

## In the Garden(s)

Before that business with the snake, the Garden of Eden was full of love and joy and laughter. Eve laughed as the Creator showed her how the trees grew; Adam giggled as the Spirit blew rainbow-coloured fountains over the unsuspecting angels; and they both creased up with mirth as the Word taught them – well, words. And how to make them up.

“Shall we call it skinny tail?”

“Or perhaps ‘long nose’?”

Then, all three together, “Elephant!!”

But we know what happened.

Choosing names was fun. Choosing how to tend the trees and the animals and the ground itself was - good.

But that one tree. The forbidden tree. Choosing what to do about *that* tree was - hard.

When they first noticed the snake, it was circling the Tree. A good distance away, but always with the trunk of the tree at the centre of its path. They mentioned it to the Creator – he looked sad. They mentioned it to the Spirit – she looked troubled. They mentioned it to the Word – he looked pained.

After that the snake disappeared for a while. But it came back. The circle was nearer this time. And the next time nearer still.

A question arose. What if? What if, instead of this wonderful joyful *friendship* with God – what if they could actually *become like* God? Not just accept all that God generously and unstintingly offered to them, but claim equality in their own right.

That day the snake almost touched the tree.

Almost, but not quite.

And it turned and looked the man and the woman in the eyes as if to say “what about it?”

The moment stretched into eternity - and condensed back into the present.

Eve reached out. She touched. She picked. She broke the fruit. "Take, eat," she invited Adam.

And hell, literally, broke loose.

Somehow, once tasted, the fruit didn't taste quite so sweet as it had promised; hanging there. When all was no longer gift but taken, the colour, the shine, dimmed. The trees were no longer friends, the animals no longer playthings. They heard the sibilance in the snake's slithering.

They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day. And they felt something new. "Shame," Adam named it. "Fear," said Eve. They argued (another new word). They hid. Hiding had been fun before, now it took on an altogether more desperate feel.

Of course, God knew what had happened. The Spirit had held her breath (the breath of life) as the fruit was taken. The Creator had remained true to his own self and acquiesced to their choice.

And the Word? The Word had felt the pain of the Creator and the Spirit. The Word had anticipated the pain of separation for all humanity.

The Word had looked through the long tunnel of Time to another invitation to "take, eat", to another garden, to another occasion when God, and God alone, could offer the gift which would restore all things. To another Tree.

And made more new words. "Yet not my will, but yours be done."