Here in Heaven

Adam would tell you I tricked him. He would tell you I wasn’t good enough for him, that I was a deceitful woman who ruined paradise for us. He had no idea what a woman needs, how to think beyond his own desire, to give someone else pleasure.

I spent a lot of time thinking I had done something wrong, that losing paradise was my fault. There was plenty of finger pointing and blame passed around after The Fall. How were we supposed to know what paradise was without a taste of hunger? Without secrets, lust, pain, or cold? The Garden wasn’t a haven for me then, it was a prison.

I had grown tired of walking by the river, I knew every song the birds had, the animals were Adam’s beasts to look after. I was one of those animals created for him. I had no responsibilities except to Adam, so my days were often empty, wandering, waiting. I wasted many afternoons imagining the rivers beyond The Garden, the mountains that must lie somewhere past the horizon. Ever since Serpent had told me that there was something beyond this place I couldn’t take my mind off it. It possessed me, kept me up at night, whispered in my ear. Were there other people? What kinds of birds lived there, what exotic songs could they sing? My favorite dream though, was about the fruit trees, about the peaches and oranges, about mangos so thick they’d explode with buttery gold at the slightest poke of a finger. How sweet they must be! I’d imagine eating a single one all day, skinning it gingerly, sucking the tangerine syrup right from the peel, licking the juice from my hands, wrists, elbows. It wouldn’t be like all these apples with their indignant variety. The orchards full of tart greens and mealy reds haunt me. Rows and rows of crooked, stooped strangers holding a hand out with the fruit there for me to taste, to sink into sin like a stone in the river, to surrender to the sweetness.

Adam and I weren’t connecting the way he said we would. He was particular about sex, about how we did it, who was on top, never asking what I wanted. It was the same every time. He grew sensitive about the power between us, sometimes he whimpered in his sleep, muttered *Lilith*, although I don’t understand that word. He held the rib he gave me over my head like a weight, ready to drop at a given moment, like I should worship him for his sacrifice. Whenever he told the story of my creation he always forgot to mention God in the matter, like he had created me without divine intervention, like he hadn’t been asleep the whole time. “We were created for each other,” he would say to me over and over; it made me nauseous. I could hear the whispers growing louder in the back of my mind, bubbling with curiosity and wonder, aching for something more. It scared me to think of what this meant.

During the long, endless days I’d begun spending my time talking with Serpent. He was much more intelligent and engrossing than the other animals. We’d sit under the fig tree and talk deeply about philosophy, language, and the future. He was charming, perhaps a little self motivated, but he could spin a tale. Speaking with Adam was like speaking to the chickens, all motion, no depth. I sensed that Adam grew a stone of resentment towards Serpent and our friendship, that perhaps he was jealous of our effortless laughter, our natural connection. Sometimes I pitied Adam’s lack of social wit. I’d see him in the fields with the horses desperately trying to bond with them, to be liked. Serpent says all the animals found him nice enough, perhaps a little dense, but he was polite and he tried hard.

Serpent would feed me these morsels, drop them before me and let them grow in my mind; that Adam wasn’t my future, that I could be radically immersed in pleasure with someone else, that I belonged on top. The most delicious of these though, was when he’d speak of the power I held within me. That I could choose. I soaked up those words carefully, savoring them. He only said these wild things after we’d had a bit of wine in the evenings, sunset deep on the horizon, while the lightning bugs put on their drowsy dance over the orchards. It was a dreamy haze, those evenings. I couldn’t brood over these thoughts too long, it was dangerous, tempting, forbidden. I was alone with Adam. God made sure of it when I was created that I’d have no options, no choice in the matter.

Perhaps that’s where my sin was seeded. Perhaps I was angry with God for his arrogance, for his lack of foresight into my desires. He created me human, he created me with passion, thoughts, feelings, and a heart of my own. Didn’t he see how unhappy I was? Why didn’t he answer my prayers?

In the earlier days of The Garden, I’d spend hours asking God to help me love Adam the way I was supposed to, to give me something more for him. Thinking it was up to me to make him happy, thinking God was listening. Serpent said God wasn’t there, that he made a mess and walked away like a child throwing his toys on the ground after becoming bored with them. This kind of abandonment felt reckless, felt like the kind of carelessness only the men could tamper with. Maybe God had wanted me to pick the fruit all along, I thought. *Forbidden* swayed in front of me while I slept; tapped me on the shoulder, begged to be adored, obsessed over. Marking it forbidden had only made the decision to provoke God taste sweeter. I was forced to do something rash. The Tree was there, the fruit dangled above my head, taunted me. It grew over summer, ripe and rotund, swung in the warm evening breeze, sang sweet enchantments to me. Serpent said I deserved to know what it tasted like, that God had given up on me, the men around me didn’t even see me, *ssssso what would it matter?*

Adam and I are no longer together, as anyone would have expected. After I picked the fruit, after he saw the cool indulgence of my sin, he couldn’t look away. Juice streaked down my neck like a rope, my fingers sticky with honey. There under the tree, we saw each other fully. He disgusted me, standing there with his fish mouth hanging open, watching me like one of the cows, dumb and deaf. He saw my pleasure, saw the delight I received in this wickedness, laughing there with Serpent, he couldn’t control himself.

He wasn’t a strong man, that Adam, or smart either. I had already eaten the fruit, and only *one* could be wise from it. He could have my scraps. I was blind with ecstasy buzzing in my ears, light-headed and delirious. The taste of power, of defiance was rapturous. Finally, God was looking at me. Everyone saw me and it tasted like heaven.