

THE GARDENER'S WIFE  
a play in free verse  
by  
Charlotte Mandel

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

EVE, ADAM, LILITH, CAIN, ABEL.

PLACE: *The house that ADAM builds; the garden he designs and plants.*

TIME: *Continuing*

*CURTAIN is a scrim depicting clear noonday sky, white clouds floating on blue. Morning calls of songbirds, rustling leaves. The pastoral medley gradually gives way to the whining drone of a hand-held chainsaw. (Directions signify stage left and stage right.) As light comes up, we see through the scrim. Stage area is divided in two: at right, the house, interior exposed, white airy, abstract open framework. At left, the outdoors -- a naturalistic garden, but gashed by raw stumps of slender trees - - pinoak, maple, scrub pine. Beyond, untouched woods, a green hill, a rock cliff. It is an afternoon in early spring. The furnishings and landscape features are minimal, suggested rather than actual. Scenes should be able to shift like states of mind. Scrim rises.*

EVE

*sits at a white table she uses as a desk; her fingers rest on the keys of a small portable typewriter. Dressed in a comfortable pastel-colored shift dress, she will look to be anywhere from 20 to 50 as the play shifts in time. Her body is strong, physically sensual without self-consciousness. Wide casement windows are open to her view, imaginary to the audience. She seems to stiffen and vibrate with each re-start of the chainsaw.*

*The sound stops. ADAM appears at the far end of the garden. EVE begins to type speaking aloud without looking at him, his movements enacting her words. ADAM moves to the center of the garden; he turns himself around as on the pinwheel of a watch, degree by degree, measuring the landscape with his eyes, until he has turned full circle.*

EVE

*(simultaneously typing / speaking )*

*As though you were the axis of the universe,  
you stood in the center of our garden and turned  
full circle, measuring the landscape.*

ADAM

*(kneels and begins to hammer a stake into the ground.)*

EVE

*(typing)*

Satisfied, you knelt, and hammered a stake into the ground.

ADAM

The edge of the pond will begin here.

EVE

Amputate, uproot and dig. So ends  
my window world. *(Throws up her hands)* These keys  
die without the woodpecker tapping rhythm!  
*(Looks towards her husband)* Adam, didn't I have  
equal right to the grove?

*(She gets up and goes out to the patio speaking directly towards him)*

Didn't I? Didn't I have a right to those trees?

ADAM

*(speaking to himself as much as to his wife)*

No flowers -- this is to be a meditation garden --  
rocks, water, fish.

EVE

*(to anyone who will listen)*

You know how birds get into disputes -- those trills  
and chucks of the tongue have to do  
with nesting privilege, pride of place. Adam!

*(he does not look up)*

Did you see the oriole this morning *(points down at a stump)* --  
on the stump of its nesting tree, scolding and pecking  
imaginary rivals out of habit. The cardinals stood  
like figures to decorate a flower pot --  
scarlet cock, washed-out pink hen.

ADAM

The rock border will reflect onto gold and red carp.  
They will appear to be swimming through mountains.  
Gazing at goldfish elicits mindfulness towards  
the truth of ambiguity --

EVE

The oriole's wings were yellow and black. *(Sniffing, blinking)*  
The house is full of smoke -- you've choked up the fireplace  
with fresh-cut pine -- resins are oozing and dripping onto the grate.  
My eyes are burning.

ADAM

-- to see orange and gold flames underwater.

EVE

*(looking directly at her husband)*

You are all that I see.

ADAM

*(pause -- he pays attention to her now)*

Eve, sometimes I have trouble finding you.

EVE

You see me as a fixture of this house --  
like the door frame, kitchen wainscoting,  
bench fitted into the bay window.

ADAM

I built every part of this house with my own hands.

And I made it to your measure.

*(He takes a few steps towards her, opens his arms and outlines her form with his hands, not quite touching)*

I am always seeing you for the first time.

*(Light fades to dark, bird songs are heard, light of morning rises as they continue to stand facing one another. They are young, in a sunfilled garden.)*

EVE

Are you my creator?

ADAM

If your name is Eve, I think you may be perfect.

EVE

Are you testing me?

ADAM

No, I want to taste you.

*(As he moves to kiss her, she puts her hand between their mouths.)*

EVE

Wait -- there is a taste -- I know words for this --  
tongue, teeth, lips -- I am a cup filled with words -- *(touching him)*  
barrier bone -- pillow breast --

*(He stops her words quickly to kiss her. Slowly they taste the surprise of each other's lips.)*

ADAM

Salt . . . sweet . . .

EVE

Sweat -- your sweat is cool, then the heat of your skin --  
how hard fits to soft -- Oh -- I think we may both be perfect.  
*(They fully embrace, young, ardent, hands and lips eager)*

ADAM

This shady oval of grass was our first bed.

EVE

The orchard blossoms were falling in their first season.

ADAM

The same fragrance of grapes almost about to sour on the vine.

EVE

I patted a snake, loved its copper and green in the sun,  
head lifted, its little forked tongue moving in and out,  
tuned to every vibration of my thighs.

*(Stage darkens, then flashes of lightning reveal them downstage running across left to right. BLACKOUT)*

*(Daylight, laughing together after making love.)*

EVE

Not expelled -- we escaped. You  
never wanted to be anybody's hireling.

ADAM

It was a world without sting or venom, or ambiguity.

EVE

His garden was a pose, like pictures in a mail order catalog.

ADAM

Our function was to complete a pattern of conceptual art.  
We pleased him like colorful birds hatched inside an aviary --  
open to the blue sky but heads wary under a dome  
of invisible wire. Creator tossed us into play  
like pieces on a board game.

EVE

Adam, you and I were the only pegs on that board

worth the risk of free will.

ADAM

Like pepper dashed into the season. Creator's own hubris.  
Why stipple our tongues with alphabet if only to spell  
words of congratulation?

EVE

The letters we spit back spelled HUMAN!

ADAM

"Banishment -- exile" -- paper words singed by his own lightning.  
Fire ate a road to freedom. We ran with outstretched arms --  
*(They gesture acting out their words)*

EVE

revolving like blades of windmills --

ADAM

stealing power from the air!  
*(They race off, triumphant, to right.  
Light darkens, then brightens.  
LILITH enters downstage, left, looking all about her. She checks out the varieties of  
plantings ADAM has set.)*

LILITH

Ah ha -- his garden is a scale model of the other one.  
That man never had an original thought in his head.  
*(Cataloging)* Hibiscus, Pumpkin facing south, to  
the west Blackberry, Lilac Chase -- my favorite late bloomer,  
food for bees when Thyme turns to seed.  
*(ADAM is seen in the distance, working a far corner of the field.)*

EVE'S VOICE

Adam, is that you?

EVE

*pregnant, near term, comes through the house, stands at the doorway. Her arms reach  
out with possibility at the sight of another woman in the world, then, in terror, wrap  
around her belly as though to protect her unborn child.*

What are you -- sometimes I dream -- are you real?

LILITH

Touch me -- my name is Lilith. Didn't either  
of your creators ever speak of me?

EVE

The one before me? Discarded for being imperfect?

LILITH

My dear, we are both perfect-ly over-intelligent.  
They tried to confine me within a wall of brambles,  
you know, like Sleeping Beauty? (*EVE shakes her head*) --  
a story, Eve, that you will write.

EVE

I do like to write stories, but --

LILITH

But I hoisted myself over the wall. I'm a born acrobat.

EVE

In Adam's story, you give birth to demons!

LILITH

Our children will be cousins, Eve, you'll see --  
demonic is child of human.

EVE

*She outlines Lilith's form with her hands, not quite touching.*  
Your form is like mine. You were first.

LILITH

I am a first draft. You're a revised version, Eve --  
more adaptable to wifehood. Nor is Adam  
the first draft of a man. Before Adam, Creator  
attempted a man with wings and boringly sweet  
disposition. That angel couldn't -- or wouldn't -- stay grounded --  
Useless for digging in gardens. Creator uses him  
like a trained pigeon, to carry messages.

EVE

Do you want to come into the house?  
Do you want me to call Adam?

LILITH

Yes, I'll come into your house. No, don't call him --  
I'd only be invisible. Your husband (*sings, ironically*)  
"only has eyes for you." There's an example of Creator's  
own hubris -- to implant monogamous ideal  
into a free-willed sexual being.  
(*Changing tone from ironic to serious, she looks directly into EVE's eyes*)  
Yet, for you and Adam, I think it works.

EVE

You were the first wife -- are you my mother?

LILITH

*(Laughs)* We're born of the same ingredients,  
dear Eve -- of earth and salt water. Creator squashed  
and patted us out of the same body of mud.

In this story, Adam keeps his rib.

*(EVE looks distressed. LILITH, sensitive to her distress, caresses her face)*

I think we are both perfect.

*(EVE's arms are wrapped around her belly as though trying to contain it.)*

EVE

Lilith --

LILITH

Yes -- ?

EVE

There is something inside -- here -- *(hands on her pregnancy)*

LILITH

Yes -- ?

EVE

It's alive.

LILITH

Yes.

EVE

It swells, grows, stretches until I ache --

LILITH

I know.

EVE

It feels as though this living thing is a substance --  
boiling and seething -- my belly's become a cauldron --  
as if all the angers of Creator are on fire inside me -- here.

LILITH

No, not all Creator's anger -- his supply is infinite --  
the more we scoop out, the more we add to the pot.

EVE

I did not put this being into my belly of my own free will.

LILITH

You were part of the garden -- a fertile part.  
Do you love Adam of your own free will?

EVE

Do I?

LILITH

You are the mother of what comes to life inside you.

EVE

*(falls to her knees)* Oh, it kicked me again. Lilith,  
tell me how much more must it hurt?  
I've seen animals --  
they lick off black blood and purple slime.

*Out in the field, ADAM swings a heavy pick onto a boulder with a loud clang.*

LILITH

*(Holding EVE, rocking)*

I am your midwife, your healer, we are  
the two women of the world. Come,  
let's take you back into the house.

*(Helps EVE enter the house.)*

*EVE's labor begins. As LILITH guides her through the birthing, ADAM continues to labor in the field. The clanging of his pick on the rock accompanies the rhythms of EVE's panting and stifled cries, the steady beat of LILITH's voice chanting instructions.)*

LILITH

Ah now, pain is your river.  
Ah now, pain is the raft.  
Ah now, little one, float -- float --  
Ah now, push --

*("Ah - ah - ah -" a newborn's cry slices through all other sounds.*

*LILITH crosses her arms to hold the infant tightly to her chest for a moment before she gives it over to EVE. LILITH washes the baby as EVE admires in wonder. The baby cries and cries.)*

EVE

It is a male, isn't it? *(laughing)* Look,  
it has a tiny erection! *(To her infant, gazing into the newborn's face)*

Don't make so much noise, tiny thing,  
please tell me why you're wailing so.

LILITH

Hunger -- sign of an active future. Open your blouse, Eve --  
see -- your nipple is leaking -- let your baby's  
lips and tongue taste you.

*(EVE nurses the infant. LILITH watches.)*

Forever so, the classic pose.

EVE

*(Speaking to the infant, absorbed in watching)*

How utterly, totally helpless you are.

What is it like to be so helpless?

I never had to suffer through a childhood.

*(Tot LILITH)* Will it be painful to grow into a man?

LILITH

Always.

EVE

What do I have to do?

LILITH

He will do it all -- he inherits himself.

*(At that moment, ADAM, weary from his day's work in the field, approaches the house.  
LILITH senses his approach and stands up to leave.)*

EVE

No -- *(looks up imploring)* -- stay with me.

LILITH

You'll see me again, dear sibling -- I'll be around  
a long time -- like you.

*(Bends and kisses EVE on the mouth, then slips away through a back door of the  
house, not the direction from which she came.)*

ADAM

*(astonished and excited)* Eve -- let me see!

EVE

*(Uncovers the infant and shows him its naked little body.)*

Look, Adam, I, too, have created a man.

His name is CAIN.

*(Slow fade indicates time passing -- evening, night, dawn. A crow calls in the distance, another answers, closer. Light builds to late afternoon, sun and long shadow. EVE sits typing at her desk. Upstage, out in the field, ADAM and their teenaged son CAIN are harvesting wheat. The youth is handsome, broadshouldered, muscular. Father and son work in harmonious rhythm towards stage right wings, as LILITH enters the house from downstage left. She stands quietly looking over EVE's shoulder at the text. With a flourish, EVE disengages the sheet of paper from her typewriter.)*

EVE

Lilith, did you know that where the high cliffs stand there was once an ocean? Adam keeps finding fossil evidence -- look *(showing her a rock)* -- a sea creature's skeleton embedded in rock from the plateau. He says Creator established the sea before deciding on land.

LILITH

Oh yes -- he modeled us originally as mer-men and women.

EVE

You're teasing me -- *(not sure)* -- is that the truth?

LILITH

Why not? What have you written today?

EVE

Because I'm so happy -- I'm writing --

LILITH

a psalm? Read me your poem.

EVE *(reading to herself, then aloud)*

. . . shivered like water  
seeping from the secret daughter  
spring of a rivulet we traced  
barefoot on porous limestone laced  
with skeletons -- curled devil-tails  
of pre-Cambrian trilobites -- failed  
species -- yet, our cousins.

LILITH

*(picks up the paper, reads)*

A psalm

to praise each ripple of breeze, calm  
eddy of moon-drawn motion

EVE

*(concluding)*

Salt in us, blue-veined, ocean.

LILITH

Poet, you are our visionary historian.  
I am the one with twenty-twenty insight,  
journalist with an eye on the news.

EVE

Before anything else, I am a wife and mother.

*(ADAM and CAIN, at work in the field, come back into view. LILITH moves to the doorstep and watches them.)*

LILITH

Two strong sons, Eve. Which one is closer to you?

EVE

A mother never plays favorites. Sometimes their father --  
well, he sort of looks the other way -- I mean --  
*(She trails off. In the field, ADAM straightens and gazes into the distance. LILITH smiles somewhat ironically but keeps silent and exits. EVE watches her go, a bit puzzled, but then smiles, re-reading her poem to herself.)*

ADAM (to CAIN)

There's dust rising on the foothills. Your brother  
will have the flock home by sunset.

CAIN

He ought to sleep with them out on the hills,  
not drive them so far each night. The meat you love  
will be tough as leather. Why bring the sheep back  
every single night?

ADAM

It cheers us to look at both our sons' faces in the evening --  
we enjoy the likeness and difference between you.

CAIN

You let him insult me.

ADAM

Abel is a clever hunter -- what's wrong  
with bragging a little? He anticipates the habits

of animals, knows when the wild ducks and geese  
congregate at waterholes.

CAIN

Yes, he is stealthy and quick. You like him  
to put pieces of animals into your mouth --  
I won't eat any live thing slaughtered and chopped apart.  
The smell of it burning rises to the heavens.

ADAM

The aroma of fat meat on the fire gives me strength.

CAIN

I feed you bread, Father -- from this very wheat.  
I invented the thresher and built the mill. I've planted  
roots and leafy vegetables, seeded more fruit trees,  
expanded the vineyard.

ADAM

You're a diligent farmer, Cain. With you in the field,  
I can go back to extending the architecture of the garden. *(Musing)*  
Let Creator see all that I have made happen here.

CAIN

Creator again -- who are you talking about?

ADAM

*(Ignoring CAIN's question) I'll bring the cart around.  
(Exits left. CAIN, frustrated, swings his scythe at a stand of tall stalks of wheat.  
Offstage: sounds of bleating sheep, a dog barking, a youth's voice guiding the animals,  
then nearby, outside the house, a tune whistled. EVE perks up her head, stops typing  
and stands up.*

ABEL

*enters from right -- the side where the house stands -- and jumps onto the threshold.  
He is appealingly boyish, slim and lithe.)*  
Mother!

EVE

*(Runs to him eagerly)* Abel, my bird-boy!

ABEL

Beautiful birds, Mother, two fat ducks, ready  
to be strung on the drying rack.  
I've thrown the entrails to the dogs.

*(ADAM and CAIN enter. CAIN carries the scythe.)*

EVE

Have we ever lived so well? Let Creator see  
all that I have made happen here.

ABEL

Who are you talking about, Mother?  
*(EVE ignores ABEL's question and goes back into the house, followed by ADAM. ABEL  
faces his brother.)*

ABEL

Haven't you found out, farmer?  
You're at Father's side all day long. Who is  
the mystery Creator?  
*(LILITH enters left. They do not see or hear her.)*

LILITH

The jealous one, dear boys, they are speaking  
of the jealous one. The one who shrivels at the sight  
of all that I, too, have made happen here. We inherit his envy  
like a parasite traveling our bones.  
*(LILITH moves nearer to them, her hands reaching. They do not see or hear her.)*  
My hands were the first to touch you when you were born,  
my hands like bellows blew breath into your chests.  
*(ABEL and CAIN are facing each other off, breathing heavily. LILITH lets her arms  
drop, exits.)*

*(Staging of the brothers' confrontation should express a taunting attitude on ABEL's  
part, provoking CAIN'S fury. ABEL is reckless. Praised and beloved, he feels  
invulnerable. His unpricked self-assurance renders him insensitive to the hurt he may  
inflict upon his brother's feelings. The following action should move very quickly.  
ABEL initiates a boxing match, skipping about; CAIN in grim frustration, at first wards  
him off with the handle of the scythe, spins about and finally, strikes a blow with all his  
strength. ABEL reels and falls, hitting his head on one of ADAM's "meditation" rocks.  
ABEL lies sprawled on the ground, his head on the rock, instantly killed. Ambiguity is  
essential: CAIN's blow may or may not have intended to kill.)*

CAIN

*(Stands over ABEL with the weapon, nudges him with his foot, drops the scythe, bends  
down and pulls at ABEL's hands.)*

Get up, prancer, get up!

*(CAIN discovers blood on his hand, tries to wipe it off with his own shirt.)*

Abel, you're bleeding -- get up!

*(Terrified by the blood on ABEL, the scythe, the rock, his hands and his own clothing, CAIN runs off.)*

### BRIEF BLACKOUT

*(Sounds of pastoral birdsong as daylight returns. ABEL's body lies center stage as before. ADAM stands left, downstage; EVE stands right, downstage. They are seeing past the heads of the audience.)*

ADAM

If we had known that parenthood would trap us,  
that our sons would be pieces on the game board.  
Spell the word *death* A B E L;  
the word *murder* C A I N.

EVE

I tried to birth him again. I licked his face, his hands--  
a cow knows to lick and lick her own blood from her newborn --  
she nudges it to stand, it must stand on wobbly limbs to suck milk. *(They move as one to their son's body, form a ring with their arms, lift the corpse, try to stand him up, then give up, and kneel together on either side of him, caressing him as he lies on the ground.)*

ADAM

We tried to cure him with milk. You brought the milk goat  
squeezed her swollen teats while I held his limp body,  
his hunter's muscular body, and forced  
his lips back from his teeth.

EVE

He was too cold - warm milk congealed  
in the corners of his mouth.

ADAM

*(Looking around and upward in a fury)* Where is my other son?

EVE

Gone. We've lost them both. Must we start over?  
I have no room for you to enter me -- that space in my body  
is blocked by loss. Like a stillborn stone.

ADAM

*(Arms raised in anger to the sky)* Will YOU ever die!  
Here is sacrifice to burn for you!

EVE

I hated you, Adam, for cutting down  
my trees -- sibilant speech of the leaves  
sway of the gray cedars.

ADAM

Aromatic kindling for his funeral pyre. You complained  
the hearth was choked with fresh tree sap --  
now blood will add marbling to the smoke  
tingling in Creator's nostrils.

EVE

Adam, I don't know how to weep.

ADAM

Nor do I. A child knows how -- but we were never children.  
A newborn cries with its first breath. Tears are a child's  
language of survival.

*(Together, they rest ABEL's form across their thighs, a mutual father-mother version of  
PIETA.)*

ADAM

His eyes are wide open -- *(passes his hand in front of ABEL's face)*  
He doesn't see me.

EVE

Perhaps he hears? Speak to him, Adam, I believe in words.

ADAM

Alphabet forges links in a chain. *death/grief* .

EVE

*Grief* is a womb that never comes to term.

ADAM

*(to his dead son)* Abel, close your eyes.

EVE

How helpless he is to do anything for himself,  
more helpless than when he was born and could,  
at least, cry.

ADAM

Close his eyes for him, Eve.  
*(Hesitant, with false starts, EVE's hand moves down ABEL's face.)*

*At last, their sobs and tears begin.)*

BLACKOUT

*(Spotlight downstage left. LILITH enters, leading CAIN by the hand like a reluctant little boy.)*

CAIN

I want to go back -- you're not my mother.

LILITH

No, my dear -- I am not the one who writes stories and poems trying to change the endings. Call me aunt, stepmother, lover -- come, you have so many cousins.

CAIN

Which one will kill me?

LILITH

Cain, my dear, we need you in our world -- you're a farmer, an inventor.

CAIN

*(agonized)* I've invented Murder!

LILITH

Did you want your brother to die?

CAIN

I wanted to kill him -- but I didn't choose for him to die.

LILITH

Ah, certainly. You did not choose to be an inventor.

*(She imprints a lipstick kiss upon his forehead.)*

There -- you'll wear the red mark of my lips as proof of my loving protection. Come, let me introduce you to your family.

*(They exit into the wings, spotlight holding a pause on the empty stage as though waiting for them to return.)*

SCRIM FALLS

*as light fades to black; light returns,*

SCRIM RISES.

*Scene as at opening curtain: EVE at her typewriter, ADAM in the field.)*

EVE

*(writing her text)* So sure he could fly, that was why I called Abel my bird-boy. Oh, I could have killed him that time!

YOUNG ABEL'S VOICE

Ma - a - a - watch me fly!

EVE

His knucky toes gripped the edge of the quarry. A vertical drop to the black well of water far down -- down --  
Oh, I wanted to kill him!

YOUNG ABEL'S VOICE

Ma - a - a - watch me fly!

EVE

Threw off his clothes -- I saw his navel, the dimple and crack of his flat buttocks --

YOUNG ABEL'S VOICE

Ma - a - a - look at me - e - e!

EVE

*(Throws her head back to scream his name)* A - A - BEL!  
I was screaming his name, A - A - BEL !

I was too far below the top of the cliff to stop him,  
too far above the deep water to race down and catch him --

YOUNG ABEL'S VOICE

Ma - a - I'm going to fly!

EVE

Into the air he leapt, the sound of his cry spiralling down, down --  
He leapt, dived under, lost in the black well of water --  
then rose into the sun gliding like a water bird on the surface,  
and perched on the edge to dry, preening like a swan.  
I yelled at him -- and he said --

YOUNG ABEL'S VOICE

Tell me a story.

EVE

I wanted to kill him.  
Every mother carries murder in her heart.

YOUNG ABEL'S VOICE

Tell me a story about when you were little.

EVE

*(taking her hands from the typewriter)*

There is no such story. No childhood begins me.  
I thought story was mine to create by what I lived.  
Abel in his bones knew he was invulnerable to rock or water  
or mother's rage against the author  
who had named him  
*the-one-who-would-be-killed-by-his-brother.*

*(EVE stands up, walks out to the "meditation pond.")*

I no longer believe in words. To "kill" in war is not murder.  
War between brothers is "civil." *(Looking down at the pond)*  
After sundown, Adam's goldfish burn to cinders.

*(Suddenly the sound of the chainsaw that seems to vibrate through her body followed by crash of a tree falling. EVE stands shocked. ADAM appears left, intent on studying a compass in his palm.)*

EVE

What have you done now?

ADAM

We need more houses. If I had built a house for each of our sons  
to live apart, we might have averted -- prevented --  
organized a plan -- i should have extended the garden -- they  
were grown men. I was their creator -- I should have given  
each of them the same -- the same right that I had taken --  
the right to shape my own world.

EVE

Are you trying to destroy me?

ADAM

Eve, I, too -- I created a garden and expected they would  
live to please me. It was I who Cain wanted to kill.  
Now he has run away, just as we ran.

EVE

*(despairing)*

Adam, let them go! Let the one die who is dead,  
let the one live who is lost.

*(She goes to him, takes his hands in hers, looks into his eyes.)*

Listen, Adam, give me your compass.

ADAM

What for?

EVE

Let me show you -- I want a garden southeast (*pointing*)  
to be a space for me to work, walk, read, and dream --  
an outdoor room with curved garden chairs and a table  
I might, in good weather, lean my notebook upon. I want  
Cosmos, Narcissus, Savory, Blackberry, dappled shade beneath  
Magnolia, white slender birches with leaves that do not fall  
until they turn oriole yellow.

ADAM

I would have to displace what I've planned there.

EVE

That is my wish, now. And Adam, help me  
displace the womb of my grief. I want  
to conceive again.

ADAM

(*Looking off towards the woods*) Tonight, the moonflower opens --  
a rare bloom that opens only one night a year. When our sons  
were small, I played a trick on them. "Come," I said, "if you are very quiet,  
you will see your father create living magic. I brought them  
out of their beds, into the moonlight, to the wall  
where I had planted the vine knowing the hour of its bloom,  
and with a sorcerer's sweep of hands, said:  
"Adam commands you to bloom!"  
The blossom opened wide as their eyes  
in the glow of their faces.  
And Eve, I did feel powerful.

EVE

A father may be forgiven for wanting to seem  
magical in the eyes of his children, for wanting them  
to see wonders in the darkness.

ADAM

I had thought to recapitulate a memory for them  
of our original world of awe. To create for them  
a better Eden. There is no more time.

EVE

Work to re-generate time.

ADAM

How?

EVE

I want to nurture life again.

ADAM

We don't know what is next in store for us,  
for those who might be born. I want to build houses.

EVE

Our children will design their own houses. Start  
with our love, Adam. That is ours.  
Creator could not will this into us. I love you, husband.

ADAM

I love you. *(Takes her into his arms, they kiss)*  
How can we ever begin again?

EVE

Not from the beginning -- I know the taste of you so well.  
*(They enter the house, passion rising.)*

## EPILOGUE

*(Late afternoon, long shadows. EVE stands near the pond, ADAM walks from the far field to the garden.)*

ADAM

*(Looking upwards)*

I clock the clouds today at eighteen to the minute --  
strong wind to speed them so fast.

Night is a long time coming.

*(As he speaks, EVE moves towards him, looking upwards at the sky as he does. He takes her hand, enfolds it with his, and points their clasped hands upward, speaking again.)*

The moon tonight will be at perigee -- its closest point of orbit.  
The heavens are beginning to crowd us. Earth's lunar satellite  
has become a travel stop, a destination. My maps  
were always right about that.

EVE

Your maps predicted the ocean coming back to us.  
Let's walk to the shore. I want to watch

moonbeams break into currents on the waves.

ADAM

*(The scene around them fading as they walk)*

In wind like this, each wave is an avalanche.  
I never want to sail.

EVE

Does it worry you to walk outside the borders of our garden?

ADAM

The shore was always part of my landscape design.

EVE

I love the independent will of the sea --  
totally beyond your control, or mine, or Creator's.

ADAM

Was it blind will of water that drove yesterday's  
excursion boat onto the rocks? Twenty children  
swallowed on a short sightseeing trip.

EVE

I think that may have been the pilot's hubris,  
snapping his fingers at weather.

ADAM

Ambiguity -- each day the sea opens --  
invitation and threat.

EVE

Listen -- *(Picks up a shell and holds it to his ear. Sound of powerful wave breaking)*

ADAM

That is the sound of original chaos.

EVE

I feel undertow within me -- my body dives  
into the tides without my willing it.  
*(Sounds of surf breaking rhythmically onto shore, seagulls calling)*

ADAM

I have always wanted to keep you safe.

EVE

You were the gardener, the paths you designed gave solace.

ADAM

I measure time by units of chosen work -- you always know where to find me.

EVE

So many anniversaries -- your gift.

ADAM

The propitiation of work -- your gift.

EVE

We have invented marriage.

ADAM

We were created so.

EVE

If we could write this story  
out of primal chaos,  
what order would we make of it?

ADAM

*(Listening to the sounds of the breakers)*  
Each wave rises --

EVE

*(Listening)*  
Question --

ADAM

And breaks --

EVE

Answer --

ADAM

Question -- Answer.  
What order would we shape out of chaos?

EVE

To bind our children safe.  
*(Sound of loud crashing wave frightens her)*

What did the wave bring this time?

ADAM

A shell, a pebble, a toy shovel. And now the tide  
pulls them back. The breakers are hungry.

EVE

Hold me, Adam, the sea is in love with us.  
Foam spills over the boundary of our garden.

ADAM

*(Reassuring)*

And crawls back, hugging the sand.  
The moon will not release the sea --  
they are inseparable.

*(The man and woman stand embraced, gazing outward, listening to the constant  
reverberation of the sea. Moonlight breaks on the water.)*

CURTAIN