EVE
Trying to stop me will only make you sad.

ADAM
He will punish us.

EVE
You don’t know that.

ADAM
Neither do you. Anything could happen.

EVE relishes the thought.

EVE
Yes. Anything.

EVE almost eats the forbidden fruit.

ADAM
What if He sends you away?

EVE
Then I’ll know what’s out there.

ADAM
But what will I do?

EVE
Whatever He wants you to do, I suppose. Whatever you did before I was here.

Again EVE raises the fruit to her lips.

ADAM
Why don’t we simply ask Him what’s outside of Eden? If you’re just curious--

EVE
Adam.

ADAM
It’s forbidden!
EVE
Why would He have put it here if he didn’t want us to use it?

ADAM is at a loss.

ADAM
To--to test us--to try and see how faithful we are--

EVE
I’ve made up my mind.

Beat. A moment.

ADAM
(Blurting)
I was alone. That’s what I did before you arrived.

An understanding is reached.

EVE
Tests can have more than one solution.

What?

ADAM

EVE
I can’t stay here and you don’t want to be alone...so you could come with me.

ADAM
But He--

EVE
Won’t keep you from feeling lonely if I leave.

Beat.

EVE bites into the apple. Wipes her mouth. Offers the apple to ADAM.

ADAM hesitates.

He, too, bites the apple.
They are lost in darkness. Simultaneously, LUCE is struck like a thunderclap, stunned at a sudden indiscernible pain.

LUCE

...and I felt it. Like missing a step and tumbling through the open air. The weight of His disapproval and wrath crushing them both, but particularly Adam, like a lead weight. Drowning would have been more pleasant.

HE (V.O.)

(Booming, imposing)

For God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

LUCE

We all know what happened next, of course. "Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?" "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." And don’t let the door hit you on the way out.

HE (V.O.)

We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope.

LUCE

At the gate, near the cherubim, I waited for them to emerge. I had to speak to her, to know if—the world was as beautiful as she’d hoped.

(A false attempt at humor)

But I guess Adam must have been just as eager to get away from Eden as Eve was. By the time I got there, they were already long gone. It’s a big world out here. Bigger than either of us expected. So it took me years to find them, and when I did—

EVE looms.

EVE

...were you ever my friend?

LUCE

Eve? My god, I haven’t seen you in so long, I thought—
EVE
I see everything now. It's all either beautiful or terrible. Was that your plan?

LUCE
I wanted--

EVE
I thought you would be one of the beautiful things, but as soon as my tongue touched the fruit I knew--I could see you for what you were.

LUCE
The knowledge of the tree is meant to be how subjective "good" and "evil" are--that's only how He--

EVE
Do you know I speak falsehoods now? Adam toils so terribly in the fields that sometimes when he asks me questions, I say whatever I think he wants to hear so that he'll smile, just once. And even I, with my incredible knowledge of good and evil--even I can't even discern for myself whether or not that's an act of selfishness.

LUCE
I just wanted your freedom!

EVE
Or your own.

EVE turns away.

EVE (CONT'D)
If I could take your name back, I would.

EVE vanishes. LUCE stands alone.

LUCE
I wanted you to want more.

CAIN, young and cautious, approaches.

CAIN
She's with child.
LUCE starts.

LUCE
She--what?

CAIN
Father says when she was with me, everything made her upset.

LUCE
You're hers?

CAIN
Who else's would I be?

LUCE
And she will bear again soon.

CAIN
Yes.

CAIN considers.

CAIN (CONT'D)
They argue more now that she's with child.

LUCE
Do they?

CAIN
(Proudly)
If he's in the fields too long and comes home after dark.
I go with him sometimes. I'm going to learn to till the land
too.

LUCE
Do they usually make amends--after they fight?

CAIN
Mostly.

LUCE
(Almost desperate)
And isn't that all the better? If there's no chance of cracks
ever forming, can flawlessness be considered a virtue?

CAIN tries to recapture LUCE'S attention.
CAIN
My name is Cain. What's yours?

LUCE
It's Luci--

LUCE grimaces.

LUCE (CONT'D)
Luce. It's Luce.

HE (V.O.)
Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain: In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened, and the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of musick shall be brought low.

As HE speaks, CAIN tills the fields. At first he is clumsy, fumbling. But he begins to grasp the basics, and at last he is strong, sure, and bright.

LUCE approaches. A warm greeting. They admire the sky together.

CAIN
Father says it was beautiful.

LUCE
It was and it wasn't. There wasn't anything ugly to compare it to.

CAIN
And you're off again.

LUCE
What?
CAIN
Defining things by their opposites. "You can't be happy unless you've known sadness." "You can't rejoice the dawn without enduring the night."

LUCE
Am I wrong?

CAIN
My father thinks you are.

LUCE
You haven't told him--

CAIN
No, of course not. But he thinks Eden would have been enough for both of them.

LUCE
I don't think Eve would have stayed even if I hadn't tempted her. She wanted too much.

And me?

CAIN
What do you want?

I want to plant rows upon rows of seeds that blossom into green fields. I want the things I plant to span centuries and nourish my children, and my children's children, and their children. I want to be the seed that cultivates generation upon generation of families.

LUCE
(Laughing)
And here I thought Eve had wanted a great deal. You want the world in the palm of your hand.

CAIN
Father thinks I'm too ambitious. He says I have too much of my mother in me.

LUCE
One of the things I like about you.
I think he prefers Abel. Abel is perfect.

There's no such thing anymore. Not since Eden.

Maybe that's where he belongs.

Are you jealous?

"Jealous?"

Clean slate. Spotless record. Square one.

You just have to make something of it.

Is it wrong?

You just have to make something of it.

How so?

Use it to do something greater. Use your jealousy as the means to a beautiful end.

What end?

How did you say it? Plant seeds. Nurture generations. Take what might be wrong and use it to make a right. You have it in you, Cain. Just as your mother did.
 Cain
Now she’s miserable.

Luce
Perhaps. But humanity has outgrown Eden and perfection. For better or for worse, here you are. What will you do with it?

Cain dreams.

Cain
For better or for worse.

Eve
(Offstage)
Cain! It’s time to make our offerings!

Cain
(Apologetically)
I have to go.

Luce
I’ll see you again?

Cain
Without fail.

Cain withdraws.

He (V.O.)
The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

Abel appears.

Abel
Who are you?

Luce does not let on if he is startled.

Luce
A friend of your brother’s.

Abel
Here to make your offering to God?
LUCE
I suppose you could call it that.

ABEL
I offered the firstlings of my flock. I believe He was pleased. What do you bring?

LUCE
The firstlings of mine.

ABEL
For sacrifice?

LUCE
For redemption.

ABEL suspects. Almost speaks, then:

A thunderclap. As before, LUCE is shaken to his core.

ABEL
Are you all right?

LUCE
Where is your brother?

ABEL
Making his offering.

LUCE
I have to find him.

ABEL
He should be out in the field, by the cypress tree.

LUCE alone. (change this)

LUCE
And I felt it. Like a cataclysm. He, the famously all-loving Father of all mankind, rejected Cain's offering. Perhaps it was part of the punishment. Perhaps sending mankind to toil in the field wasn't enough. Perhaps He felt it was His duty to make life unfair for them—to continue to prove to them that an imperfect life is a sentence rather than an opportunity.

(MORE)
LUCE (CONT'D)
Sounds a lot like what I’m supposed to be known for. But whatever the cause, He turned away Cain’s offering, and jealousy burned in Cain’s veins instead of blood.

LUCE searches.

CAIN is seething.

LUCE (CONT'D)
It’s no fault of yours.

CAIN
I’d rather it was. If it was a fault, I might overcome it.

You still might.

CAIN
He prefers my brother. There’s nothing I can do but bear it.

LUCE
You will find a way.

CAIN
Is this why you create these feelings? Selfish desires, jealous thoughts—does it amuse you to torment us?

LUCE
After all this time...I had hoped you knew me better.

CAIN
What does it accomplish? Why should I toil in the fields if my brother’s merest effort is rewarded so much more grandly?

LUCE
Because you could rise above him. Because by wanting to best him you might become something more—something beautiful—

CAIN
Something furious, and hopeless, and broken! Father is right, we would have been better in Eden. At least there everyone was equal!
LUCE
Can you truly say you would have preferred that existence? Making no effort—or all the effort—and having it amount to exactly the same thing either way? The sweetness of fruit would have been as lackluster as the taste of sand. Love would be as empty as a clear blue sky.

CAIN
And you sit On High just like He does, and make these decisions for us. You simply decided one day what life should be for us, and you visited us with sin and torment for these grand noble purposes without a care for the consequences we would face!

LUCE
You of all people must know that there is a consequence for everything.

CAIN
Oh how could I forget? Condemned to crawl on your belly and eat dust. How very--

LUCE
No, Cain. That isn’t even the beginning of it.

ADAM prays. And LUCE feels it.

ADAM
Lord forgive me, for my sins are great...

LUCE
The fear and shame Adam feels.

EVE hopes. And LUCE feels it.

EVE
No farther to fly...fettered as before.

LUCE
The longing for more that Eve pretends to have outgrown.

ABEL makes an offering. And LUCE feels it.
LUCE (CONT'D)
Even the jealousy that turns your heart to ice. All of that pain. I endure it along with you. I carry it with me like a cloak of lead, and sometimes the weight is so great it's all I can do to keep my stride.

CAIN
But you joke and laugh—you couldn't possibly be so merry if you were in such--

LUCE
It's the only way I know to keep my sanity.

CAIN
But why? We could have stayed in Eden. Why would you choose pain?

LUCE
Because I remain convinced that a beautiful soul is worth the risk of suffering. The opportunity to become more, to help others reach that power for themselves...that makes the pain worth it. I bear the darkness so the world can know the light.

HE (V.O.)
And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.

CAIN
All these pretty words were what drove us from Eden. Now they try to convince me that my inferiority is beautiful. I will not be deceived as you deceived my mother! There is no strength in failure. There is no beauty in suffering!

CAIN flees.

LUCE
I have never been so honest as I was with you! Cain, please--

CAIN climbs a summit to cry to the heavens.
CAIN
How have I displeased you? What has Abel done that I have not? What can I do to prove myself worthy?

HE (V.O.)
Why art thou wroth? And why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?

CAIN
Tell me how to achieve whatever it is you want me to achieve! Tell me how to be whoever you want me to be!

HE (V.O.)
And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.

CAIN
How do I overcome it? Tell me what to do!

HE (V.O.)
There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

CAIN
(Desperate)
I CAN’T!

ABEL, alone, tends his flocks.

CAIN watches.

CAIN (CONT’D)
Endure, overcome—Empty guidance without solace or strategy.

LUCE
Cultivate new fields. Nurture new generations.

HE (V.O.)
Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.
CAIN
Take it on faith that you are strong enough to survive one more day. One more moment.

HE (V.O.)
For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

LUCE
Don’t be afraid to want more. Want beauty. Want affirmation.

CAIN
I’ll tell you what I want. I want respite from the gnawing jealousy. I want to bury the fear that I will never be worthy. I want to be neither God’s nor Satan’s.

CAIN fixates on ABEL.

CAIN (CONT’D)
I want to never be less than another again.

CAIN vanishes.

LUCE
(Dreading)
Cain--don’t make the mistake of thinking your faults can be solved by lashing out. When Eve sinned, she didn’t force Adam to follow her. She offered him the choice. You can want to be more than Abel, but don’t punish Abel for being more this time.

Crushing silence.

LUCE (CONT’D)
Cain?

CAIN
(In the darkness)
Am I my brother’s keeper?

A stab.

ABEL and LUCE cry out in unison.
Agony of both body and soul.
ABEL falls, bathed in red light before the darkness swallows him.

The release of death does not visit LUCE.

In the darkness:

CAIN (CONT’D)

(A shadow)
I didn’t want it to hurt so much--I’m sorry--I’m sorry--

LUCE
He regrets and hates all at once.

EVE

(A shadow)
Abel? My child--my secondborn--

She weeps.

LUCE
She mourns the literal death of one child and the spiritual death of the other.

ADAM

(A shadow)
You wolf, you monster--your own blood!

LUCE
He rages, questioning for the first time the benevolence of his god. They are betrayed; grief-stricken; caught in fury. They weep. Scream. Ache.

LUCE laughs and sobs at once.

LUCE (CONT’D)
And the irony is that I always thought that pain would be the ultimate cost. But the price that I pay is so much worse. More than anything else, I want to believe that sin is a facilitator of beauty, rather than its destroyer. And yet--

ADAM

(A shadow)
Countries are locked in eternal warfare so bloodthirsty they can hardly remember the cause they fight for.
EVE
(A shadow)
Faiths loathe each other so absolutely they give the lie to the eternal love they believe in.

CAIN
(A shadow)
Arbitrary divisions create such fathomless chasms that reaching an understanding between the two is as impossible as sewing up the air.

ABEL
(A shadow)
Is this the vision you dreamed of when you took the shape of the snake?

LUCE
(To the audience)
Eve gave me so much hope, but then after Cain, I thought—maybe there isn’t anyone else capable of withstanding temptation. Maybe I’ve created a cliffside so steep that no being has the strength to surmount it. The pain is nothing. It is my constant companion; I have never wished it would end, even at its direst. But as humankind grows exponentially, I stand alone waiting for the one person who will be able to prove me right. One person to do something so absolutely beautiful, even in the face of terrible adversity, that I need never fear myself again. One person—

EVE
(A shadow)
One sunrise.

CAIN
(A shadow)
One seed.

The pain is overwhelming.

LUCE struggles to endure.

LUCE
You might be wondering how I know that it’s even possible for someone to commit this beautiful act. That’s the terror of it...I don’t. Eve was, but since then...I haven’t found anyone strong enough.
He searches the audience.

**LUCE (CONT’D)**

Do you understand that any one of you—you could be Eve reborn? Someone who did not see their faults as deadweights, but as potential for growth and newfound strength. Someone who could see how much beauty the world could have, if a few people were willing to fight to make it that way. One person cannot erase the ugliness of the world, but they might be a beacon to guide more beauty to the surface.

**LUCE weakens.**

**LUCE (CONT’D)**

The night will always be black. But even if only a few stars glimmer, their brilliance keeps the darkness at bay.

**LUCE hopes.**

**End of play.**
Morningstar

Final Draft

A one-act play

By Ru-Lee Story

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

LUCE  The bearer of light, the morningstar, the son of the dawn.
EVE   The original sinner, the dreamer who outgrew Eden.
CAIN  The dreamer whose dreams destroyed him.
ADAM  The keeper of tradition; the creation in His image.
ABEL  The unfortunate; the shepherd.
HE    The creator of man. HE is little more than the voice of judgment for Luce and his followers; HE is both omnipresent and incredibly distant; the messages of morality HE delivers should be crushing in how harshly HE speaks them. HE is very much separate from the rest of the characters and this should be reflected in his presence—or lack thereof—onstage.

SETTINGS

A theatre

The garden of Eden

The farm of Cain

PRODUCTION NOTES

ADAM, EVE, CAIN and ABEL are shadows of LUCE'S past, viewed through the lens of his memories. If the production team desires, this may (or may not) be reflected in their staging, costumes, and voices.
First, darkness. Utter, absolute.
Then a glimmer. Distant. Out of the darkness HE speaks. HE is distant, yet HIS voice is booming, almost deafening—a crushing judgment against something we cannot see yet.

HE
How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, “I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.”

The glimmer grows. A silhouette imposes itself over the questing light.

HE
Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, “Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; that made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners?”

The silhouette grinds into action, approaching like a shadow growing longer with the setting sun.

HE
All the kings of the nations, even all of them, lie in glory, every one in his own house. But thou art cast out of thy grave like an abominable branch, and as the raiment of those that are slain, thrust through with a sword, that go down to the stones of the pit; as a carcase trodden under feet.

The lights almost blind the audience.
Luce, the owner of the silhouette (or perhaps the silhouette itself) considers the audience.

Luce
(Almost apologetically)
That’s better, isn’t it?

Luce waits.

Luce (Cont’d)
A bit much, perhaps?

He makes a motion; the lights glow rather than pierce.

Luce (Cont’d)
There we are. Now then... how are we all? A bit confused, I imagine. Dare I say a bit disillusioned? You came to see a good wholesome play. “Morningstar.” That sounds quite poetic and fluffy, don’t you think? And yet here I am. Of all people.

He
(An interruption)
Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

Luce
(Directly to the heavens)
Do you have something to say to me, old man?

He
(Lofty)
Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

Luce
(Back to the audience)
I think he’s trying to warn you. Because heaven forbid you think of me as anything other than a deceiver. A tempter. Original Sin.

A moment.
LUCE (CONT’D)
Come to think of it, if you believe that your proximity to me is going to damn you to the depths, you’re welcome to show yourselves out. Though I can personally guarantee that if hell’s your goal, you’ll have to try harder than that.

An expectant pause.

LUCE
No takers?

LUCE’S mood lightens.

LUCE (CONT’D)
Glad to hear it. So, before we get underway, let’s dispel a few stereotypes, shall we? First and foremost, I don’t drink blood, nor do I accept human or animal sacrifice. Anyone who attempts any of those rites in my name is an extremist and should be ignored. Second, I am not possessed of any of the following: horns, cloven hooves, a tail, blood red skin, or a pitchfork. Sorry to disappoint.

HE
(A warning)
Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.

LUCE
He loves spouting off all of these lovely poetic fortune cookie platitudes. But then he expects humanity to translate them into good deeds.

HE leads ADAM, EVE, CAIN and ABEL
in a mechanical recitation:

HE/ADAM/EVE/CAIN/ABEL
Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not steal--

LUCE
Right, yes, I’m sure we’re all familiar with your beloved commandments. Your story is, after all, the best-selling book in the world.
(To the audience)
But then, adultery, murder and theft are all daily occurrences here on this big spinning orb we call home. And he's supposed to hate violence, isn't he?

A sudden, sharp pain seems to shake LUCE to the core.

ADAM
(A shadow)
This is the havoc that you have wrought. It is on your head. Your head! Not ours!

ABEL
(A shadow)
The world is fallen to antipathy and avarice.

LUCE
(Reaching blindly for humor)
Forgive me...it's been one of those millennia. I'm sure you're all in quite a hurry to blame me for the "sorrows of the world" or what have you. And I--I'm not here to make excuses for the wrongs that have been done in my name. But--I've gone all these centuries just accepting the slander, and the lies, and the flat-out misunderstanding of what I stand for.

HE
To those with anxious heart, take courage, fear not. Behold, your God will come with vengeance.

LUCE
He makes his living on promises. The promise that he watches over you. The promise that someday, all will be right in the world. Heaven, the afterlife, whatever you want to call it. Just a promise. But a promise would be worthless if there was no fear that it might be broken.

EVE and CAIN appear. They are full of youth and hope, uncorrupted by the bitterness and hurt of their stories.
EVE
Would a sunrise seem beautiful without the pallor of night?

CAIN
The growth and harvest of summer would be fruitless were it not for the barren bleakness of the winter months.

LUCE
I know that there are injustices in the world that are too great to be justified. I will not claim otherwise. But yet...where would humanity be without these injustices? Who would you be?

CAIN retreats. ADAM looms.

ADAM
Paradise lost.

EVE
Vacancy found.

ADAM
We lived out our days in peace.

LUCE
Synonymous with boredom.

ADAM
And so you came to us, crawling on your belly, sneaking through the mud to corrupt us--

LUCE
Brush up your folklore. The snake is rebirth. Immortality. I wanted you to shed your skin and emerge new and whole into the world.

HE
And God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness."
LUCE
The perfect man. Residing in the perfect garden. No good or evil. No right or wrong. Just perfection. Whatever that means.

HE
And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and with the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, He made a woman, and brought her unto the man.

LUCE
Hasn’t that ever bothered you? The King James Bible literally calls Eve Adam’s “help-meet.” So for all you feminists out there, guess what? According to the big man, you and your entire gender is nothing but help.

EVE practices.

EVE

LUCE
(Smiling at EVE)
But I defy you to look at Eve and see something lesser. Surrounded by a garden that claimed to supply its residents with anything their hearts might desire, Eve wanted more. She wondered. She dreamed.

LUCE approaches EVE.

EVE
One of the creatures to be named?

LUCE
You might say that.

EVE
(Startled)
You speak! I never knew creatures could speak.
LUCE

Why not?

EVE

We are their shepherds.

LUCE

The Lord is your shepherd, and yet you can speak. Why not the creatures?

EVE ponders.

EVE

What is your name?

LUCE

I have none.

EVE

Adam has been commanded to give a name to each of the--

LUCE

You are both "woman" and "Eve." Why must I simply be "snake?"

HE

(An interruption)

And the Lord God said unto the serpent, "Because thou hast done this, upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life."

EVE

Adam might give you a second name, if I was the one doing the asking.

LUCE

He'd probably think me selfish, not being satisfied with one.

EVE

"Selfish?"

A moment as LUCE recognizes EVE'S ignorance; she is, as yet, devoid of sin.
LUCE
(To audience)
Clean slate. Spotless record. Square one.
(To EVE)
It means thinking only of yourself. Not caring about other people.

EVE
But I think of myself. Am I--?

LUCE
That depends on whether you would act for your own benefit even if it would harm someone.

EVE
Adam is the only someone here...

She considers.

EVE
And I would never hurt him.

LUCE
Then you aren’t selfish.

EVE broods.

A bird soars overhead.

EVE
Peculiar creatures. Those who dwell in the fields are traceable, but the oceans and skies are boundless. I never know where they’re off to.

LUCE
Perhaps it’s going away.

EVE
To the other side of Eden?

LUCE
A bird knows no “sides.” It will fly until it tires and then it will alight wherever it is.
EVE
What could it want outside of Eden?

LUCE
Any number of things, I imagine.

EVE
Have you been?

LUCE
Outside? Isn’t Eden enough?

EVE
Eden is beautiful...

But?

EVE
But there must be more.

LUCE
(To the audience)
When you put a living thing inside walls--real or imaginary--they’re going to wonder what’s on the other side. Some people are content with the mystery, perhaps--

ADAM
(Looming)
Some knowledge is best left to fester.

LUCE
But others--most--will eventually scale the wall. Tear down the stones. Break through. It’s human nature. That, at least, I accept no blame for. Long before the apple, Eve wanted more.

Time has passed; LUCE returns to EVE.

EVE
Are you sure we’re allowed to be out this far?
LUCE
You said you wanted to see something new. Something beautiful.

EVE
What is it?

LUCE
Just look up.

The sun rises.

EVE
(Overwhelmed)
There's so much light.

LUCE
From the heart of the garden, you can't see all the colors.

EVE
Fruit, and water, and grass and sky--and colors I'd never even known before!

LUCE
Not all beauty is contained in Eden.

After taking it all in, EVE tears herself away.

EVE
But we should be content with what is there.

LUCE
There's nothing wrong with wanting to admire beauty.

EVE
It's selfish.

HE
(The voice of morality)
Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.
LUCE
It isn’t selfish.

ADAM
But the apple was.

LUCE stalls.

LUCE
(To the audience)
Did you know that the apple tree wasn’t actually an apple tree? At the time, the word “apple” just meant “fruit.” So it really could have been anything. An orange. A lime. Or what about a forbidden avocado?

ADAM
We are nothing more than amusements to you. But you ruined us. You filled our lives with corruption and condemned us to the dust!

LUCE
Thou shalt not bear false witness.

ADAM
You dare call me a liar?

LUCE
Is something a lie if the speaker isn’t even aware of the truth? Is falsehood simply the hollowness of ignorant honesty?

EVE and ADAM together. ADAM’S hostility melts into tenderness.

EVE
How do the creatures’ names come to you?

ADAM
I just pick what feels right.

EVE
And He chose all the celestial names--light, stars, the moon--
ADAM
All things glorious and greater than what graces this earth. Just as He is.

EVE giggles.

She plucks a flower.

EVE
And this?

ADAM
We haven't come to the all that leafy stuff yet.

EVE
What if I were to name it?

ADAM falters.

ADAM
I'm sure it would be a lovely name. But I don't think He--

EVE
You could pretend you made it up.

ADAM
I won't deceive him that way. We can ask Him soon. But I can't in good faith make a decision without His approval.

ADAM tucks the flower behind EVE'S ear and leaves her.

EVE reflects.

She joins LUCE.

EVE
Would you like a name?

LUCE
Would I--what?
EVE
Something beautiful. Something fitting your kindness towards me.

LUCE
You think I’m kind...?

EVE
I’d never know a sunrise if it weren’t for you...you brought light into Eden for me. But all things glorious and greater than this earth are chosen. So I just...made something up that sounded like it might have been the name for light, or the sunrise, or stars.

LUCE anticipates.

LUCE
What is it?

EVE
Lucifer. Your name is Lucifer.

A moment of shared completion.

LUCE
Lucifer...

EVE (CONT’D)
(Softly)
You’re welcome.

LUCE alone.

LUCE
(To the audience)
I’ve shortened it since, of course. Lucifer just sounds so--biblical. “Luce” has more of a modern flair, don’t you think?

LUCE considers.

LUCE (CONT’D)
...and I never knew if...that is, I never got to ask her--
LUCE takes up the forbidden fruit.

EVE approaches.

EVE
Where did you get that?

LUCE
I know what you’re thinking.

EVE
Adam says that’s forbidden.

LUCE
Is that the only reason you won’t?

EVE
He says it’s forbidden.

LUCE
Why give you the choice, then?

EVE
What do you mean?

LUCE
If He didn’t want you considering it, why would He have put it in the garden in the first place?

EVE is faltering.

EVE
Adam says we are not capable of understanding what He chooses to—

LUCE
Adam is content to never question the significance of a forbidden fruit left within reach. But you, Eve...you see the beauty in sunrises and birds’ flights. You know that there can be more. You have the power to change everything—for the rest of mankind, maybe.
EVE
How do you know that what's out there is worth it?

LUCE
That's the wonder of it. I don't. It could be anything. You could make it anything.

EVE
Fresh start.

LUCE
Brave new world.

EVE
No divine intervention...

EVE dreams.

EVE (CONT'D)
But isn't it selfish?

LUCE
Would you like a pretty lie, or an ugly truth?

EVE
Truth.

LUCE
It is selfish. But with a little selfishness, Eve...who knows? One choice, and the world might become more than perfect.

EVE
Or less.

LUCE
Or, more likely, a mixture of the two. But isn't it worth that chance?

EVE considers.

She accepts the forbidden fruit.
LUCE stands away, observing. EVE presents the fruit to ADAM.

EVE
My mind is made up.

ADAM
You can’t!

EVE
Yes, I can.

ADAM
He will punish us.

EVE
You don’t know that.

ADAM
Neither do you. Anything could happen.

EVE reishes the thought.

EVE
Yes. Anything.

EVE almost eats the forbidden fruit.

ADAM
What if He sends you away?

EVE
Then I’ll know what’s out there.

ADAM
But what will I do?

EVE
Whatever He wants you to do, I suppose. Whatever you did before I was here.
ADAM
Why don’t we simply ask Him what’s outside of Eden? If you’re just curious--

EVE
Adam.

ADAM
It’s forbidden!

EVE
Why would He have put it here if He didn’t want us to use it?

ADAM is at a loss.

ADAM
To--to test us--to try and see how faithful we are--

EVE
I’ve made up my mind.

A moment.

ADAM
(Blurting)
I was alone. That’s what I did before you arrived.

EVE
...tests can have more than one solution.

ADAM
What?

EVE
I can’t stay here and you don’t want to be alone...so you could come with me.

ADAM
But He--

EVE
He won’t keep you from feeling lonely if I leave.
A moment.
EVE bites into the apple, wipes her mouth, and offers the apple to ADAM.
ADAM hesitates, acutely aware of HIS gaze.
Then he, too, bites the apple.
They are lost in darkness.
Simultaneously, LUCE is struck like a thunderclap, stunned at a sudden indiscernible pain.

HE
(Roaring, deafening)
For God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

LUCE
...and I felt it. Like missing a step and tumbling through the open air. The weight of His disapproval and wrath crushing them both like a lead weight. Drowning would have been more pleasant.

HE
Cursed is the ground for man's sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. And thou, woman: I will greatly multiply thy sorrow, and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

LUCE
At the gate, near the cherubim, I waited for them to emerge. I had to speak to her, to know if--the world was as beautiful as she'd hoped.
(A false attempt at humor)
But there’s nothing like a healthy dose of shame to inspire a change of scenery. By the time I got there, they were already long gone. It’s a big world out here. Bigger than either of us expected. So it took me years to find them, and when I did—

EVE looms.

EVE
...were you ever my friend?

LUCE
Eve? My god, I haven’t seen you in so long, I thought--

EVE
I see everything now. It’s all either beautiful or terrible. Was that your plan?

LUCE
I wanted--

EVE
I thought you would be something beautiful, but as soon as my tongue touched the fruit I knew--I could see you for what you were.

LUCE
The knowledge of the tree is meant to be how subjective “good” and “evil” are.

EVE
Do you know I speak falsehoods now? Adam toils so in the fields that sometimes when he asks me questions, I say whatever I think he wants to hear so that he’ll smile, just once. And I can’t even discern for myself whether that is an act of good or evil. Or a selfish one.

LUCE
I just wanted your freedom!

EVE
Or your own.
EVE turns away.

EVE (CONT’D)
If I could take your name back, I would.

EVE leaves LUCE devastated.

LUCE
I just wanted you to want more.

CAIN, young and cautious, approaches.

CAIN
She’s with child.

LUCE starts.

LUCE
She--what?

CAIN
Father says when she was with me, everything made her upset.

LUCE
You’re hers.

CAIN
Who else’s would I be?

LUCE
And she will bear again soon.

CAIN
Yes.

CAIN considers.

CAIN (CONT’D) (CONT’D)
They argue more now that she’s with child.

LUCE
Do they?
CAIN
If he's too long in the fields and comes home after dark.
(Proudly)
I go with him to the fields sometimes. I'm going to learn to
till the land too.

LUCE
Do they usually make amends--after they fight?

CAIN
Mostly.

LUCE
(Almost desperate)
And isn't that all the better? If there's no chance of cracks
ever forming, can its flawlessness really be boasted of?

CAIN tries to recapture LUCE'S attention.

CAIN
My name is Cain. What's yours?

LUCE
It's L--

LUCE stops short, feeling the
weight of EVE'S fury. He thinks for
a moment.

LUCE
Luce. It's Luce.

A moment of connection between CAIN
and LUCE. As the following lines
take place, CAIN grows from a
clumsy, timid boy into a strong,
sure and bright man. Perhaps we see
him learning to till the land,
perhaps we see a moment pass
between him and his proud brother
ABEL.
Some humans are content with the limits of their lives; they take the constraints of their circumstances for granted and never question the status quo. Adam might have remained in Eden for eternity, blissfully unaware of the possibilities outside the influence of perfection. But some humans are ambitious. Dreamers. Innovators. Call it what you will, but there is no denying that Eve had a spark that Adam lacked. And as Cain blossomed into a sturdy and skilled young farmer, I saw that same fire begin to burn in his belly. Faced with empty fields that might seem daunting to a lesser man, Cain saw potential. He wondered. He dreamed.

CAIN lies on his back admiring the sky, LUCE beside him.

CAIN
Father says it was beautiful.

LUCE
It was and it wasn’t. There wasn’t anything ugly to compare it to.

CAIN
And you’re off again.

LUCE
What?

CAIN
Defining things by their opposites. “You can’t be happy unless you’ve known sadness.” “You can’t rejoice the dawn without enduring the night.”

LUCE
Am I wrong?

CAIN
Father thinks you are.

LUCE
You haven’t told--
CAIN
No, of course not. But he thinks Eden would have been enough for both of them.

LUCE
I don't think Eve would have stayed even if I hadn't tempted her. She wanted too much.

And me?

CAIN
What do you want?

LUCE
(With fervor, with hope)
I want to plant green fields and rows upon rows of seeds. I want the trees and crops I plant to span centuries and nourish my children, and my children's children, and their children. I want to be the seed that cultivates generation upon generation of families.

LUCE
(Laughing)
And here I thought Eve had wanted a great deal. You to live forever in the gardens and groves that you plant.

CAIN
Father thinks I'm too ambitious. He says I have too much of my mother in me.

LUCE
One of the things I like about you.

CAIN
I think he prefers Abel. Abel is perfect.

LUCE
There's no such thing anymore. Not since Eden.

CAIN
Maybe that's where he belongs.
LUCE
Are you jealous?

CAIN
"Jealous?"

A parallel. LUCE is startled and then amused.

LUCE
(To audience)
Clean slate. Spotless record. Square one.
(To CAIN)
You want what he has. Jealousy.

Is it wrong?

CAIN
You just have to make something of it.

How?

LUCE
Just what you said. Plant seeds. Nurture generations Take what might be wrong and use it to make a right. Use your jealousy as the means to a beautiful end. You have it in you, Cain. Just as your mother did.

CAIN
Now she's miserable.

LUCE
Perhaps. But humanity has outgrown Eden and perfection. For better or for worse, here you are. What will you do for it?

CAIN dreams.

For better or for worse.
EVE
(Offstage)
Cain! It’s time to make our offerings!

CAIN
(Apologetically)
I have to go.

LUCE
I’ll see you again?

CAIN
Without fail.

CAIN withdraws.

HE
(A summoning)
The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

ABEL is summoned by the call of his God. He is far more sure of himself than CAIN, but also much smaller of spirit.

ABEL
Who are you?

LUCE does not let on if he is startled.

LUCE
A friend of your brother’s.

ABEL
Here to make your offering to God?

LUCE
I suppose you could call it that.
ABEL
I offered the firstlings of my flock. I believe He was pleased. What do you bring?

LUCE
The firstlings of mine.

ABEL
For sacrifice?

LUCE
For redemption.

ABEL suspects. Almost speaks, then:

A thunderclap. As before, LUCE is shaken to his very soul.

ABEL
Are you all right?

LUCE
Where is your brother?

ABEL
Making his offering.

LUCE
I have to find him.

ABEL
He should be out in the field, by the cypress tree.

ABEL withdraws.

LUCE
And I felt it. Like a knife through the heart. He, the famously all-loving Father of all mankind, rejected Cain’s offering. Perhaps it was part of the punishment. Perhaps He felt it was His duty to make life unfair for them—to continue to prove to them that an imperfect life is a sentence rather than an opportunity. Sounds a lot like what I’m supposed to be known for.
But whatever the cause, He turned away Cain’s offering, and jealousy coursed through Cain’s heart instead of blood.

LUCE searches.

CAIN is seething.

CAIN
Have I not worked dutifully enough in the fields? Have I seeded the land too haphazardly, or failed to plant the correct crops for this season?

LUCE
You are nothing if not dutiful and thorough.

CAIN
Then is it my countenance? Is my—jealousy—so great a fault that it outweighs the good I’m trying to do? Or is it simply my association with you that He is displeased with?

LUCE
Please believe me, Cain—it is no fault of yours.

CAIN
Then he simply prefers my brother, and there is nothing to be done but to bear it. If it isn’t a fault, how may I overcome it?

LUCE
You will find a way.

CAIN
Is this why you created sins? Selfish desires, jealous thoughts—does it amuse you to torment us?

LUCE
After all this time...I had hoped you knew me better.

CAIN
What does it accomplish? Why should I toil in the fields if my brother’s merest effort is rewarded so much more grandly?
LUCE
Because you could rise above him. Because by wanting to best him you might become something more--something beautiful--

CAIN
Something furious, and helpless, and broken! Father is right, we would have been better in Eden. At least there everyone was equal!

LUCE
And can you truly say you would have preferred that existence? Making no effort--or all the effort--and having it amount to exactly the same thing either way? The sweetness of fruit would have been as lackluster as the taste of sand. Love would be as empty as a clear blue sky.

CAIN
And you sit On High just like He does, and make these decisions for us. You simply decided one day what life should be for us, and you visited us with sin and torment for these grand noble purposes without a care for the consequences we would face!

LUCE
You of all people must know that there is a consequence for everything.

CAIN
Oh how could I forget? Condemned to crawl on your belly and eat dust. How very--

LUCE
No, Cain. That isn't even the beginning of it.

ADAM prays. And LUCE feels it.

ADAM
Lord forgive me, for my sins are great...

LUCE
The fear and shame Adam feels.

EVE longs. And LUCE feels it
EVE
No farther to fly...as fettered as I was before.

LUCE
The longing for more that Eve pretends to have outgrown.

ABEL makes an offering. And LUCE feels it.

ABEL
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever.

LUCE
The impossibly high standard that Abel holds himself to. Even the jealousy that turns your heart to ice. All of that pain. I endure it along with you. I carry it with me like a cloak of lead, and sometimes the weight is so great it’s all I can do to keep my stride.

CAIN
(Reeling)
But we could have stayed in Eden. Why would you choose pain?

LUCE
Because I remain convinced that a beautiful soul is worth the risk of suffering. The opportunity to become more...to help others reach that brilliance for themselves...that makes the pain worth it. I bear the darkness so the world can know the light.

HE
(A warning)
And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.

CAIN is shaken by HIS voice. The tension inside him builds.
All these pretty words were what drove us from Eden. Now they try to convince me that my brother’s superiority is beautiful. I will not be deceived as you deceived my mother! There is no strength in failure. There is no beauty in suffering!

CAIN flees.

LUCE
Cain—please, you must believe that I have never meant to deceive you!

CAIN climbs a summit to cry to the heavens.

CAIN
How have I displeased you? What has Abel done that I have not? What can I do to prove myself worthy?

HE
Why art thou wroth? And why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?

CAIN
Tell me how to achieve whatever you want me to achieve! Tell me how to be whoever you want me to be!

HE
And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.

CAIN
How do I do well? Tell me what to do!

HE
There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.
CAIN
(Desperate)
I CAN'T!

There is no reply from HE.

ABEL appears, tending his flocks.

CAIN watches hungrily.

CAIN (CONT'D)
Endure, overcome--Empty guidance without solace or strategy.

LUCE
Cultivate new fields. Nurture new generations.

CAIN
Take it on faith that you are strong enough to survive one more day. One more moment.

LUCE
Don't be afraid to want more. Want beauty. Want affirmation.

CAIN
I'll tell you what I want. I want respite from the gnawing jealousy. I want to bury the fear that I will never be worthy. I want to be neither God's nor the devil's.

CAIN fixates on ABEL.

CAIN (CONT'D)
I want to never be less than another again.

LUCE
Cain--don't make the mistake of thinking your faults can be solved by lashing out. When Eve sinned, she didn't force Adam to follow her. She offered him the choice. You can want to be more than Abel, but don't punish Abel for being more this time.

Crushing silence.
LUCE (CONT’D)

Cain?

CAIN (Softly)
Am I my brother’s keeper?

A stab.

ABEL and LUCE cry out in unison.
Agony of both body and soul.

ABEL falls, bathed in red light
before the darkness swallows him.

The release of death does not visit
LUCE.

In the darkness:

CAIN (CONT’D)
I didn’t want it to hurt so much--I’m sorry--I’m sorry...

LUCE
He regrets and hates all at once.

EVE
Abel? My child--my secondborn--

LUCE
She mourns the physical death of one child and the spiritual
death of the other.

ADAM
You wolf--you monster--your own blood!

LUCE
He rages, questioning for the first time the benevolence of
his god. They are betrayed; grief-stricken; caught in fury.
They weep. Scream. Ache.

LUCE laughs and sobs at once.
LUCE (CONT'D)
And the irony is that I always thought that pain would be the ultimate cost. But the price that I pay is so much worse. Above all else, I want to believe that sin is a facilitator of beauty, rather than its destroyer. And yet--

ADAM
(A shadow)
Countries are locked in eternal warfare so bloodthirsty they can hardly remember the cause they fight for.

EVE
(A shadow)
Faiths loathe each other so absolutely they give the lie to the eternal love they believe in.

ABEL
(A shadow)
Arbitrary divisions create such fathomless chasms that reaching an understanding between the two is as impossible as sewing up the air.

CAIN
(A shadow)
Is this the vision you dreamed of when you took the shape of the snake?

LUCE
Eve gave me so much hope, but then after Cain, I began to wonder--maybe there isn’t anyone else capable of withstanding temptation. Maybe I’ve created a cliffside so steep that no being has the strength to surmount it. The pain is nothing. It is my constant companion; I have come to understand it as intimately as my breath itself. But as humankind grows exponentially, I stand alone waiting for the one person who will be able to prove me right. One person to do something so absolutely beautiful, even in the face of terrible adversity, that I need never fear myself again. One person--

EVE
One sunrise.
CAIN

One seed.

The pain is overwhelming. LUCE struggles to endure.

LUCE

You might be wondering how I know that anyone is even capable of committing this beautiful act. That’s the terror of it...I don’t. Eve was, but since then...I haven’t found anyone who had the fire in their belly and the strength to keep it from devouring them whole.

LUCE searches the audience.

LUCE

Do you realize that any one of you— you could be Eve reborn? Someone who did not see their faults as deadweights, but as potential for growth and newfound strength. Someone who could see how much beauty the world is capable of, if a few people were willing to suffer a little to make it that way. One person cannot erase the ugliness of the world, but they might be a beacon to guide more beauty to the surface.

LUCE weakens.

LUCE

The night will always be black. But even if only a few stars glimmer, their brilliance keeps the darkness at bay.

LUCE dreams.

End of play.