

Chapter 1



BANISHED

Based on Genesis 3



I walk in Eden. Dappled light paints shifting patterns on my legs and arms as my feet sink into a lush moss carpet. My steps unleash the scent of green growth mingling with the hints of lemon and spice which lace the air in this part of the garden. I stop a moment. Listen. How can I begin to describe Eden's music? It's the sigh of the wind, the chorus of birdsong, the buzz and snuffles and purrs of all the

creatures in our care. It fills and thrills, inviting every voice, even my own, to join in the chorus.

I do not sing today. I only listen. Yearning to hear, just one more time, another voice—*his* voice. Rumbling with laughter or humming an ancient tune or calling my name.

Eve.

Only he can infuse that single word with such deep, tender love. But his voice is silent.

“Eve.”

Despite the jarring voice, I try to cling to the remnants of my dream world—the serenity, sweet air and sounds of life. Yet this voice is insistent.

“Eve!”

I open my eyes. Adam stands over me, face creased with impatience. “It grows late. The goat needs milking.”

Momentarily, confusion courses through me. Why did the larks’ dawn-lullaby not wake me? Then I remember. Eden is gone. That was a different life, one lost long ago. A familiar grief tightens my throat and the refrain of my banished days whispers once more through my heart: *What have I done?*

Together, Adam and I toil in the heat of the day, clearing the ground of thistles and thorns, digging trenches for the seed from our last, meagre crop. My back aches when I finally sink down next to him at the fire that night. We sit in silence, watching the sky grow dark enough to reveal the stars.

“Do you miss Elohim’s voice?”

Adam startles at my question. The past has become a jagged, seldom-breached wall between us. In the beginning, we cried together, drawing comfort from our shared loss. Over time, the shame of what we had done turned to brittle blame and resentment. But our endless, useless *if only you hadn’t* finally gave way to an uneasy avoidance of everything linked to our past life.

“I dreamt I walked in Eden last night,” I continue. “Do you remember that part of the garden where the lemon trees grew?”

He nods, and even in the low light of the fire, I see the sudden wistful look in his eyes as he says, “The air always smelled of lemon and spice there. And the foxes had a burrow near the two largest trees.”

“Yes. I’d almost forgotten.”

Perhaps the silence that follows is a little lighter.

“I do yearn to hear his voice,” Adam says when only the echo of my question remains. “I wonder if he yearns for us, too.”

It’s a startling thought. I imagine Elohim walking through Eden alone with only the animals for company. Of course, he could go talk to those sentries with the flaming swords that he posted at the edge of the garden. Briefly, I wonder if they are still there.

“If he wanted and loved us so much, he wouldn’t have banished us.”

Adam looks up sharply. “That sounds like something the Deceiver would say.”

“It’s true, isn’t it?”

“Nothing the Deceiver says is true. He promised us safety and we got fear. He promised us knowledge and we’re lost and confused. He told us we would be like Elohim—and look at us now.” He holds his arms out wide. “No glory, no joy, no peace or purpose. Every day just a struggle to survive.”

I sense that we’re drawing close to a quarrel, so I retreat into the silence. It’s not only Elohim I miss—it’s Adam, too. He was different in Eden. There, he looked at me like I delighted him and he spoke to me with gentleness. We laughed much and played often. Adam was so easy to love in Eden.

“Eve.” Some of the old gentleness is back in his voice as he tentatively draws me into an embrace. “I don’t think Elohim stopped loving us when he banished us from Eden.”

“How can you say that?”

“Because sometimes I hear his voice in the whisper of a breeze. And with every seed that grows, I know he has not forgotten us, that he nurtures us still.” He looks up and I follow his gaze to the star-laden

sky. “I sense his majesty in the heavens every night. The stars remind me of him.”

If I’m honest, they remind me of him, too, but it’s not the same as walking side-by-side with him.

Adam seems to know my thoughts. “And the more I think about it, the more I think Elohim has a plan.”

“A plan for what?”

“Restoration.” He speaks quickly before I can object. “Remember the last thing he said to the Deceiver?”

I shake my head. All I remember is standing before Elohim with my head bowed, awash with shame at my near nakedness and the knowledge of what I had done.

“He said the Deceiver would strike at our offspring’s heel, but that *he* would crush the Deceiver’s head. Don’t you understand?” Adam’s words are suddenly animated. “One day, a child of our line will destroy that evil serpent forever.”

“The Deceiver is too clever and powerful for that.”

“Elohim can do it.”

As I draw deeper into Adam’s arms, a slight breeze tugs at the ends of my hair, and for just a moment, I hear the smallest whisper of a voice. Just a sigh—*Eve*—filled with longing. Then it is gone.

But in the morning when I awake, something has changed inside me. The shame has lifted and the refrain of regret is quiet. The first chords of a new song ring through my heart. I sense it is a song of hope.

REFLECTION

Adam was so easy to love in Eden.

I've thought of that line a great deal since I wrote 'Banished'. This side of Eden, it's difficult to imagine a place where love pervades my every word and action. Where another's interests are more important than my own. Where my strong desire to do things my way doesn't cause division and resentment.

Difficult as it is to admit, nowhere is this selfishness more evident than in my marriage. The heady romance of the early years is long gone, replaced with a predictable routine. In courtship, we disregarded one another's flaws and focused only on each other's positive qualities, but somewhere over the course of time, that switched. Now his familiar weaknesses grate me, while his strengths go unnoticed or are taken for granted.

On the day the serpent's venom spread through humanity's bloodstream, something changed. We lost our closeness and connection to God, but the loving connection with each other was also poisoned.

Yet Eve was right to hope. You and I can hope, too—not only for restoration with God, but also for reconciliation with each other. The good news is that this hope is not just an eternal one. It is a hope for today.

I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full (John 10:10). These are the words of Jesus, the one Elohim would send to crush the Deceiver's head. To me, his words speak of an abundance of love, forgiveness and grace in every relationship, even those we struggle with or in which we have been wronged. It speaks of harmony and joy in our marriages, families and friendships. It speaks of how things were before the fall.

The Gospel is filled with examples of Jesus modelling this kind of love. Even better, Jesus gives us his Spirit to enable us to do what we—children of Adam and Eve—could never do ourselves: love as God intended us to in Eden.

PRAYER

My Lord,

I have slipped so very far from Love, from You.

So far that I no longer hear your Fatherly voice

although it whispers in every breeze, roars in every wave.

So far that I no longer see your Creator's face

although it blossoms in every flower, sings in every birdcall.

So far that I no longer sense your Kingly power

although it stretches, limitless, across the night sky.

I have slipped so very far from Love, from You.

So far that I furtively snatch decaying fruit

although you prepare a feast, set my place at your royal table.

So far that I hide myself, ashamed of your eyes on my love-stripped
soul

although you offer me a white robe, procured with crimson blood.

So far that the coals of my love are dying embers

although you call me to a red-hot fire where love reignites.

Forgive me Lord, for slipping so very far from Love, from You.

Let me turn

to hear your voice,

see your face,

sense your power.

Let me return

to your table, dressed in your robes of righteousness

and to love with a heart of fire.

Draw me back to Love, to You.

Amen

DEEPER IN THE WORD

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel (Genesis 3:15).

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full (John 10:10).

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:17-19).