

## Chapter One

# The First Queue and a Piece of Fruit

*These are true stories from the Old Testament, but presented to you in an imaginary framework by animals and birds.*

*We start our story at the beginning of the world. God has created the heavens and the earth and all the living things on it. There are green meadows, woods and mountains. There are all sorts of animals and birds. The rivers and lakes and seas are filled with fish. God has also created the first man, made out of the dust of the ground.*

*Now - in a beautiful garden in Eden, two animals are talking:*

A long line of animals and birds - and things that creep and crawl and slide and slither - stretched away into the distance. Some were big. Some were small. Some fat. Some thin. They were smooth or furry, in one colour, two colours, all colours, stripy, blotchy, spotty, two legs, four legs, six legs, too many to count legs. They came with claws or paws, and beaks and snouts. And they all stood in a quiet line, waiting. A handsome tan coloured animal sat at the head of the queue. He had a huge shaggy mane of fur garlanded around his neck, and he held his head high.

‘Who are you?’ asked a small voice.

‘I don’t know yet,’ replied the big beast with a pleasant growl. He looked down to find a small woolly animal standing beside him.

‘Oh...why are we standing in this queue?’

‘We’re waiting to be named,’ replied the animal patiently.

‘Why?’

‘You don’t know who you are without a name.’

‘Oh... so who’s going to name us?’ The small fleecy item was full of questions.

‘Adam.’

‘Who’s Adam?’

‘The first man. God’s just made him from the dust of the ground. His first job is to give us all names.’

‘You’re at the head of the queue. Are you a king?’

‘I’m just the king of the beasts. God has made humans to rule over everything in the world, and that includes all of us,’ replied the larger animal,

nodding backwards to include the queue behind him. 'Look up ahead. You can see the new man now.'

The smaller animal peered round under his large friend's shaggy neck and its eyes widened when he saw the new man.

'That!' spluttered the small creature. 'That's going to be a king? He must be an economy model. He's so small! He's only got two legs.' The little woolly animal pointed down the queue: 'We've got bigger heads, and longer necks, and bigger noses and bigger ears and bigger teeth and longer legs.' It looked back at the new man. 'And he's very plain. He's got no fur. No spots. No marking or stripes of any sort. He's got no wings. What's he got that we ain't?'

'Haven't, not ain't,' growled the large beast. 'Let me tell you, my fleecy friend, he's got a lot that we ain't, I mean, haven't. We're not going to live forever, but he can. God's made him to be like himself in many ways.'

'Oh.' There was a moment's silence. 'Where are we?'

'Planet earth.' The large animal stopped, then thought better of it. 'The Garden of Eden to be precise. Nice isn't it? Lush pasture watered by great rivers. Flowers in all colours. Full of trees with good things to eat. The man's going to be looking after the place. When you get the chance to look around, you'll find two special trees, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and the tree of life in the middle of the garden. Adam's not allowed to take fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil though.'

'What happens if he does,' asked the smaller animal.

'He's lost the chance to live forever with God. When he dies, that's it.'

'What's it?'

'Why, he'll be dead for ever. Instead of being alive forever.' The big beast lifted his head and looked away into the distance. 'It's time to be named. We'll be moving soon. Get back in your place in the queue.'

The afternoon sun filtered through the leaves of the graceful, majestic tree onto the grassy glade, as one by one the creatures of the world walked before the man, who wondered and laughed and admired them all, even the creepy, wiggly ones, and gave them all names. But as the animals passed by, he didn't find one that looked like him, or had a mind like him, and could share his life with him.

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Once the man had named him, the big animal wandered away and found a nice soft spot to lie in the fading sun. Soon he was snoring gently. But not for long.

'Wake up! Wake up! There's two of them now.' One bundle of wool delivered a few surprisingly powerful kicks into the ribs of the dozing animal.

'What's your name,' replied the large beast, unperturbed by so rude an awakening.

'I'm a lamb.'

'And I'm called a lion. How do you do, lamb?' replied the lion formally. 'Now, you said something about two...'

'Yes, yes,' said the lamb rapidly. 'Two. After Adam named us all, God knocked him out, took out a rib - I mean, can you believe it - and made another human out of it. This one's a bit different from the first, but roughly the same - comes standing on two

legs...'

'It's a woman.'

'... with no fur or spots or horns...'

'It's a woman, sonny.'

'...or blotches or spots or stripes....what did you say?'

'I said it's a woman.'

'God didn't like the first design?'

'No.' The lion laughed. They were both planned from the beginning. They are both the same, made to be like God. It's not good for Adam to be by himself and clearly none of us could be his mate. Eve, this new woman, will be his true companion and helper. Adam's got to stick to her like glue. They'll be man and wife. They will be as if they are one.'

'Well, what could be better than that?' asked the lamb, of nobody in particular.

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'I can't find them. Adam and Eve. I can't find them anywhere. I've looked all over the garden,' the lamb bleated, in his anxiety forgetting excuse me, or please, or even good morning lion, or hello, how are you lion.

'That's because they've gone,' replied the lion, quietly.

'Gone?'

'Sit.'

The lamb dutifully sat down.

'Sonny, in this world there is an evil being and he been to see Eve, dressed up as a crafty serpent. He had a question to put to her. "Did God really say you weren't to eat from any of the trees of the garden?" he asked. This reptile really did talk. Eve explained that they could eat the fruit of any of the trees in the garden except the one in the middle. That one they couldn't eat from or even touch, otherwise they would die. So this serpent said "don't believe it. You won't die! God knows that when you eat it you will become like gods. You'll know good and evil..."

'That's fibs. Eve knew that,' spluttered the lamb.

'Ah, but when Eve took a good look at this tree, she could see that the fruit was good to eat, it looked luscious and she wanted it because it would make her wise. She ate some and gave some to Adam.'

'He ate it?'

'Yes, he did.'

'And they died? Dissolved back into dust?'

'No, they will die, with no chance of life. First they found that they felt unhappy about being naked and they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves. Then, when they heard God walking in the garden in the cool of the evening, they hid from him.'

'Whatever for?'

'That's what God asked Adam. He said he had hidden because he knew he was naked. God asked him how he knew that - had he eaten from the forbidden tree? Well, Adam said to God "It was the women you gave me. She gave me the fruit and I ate it." God turned to Eve "What have you done?" Eve said, "the serpent tempted me and I

