

SINGING IN THE NIGHT



COLLECTED MEDITATIONS

Volume Five

MARY BENARD, EDITOR

Town: “Oh, earth, you’re too wonderful for anybody to realize you,” followed by the anguished question, “Do any human beings ever realize life while they live it—every, every minute?”

Today is one common day, one (more) chance to be fully alive. Welcome to it!

GORDON B. MCKEEMAN

EVE’S MUSE

Describe Adam, you say. Well, he’s kind of a wuss. Don’t get me wrong, though, Adam’s a nice guy. He just adheres to rules a little too strictly. Take his conversation with God before I was created. God tells my husband not to eat fruit from a tree in the center of the garden. Adam unquestioningly goes along with the deal, “Sure God, I won’t ever, ever touch that tree’s fruit, cross my heart, hope to die.”

That’s Adam, just hanging out and enjoying this “paradise” as he calls it. Well, let me tell you, paradise wasn’t nirvana. It was beautiful: luscious lakes, meandering rivers, verdant trees, prolific flowers, stunning mountains, but . . . boring. The Garden of Eden lost its appeal pretty quickly. It was nice not to have to work. It was nice essentially to have God wait on you hand and foot. Food was

abundant, scenery ever wonderful, seventy degree days, light showers in the afternoon, and then back to perfect.

But, have you ever longed for something because life felt like a matzah cracker—dry and thin? Have you ever wanted something because you knew it would add spontaneity, diversity, and just plain change to your life? I did. Life sat pathetically before me on a silver platter. I didn't have to work, struggle, worry, engage, or contemplate. Life was supposedly perfect, and I was bored. Personally, I think God was bored too. Why else set up something to tempt so blatantly?

God also knew me. He knew I couldn't be stopped. He saw me bored out of my mind in that garden. Adam and I used to sit idly around, waiting for something to happen, anything to happen. I fell to twiddling my thumbs. Adam used to ask, "Is that all you know how to do?"

I'd tell him, "No, I can go this way too" and change the direction of my thumb twiddling. It got to the point where death didn't seem like such a bad alternative to boredom. At least monotony would get a run for its money.

Enter the snake. Smooth voice, pleasant serpent smile. A reptile that made sense. The snake reminded me that it was God who told Adam not to eat the apple. I was getting all my information secondhand.

"Remember," the snake reminded me, "Adam would rather stay in this so-called paradise with the same day, day after day, than to risk, or challenge, or imagine, or venture anything."

It was then that I looked into those snake's eyes and I saw my life. In great big capital letters, the irises of that snake read, boring. I saw myself and myself saw me. It was then that I knew I had to taste that apple. So, I did. I took a bite of that tart crispness. And all felt different. My body changed. I felt the sores on my feet. I felt a surge of life in my belly, my mind expand, my vision clear. For the first time, I felt whole. The spirit of life and love had consumed me. I felt wholly alive. Full of the spirit of God. So, I went to find Adam. I tried to explain how I felt. He just looked at me in horror and amazement, yet he kept asking me what it felt like. All I could think to say was, "I'm truly human. Adam, I feel more me than ever before!" I cajoled, argued, and finally just gave up. I shoved the apple into his taut mouth. He reluctantly took a bite. It was later that he told God it was all my fault.

Now here is the part of the story that I must confess needs correcting. I didn't blame the snake for my transgressions. I fessed up and admitted I had eaten the apple. I said in a proud, unwavering voice to God, "I am glad to be human! I can spurtle with rage, shake with despair, and bubble in ecstasy. Everything is not

perfect, but it is real, alive! I feel sorry for you, God. For you everything is perfect, always going your way. Do you ever get bored? Want to be alive like me?"

Then God got mad. He cursed us both. He said that I would scream out in pain during childbirth, that I would regret the day I was born. But I must say, I never expected anything different after watching the animals in the garden give birth. They too suffered pain, yet had such a magnificent way to appreciate the outcome. We listened to the end of his tirade, and Adam just plopped down right there, looking out at everything he felt he had lost.

I picked up the apple and went to the gate. I stood there for a while, leaning against that cold wrought iron, throwing the apple up and down. Up and down. Up and down. I stood enjoying the rhythm of that apple slap into my hand, followed by silence as the air embraced it for a brief moment. Then slap. Then rest. Then slap. I looked out over the vast expanse of that wilderness, thinking about a song I had heard, "You can make the world your apple, take a bite before it sours, you can make the world your charm or your chain." I knew it lay before me, my life, my opportunity, my humanness. And I said out loud, in a clear voice, "I'm so glad to be human!"

KAAREN SOLVEIG ANDERSON