

Let me tell you a story as old as time: the story of Adam and Eve  
It starts with a god who wanted more  
God had just created the heavens and the earth  
He had the angels by his side, but they had no will of their own  
And so the autonomy to love or reject him was never theirs  
All but for one: the one was called Bringer of Light: Lucifer Morningstar  
Lucifer was the fairest and most intelligent of all the angels  
He was the closest thing to God's image, and in his likeliness, Lucifer felt restless  
He began to question and doubt God; He doubted the hierarchy opposed upon him  
He felt God was arrogant  
In his frustration, Lucifer built a throne that stood even above God - and declared mutiny  
A war ensued; God being all powerful, came out the victor, and banished Lucifer from the heavens, and exiled him to Earth  
Once again, God was alone with his power  
Perhaps from loneliness, perhaps from curiosity, perhaps from a desire to share love  
God began to work on his greatest project yet: a being that would mirror himself: the human  
Two humans specifically: Adam and Eve  
They were placed on a paradise built for them on Earth: the Garden of Eden  
In the garden, God placed a tree that bore fruit that would grant anyone who ate it powers bestowed only to a god  
To tell good from evil, left from right, to live righteously, or to sin  
He named this the Tree of Knowledge  
God told Adam and Eve they could eat whatever they wanted in the garden, but never the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge, and if they disobeyed him, it would be punishable by death  
The basic way the story of Eden is told is that Eve was tempted by Lucifer in the form of a serpent to eat a fruit from the Tree of Knowledge  
Convinced, she bit the fruit, and she passed it to Adam, and he did the same  
Suddenly, ultimate knowledge filled their minds, and they realised they were naked, and felt shame  
God discovered this betrayal and felt angered, he exiled Adam and Eve, and cursed them with the life of a mortal  
They would work, they would bear children, and they would die: the fate of a human  
Now look deeper

And the story of the serpent tempted me, by telling me I would gain ultimate knowledge, and that god would spare me  
Both were true  
This wasn't some great deception, meaning that Satan, and the likeliness of God, perhaps understood his intentions  
In fact, the only lie uttered in the Garden of Eden was by God, who did not end up condemning Adam and Eve to death  
This could be seen as an act of mercy, but the sheer fact that the tree existed, and that humans were initially cut off from this knowledge may imply some part of God was afraid  
That if humans were granted the gift of perception, they, like Lucifer, would have the power to reject him too

The fact that there stood a beautiful tree, that could grant this knowledge in the first place, implies that a small part of God, supposedly all-knowing, perhaps wanted and intended the humans to bite too

In the bible, Satan was an exiled angel of free will  
Humans are exiled descendants of Adam and Eve also with free will  
Not only do we share the similar fate to the devil, we were also both constrained in the image of our creator  
Meaning our behaviours, in some shape or form, imperfectly echo his  
We could assume that this kind of god had his doubts as the most powerful being in the universe  
He has no one above him to turn to with questions, and no one to doubt but himself - an incredibly lonely and isolated existence  
We must only assume that the common thread between God, Lucifer, and us is the desire for more: an eternal curiosity  
A desire perhaps birthed from a seed of loneliness: if not, why would we exist in the first place?

The constantly looping bittersweet irony is whether gifted by some omnipotent god, or simply a by-product of billions of years of evolution  
Here we stand, in 2023, as creatures with free will  
The only creatures that understand and define good from bad  
Creatures with the potential of a god  
And what do we do with that free will, my friends?  
We willingly walk to the edge of a cliff  
In the name of progress, we jump off the precipice  
The empires we build ravage the earth  
The natural order of things are necessary to survive: any systems which do not honor homeostasis eventually perish  
Our free will overrides our own biological instinct  
We can take more than we eat, we can kill more than we need, we can willingly create weapons with the potential to burn everything we built to the ground  
We willingly decide to bow to the altar of greed, the most insidious and destructive of all sins  
We put our faith in corporations who pose as rulers  
We willingly allow ourselves be overruled by outdated power systems, ran by corrupted politicians and bloated dictators, who claim domain and dominion over an open and free land  
We willingly elect the corrupted when the decision was always asked to build something better  
We willingly create an opposed apparition because of ideas we are forced through our phones and television sets  
We always have the will to reject these things, but we adhere to them, as if they were the laws of physics

War, famine, pestilence, greed  
These aren't things imposed upon us by an all-powerful god, or by his demonic adversary: they are here because of us  
Not because of free will, but because of our inability to use it  
We must be motivated to be better, not out of fear of an eternal damnation, but because the choice exists: because we love ourselves  
Because we have the power to absolve ourselves of so much unnecessary suffering  
Take a second to be in this very moment  
In this moment, how much suffering is happening all over the planet, right now?  
How many people are dying of illnesses that could've easily been cured, but aren't because of the selfishness and greediness of humanity?  
How many people break their backs and reject their own passions to simply afford bills and food?  
How many of us crave distraction from existence?  
How many of us numb that pain in whatever way necessary?  
How many children are being abused?  
How many people sleep cold and hungry on the streets?  
How many people become cogs inside a machine that's destroying itself?  
How many soldiers have been forced to fight in meaningless wars?

How many humans have killed for ideals they don't believe in or understand?  
How many people have died to the greed of another man?  
And how much of this was avoidable?

As written in the Bible, "Satan was not condemned to hell, Satan was condemned to Earth

He lives there, amongst other creatures with free will, who always have the choice, and still chose their own undoing"

Ladies and gentlemen, this is our self-made hell

The bittersweet irony is this is a creation of our own design

I'll leave you with this:

Consider what you have done here today

You have worked together, as individuals, collaborating to form a giant neural network

A hivemind, capable of achieving incredible things

We have lent on each other's strengths to solve puzzles, and decipher riddles, and we've done so to win money

Imagine applying that same spirit and determination to creating the closest thing we have to paradise, here on Earth

By using the power of collaboration we can work together to even the playing field for everybody

Our dystopias can become utopias, our jahannams can become 'jannah, our hells can become heaven, right here on Earth

And this sentiment applies to atheists, agnostics and believers alike

Myself, I'm an agnostic who believes

I believe in us

We must do better, because we can choose to

We must be better, simply because the option exists

Thank you