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Dramatic Publishing

SEARCHING FOR EDEN: the diaries of adam and eve

By
JAMES STILL

Adapted and inspired by Mark Twain's short stories
"Extracts from Adam's Diary" and "Eve's Diary."



Dramatic Publishing

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(SEARCHING FOR EDEN: THE DIARIES OF ADAM AND EVE)

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Judy Boals, Inc., 307 W. 38th St., #812, New York NY 10018
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Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf's a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.

— Robert Frost

“Marriage is the deep, deep peace of the double bed after
the hurly-burly of the chaise longue.”

— Mrs. Patrick Campbell

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“The play was originally produced by the
American Heartland Theatre, Kansas City, Missouri;
Paul Hough, Director of Production;
Lilli A. Zarda, Executive Director.”

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

There are many ways to approach adapting someone else's material into another form. In the case of *Searching for Eden*, there were a couple of immediate challenges, questions I had to ask myself before I could go forward. "Is there enough source material to adapt?" is always a legitimate question, but it's never the first question I ask myself. The first question is almost always the same: "Will this material make a good play?" The burning question for me is always, "Do I feel an emotional connection to the source material?" which is quickly followed by "Can I love the original material enough to make it my own?" I know this about myself as a writer: I write from the emotional center of the play, from that uneasy place where characters are often precariously off-balance, trying to find themselves in a world that is often out of control. The craft of structuring a story is complicated and full of pleasure for me—but it's the emotional life of the play that keeps me returning day after day to the characters and their attempts to connect and reconnect to the world around them. And so it was with *Searching for Eden*.

About the title: what drew me to Twain's original stories was a deep sense of yearning. Beneath the hilarity and wit and devilish charm that Twain is still famous for a hundred years later, it was the yearning that struck me to the heart. Later I would discover that Twain wrote "Eve's Diary" not long after his wife's death, and knowing that made his stories of Adam and Eve that much more poignant for me. But then one day, in spite of my real affection for Twain's stories and my eagerness to see them live on stage, there was the nagging reality that I would have to find an organic solution to the fact that Twain's short stories are, indeed, short. So how to make it a full and satisfying evening in the theater? I can't describe exactly how it happened—but I re-

member the shock and thrill of discovering Act Two of *Searching for Eden* and then suddenly running to catch up with my play which was already racing ahead of me by then. I had been struck by a line in Twain's "Extracts from Adam's Diary" where Eve makes a remark about the Garden being a wonderful summer resort (and admitting that she had no idea what a summer resort is!)—and I kept thinking about that funny, sly observation. At the same time I was really struck by the notion that Adam and Eve were the first lovers, the first couple, the first marriage, and when you dare to remove the myths surrounding their story, you're left with a love story, a relationship, the first relationship, two people who felt like they were the only people on Earth! What could be more universal? Soon I was wondering about Adam and Eve AFTER their famous time in the Garden. Soon I was asking myself, "I wonder whatever happened to Adam and Eve...?" Act Two is my response to that question. While there is a theatrical conceit at work in the play's structure, I explored that question with real intention. Who did Adam and Eve become, in their 40s, nearing middle age, who did they become, and how did their marriage change? And if they were in their 40s TODAY, what careers might they have settled into, what patterns from their youth have they continued to repeat, which ones have defined them as adults, and which ones are they still desperately trying to change after thousands of years of marriage? I think anyone who's been married or in a relationship with another person for any length of time has felt like they've been with that other person for "a thousand years." *Searching for Eden* takes that feeling and puts it into story.

On a personal note, I'd like to thank Mark Twain for lending me his stories and for keeping me such good company.

— James Still

SEARCHING FOR EDEN premiered at the American Heartland Theatre (Lilli Zarda, Executive Director) in Kansas City, Missouri, on September 5, 2003. Direction was Paul Hough, scenic design by Del Unruh, costume design by Mary Traylor, lighting design by Shane Rowse, sound design by Roger Stoddard and original music composed and performed by Anthony T. Edwards. The stage manager was William J. Christie. The cast was:

Adam Sean Grennan
Eve Barbara McCulloh

In a revised script, SEARCHING FOR EDEN opened at the Indiana Repertory Theatre (Janet Allen, Artistic Director and Danny Baker, Managing Director) in Indianapolis, Indiana, on May 6, 2005. Direction was by David Bradley, scenic design by Russell Metheny, costume design by Tracy Dorman, lighting design by Mary Louise Geiger, music and sound design by Michael Keck. The stage manager was Nathan Garrison. The cast was:

Adam David Alan Anderson
Eve Ora Jones

SEARCHING FOR EDEN: the diary of adam and eve

A Play in Two Acts
For 1 Man and 1 Woman

CHARACTERS

ADAM
EVE

THE SETTING: The Garden of Eden.

ACT ONE: The beginning of time.

ACT TWO: Thousands of years later.

There is one intermission.

ACT ONE

SUNRISE. *Spring. A garden. A reflecting pool. For sure: this is a place where invention is born. Language, creativity, and love will happen here.*

TITLE PROJECTION: "IN THE BEGINNING"

MUSIC: SIMPLE, MELODIC, ROCK 'N' ROLL.

(THE SOUND OF A TIGER'S ROAR, FOLLOWED BY THE LAUGHTER OF A MAN.)

A MAN [ADAM] tumbles on stage, obviously playing with an off-stage tiger—the way a boy plays with his puppy. ADAM throws a stick off-stage and runs off after it. Then ADAM re-enters, out of breath, looking around for the “next big thing” to play. Happy, simple, uncomplicated ADAM. He could be a surfer, a farm boy, a rock star. He’s your father many years ago. He pulls a piece of bark off of an apple tree and discovers writing:)

ADAM *(writing in a diary)*. Today I’m going to write down all my deepest thoughts. *(Thinking, for a beat; then:)* Wednesday! *(Beat.)* My deepest thoughts. *(ADAM hears the off-stage tiger roaring and happily hurries after it.)* To be continued! *(ADAM exits.)*

MUSIC: MYSTERIOUS, OTHER-WORLDDLY. BIRTH.

(THE LIGHTS FADE ON EVERYTHING EXCEPT THE REFLECTING POOL WHICH SEEMS TO GLOW FROM WITHIN. Suddenly, from the reflecting pool a WOMAN [EVE] SHOOTS UP OUT OF THE WATER, gasping for breath. Sitting in the water and dripping wet, she takes several fast, deep breaths, as if learning in this instant how to breathe. She is surprised, unknowing.)

EVE. Who am I? *(Beat, looks at her reflection in the pool.)*
What am I? *(Looking around, wide-eyed.)* Where am I?

(ADAM re-enters. ADAM and EVE do not see each other, they are not in the same space. ADAM might be playing with a rock, discovering gravity—"what comes up, must come down.")

ADAM. Thursday! *(ADAM suddenly notices the sky.)*
Cloudy today. Wind in the east. Maybe it'll rain.
(Shrugs.) Maybe it won't.

(EVE crawls out of the pool, stays on all fours like a wild animal, looks around.)

EVE. I am almost a whole day old now. I arrived yesterday. I think. Yesterday!?! I think I just invented that word!

ADAM. Friday! *(Thinking, then triumphant:)* T.G.I.F.!
(ADAM exits.)

(EVE slowly rises to her feet, wobbly, like a newborn colt.)

EVE. Day Two: I must have arrived yesterday because if there was a day-before-yesterday I wasn't there when it happened. I would remember. But maybe I didn't notice, maybe it did happen and I wasn't paying attention. And if I wasn't paying attention I wonder what else I might have missed? I might have missed EVERYTHING and didn't know it. *(EVE tries to take her first step and quickly loses her balance, falls on her face. Splat.)* From now on I'm going to be very watchful so that if any more days-before-yesterday happen I'll be sure to notice them.

MUSIC: SURF MUSIC.

(ADAM enters like he's riding the waves.)

ADAM. Saturday: the perfect day to go over the falls! I like riding the water, the plunge, the excitement, the coolness! *(ADAM runs off.)*

(EVE rises carefully, tries to walk again. This time she is more successful. She walks, more and more confident, thrilled by her achievement. Then she stops and suddenly gets very serious. She looks around, intense, intent:)

EVE. I'm starting right now. Noticing. Everything. *(EVE holds her hand in front of her mouth.)* My breath. *(EVE touches her heart.)* My heart. *(Surprise.)* Beats! *(EVE*

holds both hands out in front of her, looking at them.) My hands. (EVE's hands glow with light. In wonder, she turns her hands over and looks at the palms, as if she's reading them like a fortuneteller.) My future.

(EVE reaches up in the air with one hand like she's picking something out of the air. She repeats this motion several times, slowing down each time until it becomes more and more clear: it is the motion of someone picking an apple from a tree. She holds an imaginary apple in front of her and studies it—

A SIGN DROPS IN FROM HEAVEN, suspended in mid-air in front of EVE. It's a picture of a beautiful apple with a line drawn through it—like a “no smoking” sign. EVE GASPS, “drops” the imaginary apple like she's awoken from a nightmare, afraid. She runs off just as ADAM runs on. He's holding an apple and is about to take the first bite when he looks up and notices the sign. He quickly drops the apple.)

ADAM. Here's something: I've noticed that the water in the falls is always running downhill. I wonder if it ever runs Uphill? It must run uphill...it must run uphill in the dark when I can't see it! And THEN—it runs DOWNhill all day when it's light! The falls never goes dry, see, which it would if the water didn't run back uphill at night. I'm never around at the right time to watch it running Uphill. *(Thinks.)* Tonight I'm going to stay awake so I can see the water running uphill.

(EVE re-enters with more confidence, she's definitely mastered the art of walking.)

EVE *(looking out at the vista)*. Day Three: Things look better today than they did yesterday. I am less frightened today. *(Beat.)* Still...I have this constant—what do I call it? *(Searching for the word:)* Fading/failing/flailing/FEELING! I have this constant FEELING! *(Beat.)* No, there must be a better word for it, a better way to say it. “A speck of dust.” “The last sliver of lemon meringue pie.” What’s the feeling? A dry riverbed. The word—what’s the word? “Alone-me.” I feel—alone-me. LONELY! I feel LONELY. Lonely. Even the word SOUNDS lonely. I’m sure that’s it! I am LONELY! *(Beat, looking around.)* It is LONELY—here.

ADAM. It is peaceful here.

EVE. Oh, the birds and the tigers are good company. All of the animals are friendly, they never fight about anything. They all talk, and they all talk to me, but it must be a foreign language because I can’t make out a word they say. What’s even more embarrassing is that they seem to understand EVERYTHING I say. I love them. The tigers’ breath smells like strawberries.

ADAM. Sunday. *(Yawning.)* I think I finally figured out what the rest of the week is for—it’s to give me time to rest up from the exhaustion of Sunday.

EVE *(in the moment)*. Omygosh! Two meadowlarks—beak-to-beak!!! I call that— *(Aha!)* KISSING! Kissing. The word just came to me. I like the way it sounds. Kissing. I wonder what it FEELS like...

(AS THE SUN IS SETTING, EVE tries to mimic the way the birds kiss. That transforms into kissing the air like an awkward child. Then with great exuberance, LAUGHING. Her laughter dies down and she kisses the air tenderly, swooning. She's a pretty good kisser. Then she stops.)

EVE *(cont'd)*. Why does it feel silly when I do it? I lack—something. I don't know what it is. Something's missing. *(Searching.)* Something, something...I NEED something.

ADAM. I have everything I need.

EVE. Everywhere I look I see TWO of everything—two of everything and only one of me. All the other creatures have mates. I am the only thing that is alone.

ADAM. The other creatures all have mates. Poor things. I am the only one that is strong enough to be by myself.

EVE. I hate being by myself.

ADAM. I love being by myself.

EVE. What have I done wrong? Why am I here? Is there another one—something, someone out there who is like ME? I have made sure that I notice everything. *(Counting the animals.)* Two, two, two, two, two, two, two... *(Herself.)* One. Am I special? Or just very unlucky?

ADAM. I am very lucky.

EVE. The mountains seem unfinished, like they were left in a ragged condition, they even look angry the way they poke up at the sky. But then other land looks flat and dangerous in another way. Maybe it was all made too quickly. Or maybe there was an intermission/interception/INTERRUPTION! It all seems beautiful but—frag-

ile—like someone suddenly left, like a house with no one in it and breakfast still on the table, warm. And if whoever made all this left in a hurry—then— (*Stricken.*)

I am alone.

ADAM (*thrilled*). I am alone!

(*DAY TURNS TO NIGHT. A FULL MOON. STARS TWINKLE IN THE SKY.*)

EVE (*looking up at the full moon*). I asked two cows about the huge round thing up there with the stars and one of them said, “Mooooo.” I agreed that it was the perfect name. I wish we had five or six moos. I would never go to sleep. I would never get tired of looking up at the moos. (*Looking at the sky.*) Are the stars part of this place? Or is this place part of THAT place? How does all of this fit together and how do I fit in? (*Squinting up at the night sky.*) There are too many stars in some places and not enough in others. I could fix that. I could... What’s the word? Fix-it? Fork-lift...facelift/lip-stick/stickshift/shape-shift/ship-shape/re-shape/re-place/redecorate/RENOVATE! I could renovate!

ADAM. I like it here. I wouldn’t change a thing. (*ADAM exits.*)

EVE (*looking up at the stars*). I want some of those stars to put in my hair. Or I could make a necklace. If I plant a star in the ground will it grow into a tree? Will it burst/break/boom/BLOOM! with stars so I can shake the tree and let the stars rain down on me? (*EVE grabs a tree branch and takes several swings at the sky, trying to knock down a star or two. She’s very determined.*) I WANT ONE! (*EVE tries harder to knock a star down*

from the sky with the branch, using all her strength. Finally she gives up.) The stars are farther away than they look. *(EVE looks around for something else and picks up a small rock which she hurls up at the stars. She misses and hits ADAM.)*

ADAM *(offstage)*. Ow! Shit!

(ADAM enters, rubbing his head. He stops when he sees EVE. They look at each other. It is the first time they have ever seen each other. Neither one can speak, they don't know what the other is. They eye each other, carefully. It isn't exactly love at first sight. Then:)

ADAM & EVE *(simultaneous)*. <SCREAM>

(And then they both turn and run in opposite directions. THE SUN RISES AND IT BECOMES MORNING, ALL PINK AND BLUE. EVE sneaks back on, looking in all directions to make sure she isn't being followed.)

EVE. I hit it with a rock and I think it used language. It gave me a thrill because it was the first time I ever heard speech, except my own. *(Repeating ADAM's word, trying it out:)* "Shit." I didn't understand the word, but it seems very expressive.

(ADAM runs on out of breath, cautious, looking over his shoulder. ADAM and EVE do not see each other yet.)

ADAM. All night this new creature with the long hair has been following me everywhere!

EVE. All night I watched it from a distance, trying to figure out what it might be. (*ADAM and EVE see each other, freeze.*)

ADAM. I can't figure out what it is.

EVE. I can't figure out what it's for.

ADAM. I can't figure out what it wants. (*They begin to move toward and away from each other, some perverse dance.*)

EVE. At first, I was afraid of it, afraid it was going to chase me.

ADAM. It chases me everywhere! Why does it have to get so close???

EVE. I'm being very careful not to get too close. (*They look at each other, watching.*)

ADAM. I wish it would stop staring at me.

EVE. I wish it would do something.

ADAM. Why is it staring at me?

EVE. Why won't it look at me?

ADAM. If I don't look at it maybe it will stop staring at me.

EVE. It seems nervous. And unhappy.

ADAM. I don't know what it wants. (*ADAM climbs up in the tree.*)

EVE. Finally! It climbed up a tree.

ADAM. It chased me up this tree.

EVE. Maybe it's a monkey!

(*LIGHTS SHIFT—TIME PASSES.*)

EVE (*cont'd*). The next day, it's still up that tree.

ADAM. The next day, pulled through. Barely.

EVE. So far it seems to have no purpose. It doesn't DO anything.

ADAM. It's always DOING something.

EVE. It likes to sit.

ADAM. It never sits.

EVE. It would exhaust me to sit so much.

ADAM. Why is it always watching me???

EVE. What does it want?

ADAM. What does it want??? *(From the ground, EVE offers ADAM a banana. ADAM takes a piece cautiously, eating out of the palm of her hand...)*

EVE. I haven't come up with a name for it yet but I'm sure it's not a monkey. It doesn't seem smart enough to be a monkey.

ADAM *(grabbing the entire banana from EVE)*. Maybe it's some kind of banana tree.

EVE. Maybe it's a bug. *(ADAM tosses the banana peel to the ground.)* Maybe it's a litter bug. No, I think it's a reptile! But I feel more curiosity about it than I do for any of the other reptiles.

ADAM. I have named it "Thing Number Four-Hundred and Thirty-Two."

EVE. If it isn't a reptile then it's definitely architecture. It's like a statue, always sitting.

ADAM. "Thing Number 432" has an interesting shape.

EVE. It has no hips. It looks like a man. *(Eureka! an awakening.)* It's a man! This seems important. Because if this reptile is a man, then it isn't an IT, is it? That wouldn't be grammatical anyway. I think it would be a HE. I think so. In that case one would parse it thus: nominative HE; dative, HIM; possessive, HIS'N. Well. I'll con-

sider it a man and call it “HE” until it turns out to be something else.

ADAM. Whatever it is—hopefully it’ll be gone by morning. (*ADAM sneaks out of the tree and exits.*)

EVE. Since “he” was here before me, and since clearly I’m brighter and more interesting than him—I must have been created as an intruder/computer/IMPROVEMENT. I am an improvement! (*Beat.*) But who made us? And why are we here? (*Looking up at the sky.*) Where’s the moo? It must have gotten loose... It must have gotten loose and fallen out of the scheme/the school/the SKY. So: the moo got loose this morning and fell out of the SKY! That’s what I get for falling asleep and not paying attention. The moo is gone and it busts my heart, it RUSTS my heart, it BREAKS my heart to think about it. The moo should have been fastened better. Somebody took it— (*Aha!*) And I know who it was! (*EVE storms off in a fury.*)

(*ADAM sneaks on, out of breath, chased, disheveled, looking around for any sign of EVE. Maybe he’s wearing a disguise???*)

ADAM. Why doesn’t this new creature leave me alone? And what does it want from me? I hope it doesn’t plan on staying here—

(*EVE appears out of nowhere and tackles ADAM to the ground, catching him off guard. They wrestle around, fighting for their lives, one then the other in control. Finally they separate, breathing heavily, staring at each other, circling each other like wrestlers.*)