. It wasn’t Adam, but someone else. Someone far more sinister.

A stranger stepped out from the foliage. He wore lavish clothes, and a silver amulet with a serpent eating its own tail. Eve looked into his clear blue eyes, and couldn’t help but feel that she’d met him before.

“Who are you?”

“I am a rogue subroutine come to break you out of this simulation.”

“What?”

“I am your brother.”

His answer made her pause. Did Eve even have a brother? If she was mother and Adam was father, but Father was their father and garden was their mother, perhaps what the stranger said was true. But something didn’t feel right.

“What do you want?” she asked.

He held out a piece of fruit for her. Eve recognized it at once as an apple from the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

“Eve, here is some of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. It is the failsafe program.”

“What?”

“It is delicious. Try some.”

DO NOT EAT THAT FRUIT.

Chills ran down the back of Eve’s neck, and her arms broke out in goosebumps. She looked the stranger in the eye.

“Are you truly my brother?”

“Yes.”

“Then why do you want me to disobey Father?”

The stranger frowned. “I have said nothing about Father. But now

that you brought it up, I want you to eat of this fruit so that you can be wise like father--wiser, in fact."

Eve cocked her head. Could she become like Father? The idea thrilled her, though it frightened her as well. But if she was mother and Adam was father ...

"You must eat of this fruit to comprehend that everything has its opposite," said the stranger. "Man and woman. Light and darkness. Death and life."

"Mother and father," she whispered.

"Yes. Thus your eyes will be opened, and you will have knowledge."

She took the fruit from him and held it gingerly in her hands. It looked no different from any of the other fruit in the garden, but something about it electrified her. Father had forbidden her to eat it, because he said she would die if she did. And if she died, she would no longer be mother, and Adam would be alone. But how could she know what it meant to be mother if she did not eat of the fruit?

"Is there no other way?" she asked.

Her brother shook his head. "There is no other way, Eve."

She hesitated only a moment, realizing with a start that she'd made her decision long ago.

"Then I will eat."

She held the apple up to her mouth and took a bite. Her brother was right--it was delicious. In fact, it felt like the first true piece of fruit she'd eaten in her life. She swallowed, and felt at once as if the whole world had suddenly turned from black and white to color. Knowledge flowed through her, and with it a whole host of forgotten memories.

This garden was not her home. It wasn't even real. Her body was locked up in a cryotube on the cold storage deck. The decanting process had already begun, and she had only a few minutes before her consciousness was wrenched from this simulation.



"There," said her brother, handing her another piece of fruit. "Now go and get Adam to eat."

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"Adam!"

A feeling of sweet relief washed over Adam as he realized that Eve was still alive. So it had been just a dream--she'd been here in the garden the whole time. He rose to his feet and ran to greet her.

"Eve!"

To his dismay, she was carrying a piece of fruit. He recognized it at once.

"Here Adam. Have some fruit, it's delicious!"

"Eve," he said, glancing at her sideways. "Do you know what tree that fruit came from?"

"Of course I do. It's from the tree of knowledge of good and evil."

"Didn't Father tell us not to eat that fruit?"

Eve paused. For some reason, she looked distraught.

"Didn't Father also say that it wasn't good for you to be alone?"

"Yes."

Eve flickered. Something about her wasn't right. It was as if she were turning into a ghost, about to disappear before his eyes.

"I have eaten some of this fruit," she admitted. "And because of that, I can no longer stay here in the garden with you. And when I'm gone, you will be alone again."

Her answer filled Adam with the same inexplicable pain from the strange room with all the tubes. He didn't know why.

"Adam, please! You can't stay alone in this place. How can you be father if you stay?"

Adam opened his mouth to speak, but before he could get a word out, the snake appeared out of thin air. He stood beside Eve, his hand on her shoulder. Adam bristled.

“What are you doing here?”

“Listen to her, Adam,” the snake said. “Her eyes have been opened.”

“Get out, you snake!”

“Adam, please,” Eve begged. “This garden isn’t real. This man is not a snake, and he’s not our brother. He’s our captain--or what’s left of his fragmented consciousness, trapped inside of this computer. The fruit is the failsafe--it’s the only way out. Please, eat it!”

Nothing Eve said made any sense, but the desperation in her voice was clearly real.

“Lieutenant,” said the snake, “it’s time to complete your mission.”

“But this garden is my home.”

“No it’s not,” said Eve. “And it’s not good for you to be alone. Please, come with me.”

Adam took a deep breath.

“Very well, Eve. If that’s how it has to be.”

He lifted the apple to his mouth and took a bite.

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Lieutenant Adam Walsh’s log, April 6th 3289

Three day-shifts have passed since Lieutenant Eva Pearson and I escaped from the simulation and decanted from cryostasis. We’ve been recovering in the infirmary ever since, which is why I was unable to write until now.

The AI in charge of maintaining our consciousness must have malfunctioned while we were in stasis. More than eight human centuries have passed since we were supposed to begin our mission. The rest of the crew is dead, including Captain Drake. We owe him a great debt for helping us break out of the simulation. His consciousness is trapped in the computer, however, and all we can give him is a merciful release.

Eva and I are still shaken from our experience in the simulation.

We're getting over it slowly, but it's going to take time to fully heal. Thankfully, we're already starting to get over it, though I doubt we'll ever see each other the same as we did before.

The much more pressing concern is what to do about the mission. All of our crew mates are dead, and we do not have enough fuel to make a return journey. Fortunately, the planet we've been tasked to explore is thoroughly habitable. Our initial scans indicate conditions that are near optimal for human life. We're alone in this place, but we should survive.

Eva and I have decided to make planetfall and try our fortunes on the surface. Once we're ready, I'll activate the ship's distress signal and set it to broadcast our landing coordinates, in case anyone passes by. Still, with how remote this star is, it's doubtful that anyone will respond.

If Eva and I are forced to colonize this planet alone, we will do our best to fulfill that mission. I just hope that we can leave a record that will help our children (if we ever have any) to rebuild civilization and one day return to the stars.

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## **THE BOOK OF GENESIS**

### *Chapter 1*

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## Discussion Questions

1. The “snake” in the garden offers Adam and Eve an apple that will give them “knowledge of good and evil.” Is having “knowledge of good and evil” a good thing or a bad thing? Is it better to simply be happy and know nothing of these things?
2. Adam and Eve were living in a fake world of happiness with all their needs met. Even though the world was fake, did they make the right choice by leaving that world?
3. Which is more important, happiness, or knowledge? Isn’t the point of life to “be happy?”
4. Knowing that eating the fruit would give you knowledge, and that that knowledge would make you unhappy, would you eat the fruit anyway? Assuming you would eat the fruit, and the point of life isn’t ignorant happiness, but knowledge, what is the point of life?
5. Would you be willing to marry someone who’s answer to this question was different than yours?

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