

Now what of this villain?

He was not grotesque or bent. He had no red horns to speak of, no pointy tail, no pitchfork. He didn't cackle or twist a greasy mustache like the bad guy in a silent film. There are some who would make the case, and I might be inclined to agree, that this wicked one had been one of the guardian cherubs we saw standing in the assembly of God himself. That this adversary was adept at masquerading as an "angel of light." That once he had been adorned in beauty by every precious stone imagined. That he had been covered as if by gold. But unrighteousness was found in him. He was filled with violence and was therefore cast from the very mountain of God.

So then, that vile enemy slunk away to wait in sin and rebellion. To plot evil things.

In the meantime, God had given his image bearers a paradise to live in; Eden, a utopia, imbued with the fullness of God's loving goodness. There was but a single instruction, "Do not eat from the tree in the center of the garden. The one called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. For in the very same day that you eat of it, you will certainly die."

Death. What a concept. All of life had just come to being. You need only look this way or that, and all things were moving in the elegant symphony of life. The bee lazily landed on the petal of an upturned flower, and the flower fell ever so slightly under the weight. That tiny bee, by the design of God, having never been taught to do such a thing, plunged his head into the flower and coated himself with the golden pollen therein. And it wasn't just one bee, but thousands. Each busy with their work. Everywhere one could look was life.

The ants had already begun to gather seeds into their underground network, laying a scent trail for the others to follow so they wouldn't lose their way.

The eagles had already found thermal updrafts and floated with ease higher and higher into the sky.

The doe and her fawn traveled silently through the grass with effortless leaps.

The mountain goat found his cloven hooves adept at leaping from rock to rock up the side of the cliff in playful delight.

The lion stretched and pawed the ground in the afternoon sun.

The chipmunks and ground squirrels popped up and down out of burrows they had made by instinct, each chirping and chattering wild instructions to one another.

Adam and Eve busied themselves with those things that bring joy and meaning to an unbothered existence.

Death hardly seemed to be a problem for this young world.

But there in the corner of some shadowy place, the villain came forward disguised as a serpent. He slithered his way from his hiding place and straight to the tree. Not just any tree.

THE TREE. The FORBIDDEN one. He had the most wickedly vile plan, and he was ready to put it into place.

But don't worry.

The best is yet to come.



# The Best is yet to Come

