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What if...

A fantasy based very loosely on the Eden story.

in Genesis 2:4b-3:24

by Ralph Milton

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Way back when, at the very beginning of things, there was a God with an unpronounceable name. Something like "Yahweh". Probably close, but nobody was sure.

Now this Yahweh, being after all, well, God, shouldn't have *needed* anything. But this God was the *only* God and therefore all alone. And, well, Yahweh was lonely.

So Yahweh started making things. And in each little creation, Yahweh invested love. Deep love.

Yahweh loved making things. Round things like worlds and growing things like dandelions and creeping things like worms. And things that walked and ran.

It was fun too. Yahweh raced with the gazelle, and of course won hands down because Yahweh was God and therefore the best at everything.

And Yahweh made faces at the chimp and the chimp really broke up laughing because God could make funnier faces than anyone.

But the gazelles and the chimps and all the other animals were mostly concerned with necessary things like eating and copulating and bearing offspring.

In those days, the animals could talk. And Yahweh had interesting conversations with them. Interesting and sometimes frustrating.

There were two words the animals never used. "What if..."

Yahweh used those two words constantly.

"What if, instead of having babies come out of eggs, we grew them in their mother's stomach?"

None of the animals could understand that. "I laid a two-hundred pound egg last week," said the elephant. "I was going for a record, and now you decide to change it."

"What if you had a three-hundred pound baby instead?" Yahweh asked. "Then it'd be ready to go. You wouldn't have to sit on it for sixteen months."

"I suppose. But we never did it that way before," said the elephant.

The birds and the insects and reptiles seemed to be the most conservative of all. "No way, Jose!" said the bluejay. "I like sitting on eggs. I like it! I like it!"

"So all right already!" said Yahweh. "What if birds, insects and reptiles did eggs and the rest of you had the new improved instant kid?"

"What if...What if..." said the baboon."Can't you leave things alone instead of creating all the time?"

"No, I can't. That's who I am," said Yahweh. "You're a survivor. I'm a creator. And oh, how I'd like someone to create with me."

"Here we go again," said the dinosaur.

"What if..." Yahweh said kind of introspectively... "What if I made something that's a little like both of us. What if we called it a 'human'?"

Yahweh God was silent for awhile. Then, "Let us make a human in *our* image. A being that's going to be like you animals in all kinds of ways. An animal that can run like the gazelle and make stupid faces like the chimp... a being that will be preoccupied with necessary things like eating and copulating and bearing young and staying alive"

Yahweh paused for a moment. "But this being, this human, will be like me too. This human will know what it's like to be God. This human will understand the difference between good and evil. This human will get the point of a joke. This human will know how to love. This human will understand the words, 'what if...!'"

So Yahweh God went to work. Yahweh took some of the dust of the ground, moistened it with the water of life, and shaped it into a beautiful creature called human.

Then Yahweh held the new being close, like a mother cradling a new infant, and gently breathed the breath of life into this new creation.

And the human – the human became a living soul!

The animals gasped. The human was beautiful. Just beautiful.

Yahweh looked and smiled at the human. "Behold," Yahweh said, "this is *very* good."

Yahweh and the human had a wonderful time together. Yahweh and the human loved to begin sentences with "What if..."

But some of the animals were much more logical than God. They pointed out a small flaw in the divine plan.

"Ah, God," said the orangutan. "You said this human was going to be like us animals...preoccupied with necessary things like eating and copulating. The eating part is no problem. The human manages to eat alone, all right. But if you have a copulator, you also have to have a copulatee."

"Good point," said God. "But I'll go you one better. I created this human to love. So the human will need more than just another human to copulate with and bear offspring with.

"I'll create a partner, so that humans will be able to do far more than copulate. They will be able to make love."

Yahweh repeated those words. "To make love. And it will be a sacrament."

That was another wonderful word. "A sacrament," Yahweh said quietly.

"And these humans, out of their love making, and because they will understand a little of what sacredness means, they will be able to create the world *with* me."

So God made another human, very much like the first but different in just the right ways and places.

Then the great God Yahweh looked at the two humans standing there, bare naked and beautiful. And God loved them and gave them names. Eve and Adam.

And Yahweh smiled a smile as wide as the rainbow.

Yahweh enjoyed creating with the humans...enjoyed the long "what if..." conversations they had strolling through the gardens.

But Yahweh also was just a little worried. The humans were getting a little careless about their creating. It was just too easy for them to say, "what if..." and ZAP, there it was.

Then Yahweh knew these humans were incomplete. Something was missing. It was fun creating with these humans, but they seemed so...

God wasn't sure what. The garden was perfect. Everyone was having fun. But it didn't seem to mean anything.

Suddenly God asked a whole new question. The question was "Why?"

God said to the humans. "I have a new question. It's even bigger than 'what if.' The question is 'why?'"

"I don't get it," said Adam.

"Why? What do you mean, 'why?'" said Eve.

There was a long, long pause.

Finally God said, "What if..."

"What if what?" asked Eve.

God was silent again. Then....

"Look, Eve. Adam. That tree over there? You can't eat any of the fruit off it, see. That's reserved for me. Touch it, and I'll stomp on you good. Y'hear?"

"What ever you say," shrugged Adam.

"But why?" Eve wanted to know.

"Never mind," said Yahweh. "Just do as you're told."

But Eve wondered. She thought she heard a challenge in Yahweh's order. Adam shrugged and walked off, but Eve sat down, looked at the tree, her eyes sparkling with the new challenge.

Eve made up a tall tale about a serpent tempting her (just in case God should catch her red handed) and then after dark one night, she snatched some of the fruit from the forbidden tree. And she slipped a few pieces into the salad Adam was making for supper. He never knew the difference.

Yahweh of course, knew the difference. After all, Yahweh was God. God knew everything.

"All right," God said. "Everybody out of the pool. You didn't play by the rules. You tried to think for yourselves. You tried to act on your own. So the party's over. Out!"

God sounded furious. But Eve thought she saw the hint of a smile in God's eyes.

Or was it perhaps that God was shedding a divine tear. Yahweh was both mother and father of this race of humans. Yahweh had enjoyed their childlike innocence, and it seemed like a shame for them to have to grow up so quickly.

It was both a tear and a smile. Yahweh, like all parents felt both joy and pain, watching the kids go off into the world.

So God put heavenly arms around the couple and gave them a hug. "You're going to have to work for your food," God said to them somewhat sadly. "But the work will build strength. Work will put you in touch with the earth from which you were formed.

"And you are going to know pain and danger and anger and alienation and shame. And heartbreak."

Eve and Adam could feel that great heavenly body quake. God was crying.

"I'm sorry it has to be this way," Yahweh said to them very softly. "But if you don't know about pain and danger and alienation and shame, you'll never know about joy and comfort and love and community and ecstasy.

"And death too. You've got to die so that you can live."

"But why?" Eve asked.

"You will never understand," said Yahweh, "but if you remember how we created this world together, and how much I love you, then sometimes, just for an instant, you will know."

So Adam and Eve went off to start the human race. And Yahweh grinned and cried at their naked buttocks bouncing away from paradise and into the world.

"Be fruitful and multiply," God said. "Fill the earth. You're in charge of it. Be gentle with our creation."

As the couple turned for one final wave, God called out, "Don't forget to call home. Often! Please."

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