

## Adam's Belly-button and Flying Fish

By Drew T. Noll

Deep in the jungle on a tiny hilltop sat a lonely figure. He was completely surrounded by lush vegetation and flowering plants that oozed honey into the air and down stems and trunks to a wide variety of waiting creatures below. Each plant tried to outdo the next in the way it dazzled up into the sunlight, with rays glimmering off dew covered leaves. The trees were stretching higher than they could reach, and then swooping down into perfect timing with the waves of moist air that blew in from the west.

The animals in this jungle weren't regular animals like what we would expect to see in a jungle far, far away. These animals were not confined to the ground, but flew and floated about, filling all the skies hovering above the garden with smiling creatures. The monkeys were swinging from tree to tree, flipping in somersaults between, and enjoying every moment. The lions were floating, as if doing the back stroke through a pool on a hot summer's day, and the hippopotamuses were bouncing from the ground and over the highest trees with barely a thud as they landed back onto the ground, then launching again, gleefully grinning to one another!

But, all this wonder was happening around one lone figure, an upright walker named Adam, as he sat gazing downwards ... contemplating a tiny hole in the center of his belly, his belly-button.

Adam was the only person that had ever existed in the jungle garden and all the animals that gathered around him loved him, but they didn't know



how to help him figure out why he had a belly-button. Adam just sat and stared while his mind went wild with all the possibilities. He couldn't figure out why this one tiny hole was apparently not meant to be used for anything. He knew that the holes in his ears were for hearing, because when he covered them he was unable to hear. He knew that the holes in his nose and mouth also had a purpose. Every hole in his body had a purpose, and each was very important with which to live in the garden ... all except this one small hole, a button, in the center of his belly. So, Adam just sat, looking down, and stared at it.

One day, Adam got a wonderful idea. He decided to pray, and to ask for another upright walker that could be a friend for him in the garden. Then, surely this person could tell him why he had a belly-button. So, that night he went to sleep, and in the morning he woke to find another upright walker curled in sleep next to him in the garden. He was so excited that he jumped up, and since everything floated in the garden he ended up jumping higher into the sky than even the hippos could.

Adam eventually made it back down to the ground and seeing that all of the animals had gathered around the newcomer, he stepped out of the air onto the ground and stood by her side. She looked almost exactly like Adam, except for some minor differences, and Adam was very excited to see that she also had a belly-button. But, when Adam asked her about it, she replied that it was obviously there for 'some purpose' and to stop sitting around wasting time. There was a lot to do in the garden and an expedition to its farthest corners was the first thing on the list. Adam,



shuffling his feet, sheepishly agreed, and since he had given all the animals their names, he gave this newcomer a name as well. Adam decided that he was to be a 'He,' and that she was to be a 'She,' so, because the animals in the garden had gathered around her so quickly, Adam also decided to call her Eve, because of the love and compassion that arose from her. This love had attracted all the garden animals as if she were the mother of all life.

Adam and Eve immediately set out to explore their garden and as Adam was clearing a path for Eve in one direction, Eve had a moment to ask the animals about Adam's obsession with his belly-button. The animals loved Eve and followed her as she explored, but none of the animals had an answer for her, and so, just waited around to see what would happen next.

Then the snake floated forward with an idea, saying, "Just over the hill there is a magic tree that has all the answers to questions in the garden. You only need to eat from it to receive the answer to any question you wish. It's really quite a unique tree." But, when the schools of fish that were always hovering about heard the snake, they all immediately flew away as fast as they could, all the while warning the jungle animals that they would be very sorry if they stayed. The animals just laughed at the fish and told them all to go back to school.

So, the snake led the way, floating down the path, to show Eve the tree while everyone but the fish looked on with baited breath. As Eve came into the clearing with the enchanted tree growing from its center, she was very pleased by it. When she came closer, Eve found that it was the most



aromatic tree in the entire garden. She didn't understand why they weren't allowed to eat from such a desirable tree. She reached up to pick a shining fruit that seemed to beg to be plucked, leaning out and glistening, when all the birds began to squawk at Eve not to do it, not to even touch the tree! They floated around her in swarms with a giant noise full of cries and chaos, trying to get her to listen, but ... it was too late.

Meanwhile, Adam was still clearing a path to get to a tree that he knew Eve would love called the Tree of Life, and since Eve was the mother of all life, Adam knew that she would give him one of her biggest smiles when she saw it. But, just as he was about to break through the brush that grew thick around the base of the Tree of Life, Adam heard a school of fish swarming over his head. He stopped what he was doing and looked up to see what all the fuss was about.

The fish continued to cry out their warnings, so Adam skipped back through the garden to where Eve and the animals were gathered and came into a dark little clearing with a lonely, crooked tree nestled in its center. The birds had been there, squawking and crying, but were now all flapping willy-nilly away towards the horizon, and as he approached, shocked, he realized which tree they had all been gathered around. Eve had already plucked a fruit and held it out to Adam. She had touched the tree. She had eaten from it. Adam was overwhelmed by its scent and its beauty. He instantly forgot that it was a forbidden tree with a forbidden fruit, he forgot about what the fish had said, and he shut out the squawking warnings of the birds as they continued to fly away. Adam took a large, juicy bite from



the fruit of the forbidden tree, and as its innards squirted out and ran down his face, he finally understood. He looked down at his belly-button, realizing in that moment where it had come from, but he also noticed that he had, evidently, forgotten to put on his pants.

So, in the end, the animals were all confined to the ground for standing idly by and not trying to stop the upright walkers from eating the forbidden fruit. The snake was cursed to eat dirt forever as it slithered around under the ground in all the dark and cold places. The birds got to stay in the air, because they tried so hard to stop Adam and Eve from the forbidden tree; and the fish you ask? Since they flew away, but didn't try and help, the fish ended up continuing to fly, but under the water. Sometimes, even today, on the sea when it's dark and quiet, you can still see a fish flying above the surface of the water for a moment, as if to remind us what happened to Adam and Eve in the garden, and how Adam ignored the splendor and majesty that was all around him, only to waste his life wondering about something so tiny and insignificant as a belly-button.

