

COVER PAGE

## **Adam & Everett**

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~ 1696 words

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## Adam & Everett

“Adam!” The ground shuddered, and echoes of the stentorian voice tumbled among the distant hills like drunken thunder, and many valleys called his name again, the sound of their shouts dissolving away like a summer cloud.

“Yes, Lord?” When a disembodied voice speaks to you by name, particularly if you’re the only person on earth, you may be inclined to accord it a special status. (*You can’t cause earthquakes, or command floods, or turn people to salt, can you?*)

“Look, I know you’ve been kind of down in the dumps, as it were, so I’m giving you this incredible, beautiful, magical place to live in. You’ll love it. Whatever you want, it will be. You should be happy here.”

Well, who wouldn’t? Who couldn’t? The place was so magical that Adam was barely able to detect some discomfiture before its alleviative appeared. Food, flowers, a soft bed, clear water, even fish and chips were at his beck and call. But after a week or so he began to develop a vague unease. One day he decided to mention it.

“Lord?” He was standing on the lawn in front of his little bower of lotus blossoms and he just sort of spoke toward the tops of the trees, as if he were addressing someone very tall.

“What?” The earth trembled and a nearby ash tree tottered and toppled over onto Adam’s tulip beds.

“Damn,” Lord murmured under his breath (but still loudly enough that Adam heard it very well). “Guess that *wasn’t* Yggdrasil.”

Then, more loudly, Lord said, “Well? What is it?”

“I’m bored.”

“Bored, huh? Well, let’s see. I could send you a little weather. Say, a hurricane, a tornado, incessant rain, a blizzard, a drought – what’ll it be?”

“Um, no, I don’t think that’s it.”

“Okay, give me a minute. Hey, I know! How about an infestation of snakes? That’ll keep you busy. Big, poisonous ones, that droop from trees and drop on you in the middle...”

“I don’t like snakes.”

Lord seemed a bit exasperated. “Well, what *do* you want?”

“I don’t know. That’s just it. Well, you know, maybe someone to talk to.”

“So what am I? Chopped liver?”

Every time Lord spoke in that big, booming voice, a few lotus blossoms fell out of Adam’s bower.

“Well, no,” Adam said warily, “I guess not—I mean, I don’t know what...”

“It seems you talk to me whenever you bloody well feel like it, *n’est pas*? You don’t even bother to inquire whether I’m busy, do you?” He emphasized the word “busy” with such gusto that the water in a nearby lake suddenly receded many cubits from the shoreline and then came rushing back like a tidal wave, washing over Adam’s sandals and soaking his socks.

“Well, I meant somebody, you know, my own size,” Adam stammered.

“Somebody my own age. And, um, visible, like me.”

“I wish I could remember how I got started with this, Adam. Creating stuff is a pain in the butt. First you make one thing and then you have to make another thing to complement the first thing. Where does it end? I have other things to do, you know.”

“I’m sorry if I exasperated you, Your Worship.”

“It’s Lord, Sonny. Lord. L-O-R-D. And don’t you forget it. Don’t be making up your own names. I do the names around here. And skip that worship stuff, I don’t have time for it.”

“Lord.”

“All right, I’ll do it. But this is it, you hear? One more whining, sniveling peep from you and you’re outta here, you got that?”

"Oh, yes, sir, Lord. Thank you, Lord."

"Good. And I'm sending some snakes along anyway to remind you."

"Yes, sir, Lord." He shivered involuntarily.

And there, suddenly, stood Adam's companion, Everett. And, under cover of the gathering twilight, a large purple snake slithered silently into the tulips.

But the great basso voice from the sky was not quite finished. "One more thing," it intoned sternly. "You get something, you gotta give up something. So henceforth, no more dingleberry fiestas. And no more smoking dingleberry roots, either. Otherwise, you're history. I mean it. And that goes for your doppelgänger, too."

Then there was a huge empty silence.

"He's really very busy," Adam said, smiling shyly, to his new friend.

"Yeah. I'm Everett. He's an asshole," Everett said, not the least bit respectfully, settling himself into the crotch of a baobab tree. "Listen, Adam is it? You got any snakes around here?"

"A few, I guess. I don't really cotton to them."

"Oh, no, man, dumb choice. Really, they're full of fun!" Everett's eyes got big. "You can coil them up and hold them next to your ear, and they'll tell you things." He leaped up excitedly. Adam noticed how blue and limpid his eyes were, how his full red lips quivered with impish delight. "C'mon," Everett said, extending an eager hand. "I'll show you."

Adam was hesitant. "I don't know. Maybe we should have something to eat first. Or wait until morning."

Without a word Everett plunged suddenly into the tall tulips and quickly lifted therefrom, into the air over his head, a writhing six-foot snake. "Voilà!" he cried triumphantly.

"Oy," said Adam. "It's so big."

Everett stroked the snake and whispered to it soothingly, which seemed to

hypnotize it, and then he coiled it carefully into a hollow cone, like a coiled rope in the shape of a bell, with the serpent's head, flanked by those two unblinking green eyes, rising from the center like a clapper. "Wanna try it?"

"No."

"It's easy," Everett assured him. "Watch." He held the snake against his ear, as if it were a giant conch, and listened intently. "Hello? Hello?" he clowned.

Adam heard the snake hiss. It was loud. It must have been almost deafening to Everett, who nonetheless seemed quite unperturbed, even delighted.

"Loud," Adam said uneasily, cupping his hands over his ears.

Everett laughed. Adam marveled at what a wonderful laugh it was, bright and melodic, and it reminded him of little flecks of sunlight dancing on rippled water.

"Sure you don't want to try it?" Everett asked, stuffing the viper into a large satchel pocket in the front of his puffy pantaloons.

"No. What did it say?"

"It said: smoke, smoke, smoke that dingleberry root and then you'll see the light."

"But that's forbidden. Didn't you hear the word of the Lord?"

"*The* Lord? I thought his *name* was Lord. Now all of a sudden it's *The Lord*. He's moving up. Anyway, Lord schmord, wouldn't you like to see a little light? Listen, who's your friend around here, anyway? Me, right? Mister *the* Lord put me here for you, yes? Man, you are the original party-pooper. No wonder you were bored before I came."

Adam thought of calling out to the Lord but he was hectored by misgivings as he recalled the Lord's evident annoyance at his last outcry. And Everett did seem to have a point.

"C'mon," Everett chided him, "you can't pass through the swamps of life without getting your feet wet."

Adam's feet were already wet—the Lord had splashed them with that receding-lake *cum* tsunami trick—and Adam noticed again that Everett was really stunningly

good-looking, and that he moved with the catlike grace and power of a, well, a god.

So they sat beneath the baobab tree and smoked a couple of yards of dingleberry root and feasted on the ripe, succulent crimson berries. The snake even joined in. Over and over, Everett would peel a berry and toss it off toward the serpent's soft, pinkish, orchidlike maw, its slender fangs retracted almost out of sight as it swayed slowly in the night air, left and right, left and right. The snake caught every one.

"God, I'm stoned," Adam said blearily.

"Huh," muttered the snake contemptuously. "Didn't think you'd recognize me."

"Hey, Adam," Everett called, his dark eyes glistening in the light of the campfire, his lithe, tan body undulating to the haunting, contrapuntal rhythms of suddenly audible jungle drums. "Want to give a listen to the coil now? I mean, we're all friends here, yes?"

The snake hissed, and flicked out its black tongue, and curled itself obligingly into a cone again with those unmoving, lidless eyes staring up from the bottom. Adam thought he detected just a hint of a smile creeping across its – well, lips. He bent down to put his ear over the opening and next to those beady, icy, serpentine little eyes. The snake purred softly.

"Good news," it whispered with just the hint of a conspiratorial giggle. "Guess what? While I was in Everett's pocket, when he was 'way too stoned to notice, I turned him into a *woman*."

Adam glanced over at Everett, now recumbent and gazing dreamily into the fire, wearing only a brief black teddy. God, he had nice long legs. "Uh-huh," he said. "What's a woman?"

The snake snickered. "Who in hell knows? All I can tell you is, once they get you twisted up like this, you have to give 'em whatever they want, whenever they want it."

"Adam!"

All the leaves in the forest rustled. The water in the lake rippled, and then stood

motionless. A small gray cloud veiled the moon. The crickets were suddenly silent. The fire's light became a steady glow. The voice was surreal as always but now it seemed somehow different.

"Yes, Lord?"

"No, darling, it's me – Eve! Come over here and wrap yourself around me, sweetheart. I'm feeling chilly."

Adam stared at the firm and flowing figure by the fire. It stretched languorously and glanced up at him with large soft eyes and smiled shyly and pursed its lips ever so slightly.

"Lord?" Adam shouted out desperately. "Oh, Lord! Hey, Lord!" But there was no response.

"Listen," said the snake, "it's been loopy, but I gotta go. I've got a late gig as a walking stick. And hide the dingleberry root. He gets unjovial about it. I used to have legs, you know." And, so saying, it uncoiled itself and dropped from Adam's grasp and slithered off into the darkness.

And that's how it all began.