
TOSCA LEE
Havah
the story of Eve
THE DELETED SCENES

Lamech

This strange great-grandson of Irad—I will not speak his name, I have sworn it will not come from my lips lest it give him the notoriety that he so longed for—took two wives. One to adorn himself in public as a man puts on his finery, for I heard she was young and very beautiful, and one to adorn himself in his chamber, for she was seldom seen and remained in her sister-wife's shadow. And this man—he will be unknown to me, I shall not know him or ever say I have and will revoke my knowing of him if I should meet him by coincidence—killed a young man. He was unapologetic, and the feud-song came as far as our settlement and likely traveled farther, saying that he would not hesitate to have done it anyway, no matter that the man was young. And so if Kayin was avenged for any hurt done to him seven times, surely he would be avenged seventy times seven, because he had cause to do it.

Where had the sense gone in people?

It is said that his one son was the first to live in tents with livestock, though that braggart family would claim to be the first to defecate on the ground if they thought it was something

to brag about. His other son was the first to play the lyre and the pipe, though I knew better. I hoped he was put out of the city or, barring that, that his great, great-grandmother Renana chastised him well; no doubt that she still had a sharp tongue. (Let the braggart see what defense he had against that.) But I never heard that he was put out and so it seemed he fooled everyone with his claim of self defense.

I wondered, if indeed there was a day that one stands before the One, if he would keep his claim to the face of God.

At least the sister in the shadows, the second wife of the braggart, seemed to bear a son with some claim to something: many years later, traders came from Hanokh to our area bringing copper wares the like I had not seen before. And they were the work, it was said, of this son, who became renowned for this very craft for many generations to come.

Some time around evening, when everyone was in the streets—I never understood the ability of so many to loiter in such a place—a boisterous and rotund man came into the room, huffing with each step. He wore the finest wool and new sandals. Behind him walked a woman of such striking beauty that I actually gasped. But now I saw that she was not so very young. No, not young at all. Surely she had grandchildren of her own by now.

"Ah, my great grandson, Lamekh." Renana sounded less than ecstatic. I gave him a slight, blank smile.

"Mother," he said, coming to kneel, with great difficulty, before me. The woman with him did likewise. Now I could

smell the scent of jasmine upon her. She was like a dish that one lays out that is too lovely to eat, but too delicious not to.

"Lamekh, you say?" I did not offer him my hand.

"Yes, mother, and Adah, my first wife. I have two of them."

I almost cringed at the sound of that name, but if ever there was a woman fitting to carry it, it was this beauty.

"How strange," I said. Renana said nothing and I realized that there was no love lost between them. Or perhaps the conflict lay between her and the beautiful Adah. "How should I know you—a great-grandson, you say?"

He recited the lineage of Hanokh to Methusalel. "Some know me only by the event that happened now some long while ago. I defended myself and by the hand of the One, was triumphant. How sad for that boy's family, and for me as well. It is not an easy thing to bear the favor of God."

"No," I said lightly, "I have heard nothing of you."

The Great Mother

One day a man comes to me. I recognize him; he is the master potter. "I have brought this gift," he says, bowing low. I want to tell him I am weary of gifts—what do I need with all of these things? But every child wants to be blessed and so I thank him as I admire it—until I see the sign of the serpent upon it.

"Tell me," I say, "What is this symbol?" I want to hear what he will say, though I know what it is.

Again, the serpent returns to me. Test me, Deceiver. You will not win again.

"It is a myth, I am told, of a creature that brought knowledge to man."

How can they know this?

"That is not a myth," I tell him, but do not satisfy the question in his eyes.

Hanokh has founded another city, I hear. And Irad has a city named for him in the delta to the south, where they build reed houses and live on fish. I hear they have made a shrine and

fortified it with bricks. One day a ship sails upriver—we stare at it in amazement. It brings news and goods: fine metals and fish oils and reed mats and beads. The merchant offers me one for each of my children—56 in all. There was a time I would have accepted gifts for my grandchildren as well, though today I cannot even summon their full number.

"You see this one, that it is the color of the river of paradise?"

"What river is that?" I squint.

"The waters of everlasting life that flow from a mountain spring."

"That is foolish talk." I hand the beads back.

"Forgive a merchant his stories. Please keep them, Lady of the Rib."

I have not been called that in a very long while. It sounds strange on his tongue; he has an accent. Perhaps he comes from one of those settlements where the words of the people are strange and can no longer be easily understood.

In Old Age

There are a few things that happened during those years, though now I cannot remember exactly when. It is the bane of age, forgetfulness, but the privilege of the old woman, to tell things out of order. Yes, I am the hen, pecking at her seeds hither and yon, and so be it.

I can remember to this day with absolute accuracy and a remaining pang the first time one of my children lied to me. I had gone out after Hevel, who had toddled out of the house to who knows where—he was always going somewhere, even in his napkins. I had left near the hearth a skin full of gruel on a hot rock. As I went out, I called back to Kayin, "I will be back—do not touch the fire or the food."

Well, Hevel not only escaped his brother, but got himself most of the way to the river, whereupon he became lost and it was only through Reut's help that I found him, crying and sucking on his fingers, his other hand tugging at his wet and soiled napkin. When I brought him back, Kayin was missing. I left Hevel there, with the same command, sitting in his soiled clothes as panic seized my chest. It was like that for me with

any child that went missing in those early days, but especially so for Kayin.

"Kayin?" I called, "Where are you?" I called him again, and then again. He told me many years later, remembering the incident perhaps with as much pain as I, that it was the near-hysteria in my voice that brought him out of hiding. His fingers were in his mouth, and I knew right away that he had burned them, but it was the look on his face that seized my heart. His shoulders had fallen forward, and his chin quivered as he came back to the house, not embracing his wayward brother who put out his hands toward him, or to inquire, as he always did, about every little thing Hevel had done or where I had found him or what we were going to do next.

"I told you not to touch that food!" I said with a mixture of exasperation, shock, and compassion. But just as I was examining his hands, I stopped.

Where are you?

I was afraid, and so I hid.

Did you eat of the tree that I commanded you not to eat?

But of course the One had known. As I had known. Now, looking at my miserable son, I saw the way he suffered now because of it.

And how I suffered as well.

That night when all of my children and the adam, too, slept, I walked out of the house to stand beneath the stars. It was the first time I realized fully that in the absence of choice, there is no true obedience.

That night, I wept up to the sky. And later, I dreamed of the

valley, and of the gate between the mountains, and of the pillars of fire, and the terrible faces of the beings within it that I have believed ever since to stand at the gates of that place, ready to confront us should we return before the fullness of time.

Not long after that, Kayin asked me for the first time about the beginning. Adam was in the garden and I was pinching a new mud pot. Hevel and Lila were playing outside in the sun, but as ever, Kayin was wherever I was, near to hand, willing to take my labor from my hands even then if it gave me rest—or a chance to talk to him unhindered. He was quietly jealous for my time, though he never made demands, and gave it up with only silent reluctance.

I was startled, not having expected this question. This life was what he knew. Why should he wonder about what was before? I had never wondered at any such thing.

But then, I had known the answers from the first days of my life.

I thought back to my dreams, so remote now as to be stories I told myself before sleeping, the vision of them like something dried in the sun, leaving only its residue where once it had been.

I smashed the clay flat—it wasn't turning out properly anyway—and formed it into a rough ball. "When the One that Is began to create, there was earth, and there was nothing in it, and it was much as this clay here, without form. And the One made light," I said.

"How did he do that?" Kayin asked.

"What makes you think the One is a he?" I said, glancing at him sidelong, my eyebrow raised.

"Father calls the One a 'he.'"

Does he? I thought, wryly. Now I realized that I had heard him say the same thing, and had done it myself, too. But in truth I had not thought of it this way ever. The One, I knew, was all things. Was the beginning and the end. Was greater than man or woman. But eventually, I, too, began to refer to the One as 'he' as well.

Forgive me for that, daughters, if you can.

During the time of Kayin's first questions, I know now that he took note of the wistfulness in my face when I told him about my communion that day among the grape shrubs on the terraces. He asked me then if the One still came to me now as then, and I was abstract in my response, and even then, as a child, I wonder if he did not see through it. But it was my hope that he would experience the One as he was meant to, in whatever way the One would come to him.

I did not tell him how greatly different things were then and now, and I did not tell him why. He did not know that our existence was a shadow of that former life. Or that we had not been made to die or to suffer or to hunger or fear or live in anything other than accord with the animals that we now hunted for their skins or that we sacrificed on the altar to send the aromas up to heaven. Kayin knew none of these things—only that the burden of some great responsibility rested on his shoulders.

I wonder if telling him would have made a difference.

Now here is something else: by the time my first children were old enough to be counted among the adults, when I had

by then the children of my oldest children—as well as my own youngest—to hold in my lap, and Adam labored in the fields with the other men, something began to shift between us. I did not see it then, it was so gradual, like the changing of a river's course. But in retrospect I see it well; the men unbound by the duties of nursing children that kept a woman doing those things that could be put down and taken up easily, that kept infants out of the hot sun or inclement weather, the men, making their deals together, expanding and sharing fields, clearing for one another, offering service in return for yields and yearlings. Though the women were in the fields often, it was among the men that these bargains were struck. And so I tell you: that power rests in the hand that folds the swaddling, but it is recognized in the pacts made by men. If we were not near when a decision was being made, it was done as readily as a man releases his bladder—that is to say, whenever and anywhere he will do it. I had to remind Adam to consult me in these matters and, when that failed me, to demand it.

I noticed after a time that my daughters began to sway men's thinking in other ways. They had become more clever than I, who continued to reason with my husband, knowing he would do whatever he pleased when he was gone anyway. And so they learned to ply the wills of men with the pleasures of food and wine and warmth in the night, perhaps more adroitly than I.

I was first amused and then disgusted by this. But how could I fault them—especially when it worked.

It was not until many years later, when I held the children of my grand-children, that I realized indeed, that it had come to

pass, the very thing the One had said: that the man had power over me, and yet my desire was still—was ever—for him.

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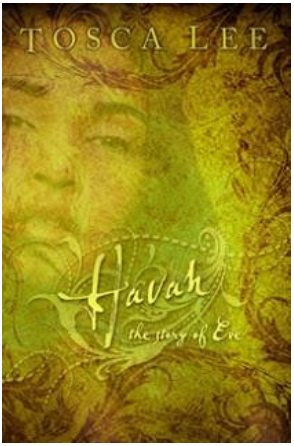

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