

## Finding the Glory Within

By Lynne Phillips

It was too terrible and too embarrassing to talk about, so they didn't. She stumbled along, tears running down her face. From time to time, hiccuping sobs convulsed her whole body, forcing her to stop, breathless, unable to walk. He walked with his eyes downcast. From time to time, he groaned and shook his fist at some unseen adversary. His face was contorted in a grimace of pain, his lips stretched over clenched teeth. For almost forever, they floundered through the dark wilderness of massive trees strangled by a dense maze of vines. Grotesque forms of fungus released pungent smells of rotting vegetation under their feet and sickened them. Finally overcome by weariness, they turned to one another, embraced and dropped to the earth as if felled by arrows to their hearts.

The shine of day penetrated the canopy overhead and settled on the face of the woman. She awoke and for an instant was filled with joy at the glimpse of blue sky and golden sun. But swift as a cloud heavy with rain and the threat of wind, the memory of yesterday filled her again with grief. She sat up and moved away from the man. Leaning against a fallen trunk, soft with moss, she thought, "Well, that's it. We wanted

to know what there was to know. And now we know, but we are stunned. We can't undo it anymore than we can put eggs back together. What we have learned so far is bitter, but maybe there is more to this venture than we can imagine."

She sighed and looked at the man. The sun had moved on and his face was in shadow. "Will he be up to this?," she wondered. As if summoned, he opened his eyes and stared, as she had done, at the leaves above. He sat up, looked at the woman, and cried out, "You! You did this!"

### **BORED WITH A LIFE OF ENDLESS PLEASURE AND EASY LIVING**

The woman pressed her back against the log and clutched a handful of mushy leaves and soft earth. She moved her head slowly from side to side. "We chose it. Together. Remember?"

He twisted his lips as if to spit, then snarled, "Choice? What choice did I have? It was you who made the first move. You who made me do it."

She played with the earth, tracing patterns, making little hills and

paths among the leaves. "If I made the first move, it's because I was the first to tire of our life. But you too were bored with a life of endless pleasure and easy living. To be constantly told—don't question, just obey and you will be given all the food, the toys, the enjoyments of life that you desire. That was fine at first, but it was always the same flat prospect. There was nothing to look forward to. There was no drama, no peaks."

A pause. She frowned. "So now we know that we can't have peaks without the abyss."

She cast a pleading look towards him.

"Excitement. Is that all we gained?" He rolled over on his side. She studied his back, clothed with an intricate mosaic of damp leaves: new-leaf green, greenish-brown, reddish-brown, brown, brown spotted with black.

"No, not just that. Ever since we left, I have been—how can I say it—I have felt so alive. Even just sitting here, I can feel the damp earth under my buttocks. When I piss, there will be warmth from my body flowing into the earth. When I breathe, cool air from out there comes into here, into me! That makes me think—someday I won't

breathe anymore, someday my eyes will close forever. I feel fragile. I feel like every breath is a gift. A gift from the earth.”

**I CURSE YOU FOR  
OPENING MY EYES TO  
SUFFERING AND DEATH.**

He stared at her for a long time. Then he gazed somberly at his dirt-encrusted hands and rubbed his face and pulled at the hairs on his head. He said, “We are dirt people. We came from dirt and now we will return to dirt. I thought we were living in paradise but it seems that we were only living in ignorance.”

She said, “We have lost the glory without. Now we must find the glory within.”

The man spat. “I curse you for opening my eyes to suffering and death. I still wish with all my heart that I had never even smelled the enticing lure of knowledge, let alone tasted it. But I have and you have. And now we must go forward into that darkness.”

The woman sprang to her feet. “Yes, but look! Last night I saw little bits of light in the darkness. I caught one! It was a fly that glowed as if lit from within by a tiny sun. We too can find gleams of sun to light that darkness. We can! God didn’t leave us helpless. God gave us

curiosity! And joy! Every moment is precious now because we know that we will die.” She crossed her hands on her shoulders and hugged herself. “I think God will still walk with us. I can feel it in my heart.”

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Smiling fondly on the curly heads of her children who were snuggled by her side, Eve concluded, “I’m not a bit sorry . Adam did calm down eventually. We wandered around for quite awhile before we found the right path. And apples are still my favorite treat.” □

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