

Another Day in Paradise
by Rachel Woodlock

Monty stretched and sighed as he leaned over to pick another perfectly plump grape from the vine. A cool breeze delicately tussled his chestnut curly hair as he popped the grape into his mouth to savor the exquisitely sweet juice. It was a warm summer's day in Eden, as was every day in the blissful Paradise, and Monty had lost count of the hours spent lying underneath the shady willow tree. He glanced over towards the bustling rivulet and saw a small fish leap up into the air, somersaulting and shaking droplets of water that sparkled in the sun. Monty sighed again.

It had been rather exciting when the Messiah finally returned to conquer evil and restore Paradise. Monty wasn't quite sure how he'd managed to be on the side of the righteous, but with a strict religious childhood of services three times a week, and a strong sense of social conformity which meant always buckling the seatbelt when driving, Monty had a sneaking suspicion he'd snuck in low under God's radar.

Nearby, a large lioness, which had previously been enjoying a sun-bake, ambled over to take a drink at the rivulet. She purred as she lapped and it caught the attention of two young lambs halfheartedly munching on clover. Monty was about to sigh for a third time when he caught sight of Satan who was heading over towards Monty's shady willow tree.

"Hello Monty, I've got a new one for you", Satan said.

"Well you can give it a go, but I've pretty much heard them all by now."

"It *was* the lone gunman on the grassy knoll." Satan beamed in anticipation of Monty's surprise.

"No good. Heard that at the same time as the Colonel's secret recipe of seven not so secret herbs and spices. Wouldn't have figured marjoram would make all the difference to a piece of chicken." Monty glumly returned.

Satan frowned for a moment, shook his bald red head and then plopped himself down next to Monty.

"What about that Elvis was correctly spotted three times in a Hawaiian 7-Eleven before moving to Albuquerque and opening a fishing store?"

Monty rolled his eyes.

"I first heard that years ago, and besides, most people knew that before Jesus came back anyway!"

"Ummm, there isn't life in outer space and the UFOs were a CIA plot to confuse the Russians, not to mention all those gullible New Mexicans?"

"Look Satan, since the Messiah returned; fought your lot; forgave you for simply carrying out God's orders and rebuilt Eden, there aren't any more intriguing mysteries to haunt us for their solution. Face it, Paradise is perfect! Monty sighed for the fourth time and Satan mumbled that he'd only been trying to help.

There was a long silence as the two chums lay on the grass, picking grapes and trying to think of a topic of conversation.

"I caught up with Adam the other day," Satan finally said.

"Oh yes?" Monty said with half an interest.

"Yes lovely chap, God couldn't have picked a nicer example to use as the first human. We're going bird watching on Tuesday. Not sure if Jesus is free that day as well, but I've left a message for him at anyrate."

"Fair enough."

There was another long pause.

"What do you think of the plans for a new rock pool in the Center Management

complex at Edensville?” Satan tried again.

“Has anyone objected?”

“Of course not, it’s aesthetically ideal.”

“You’d think they could at least try and build a tacky theme park and see if they could rouse up some opposition to the building application.” Monty grimaced.

“Hardly, the community consultation programme is stronger than ever since they decided to have Jesus attend all the meetings.”

Satan got up and brushed himself off, smoothing the lapels of his red pinstriped suit.

“I’m off Monty, you’re acting awfully bored today.” Monty rolled his eyes again and picked another grape. He looked up after noticing that Satan’s shadow hadn’t moved for a couple of minutes.

“Well? Goodbye then!” Monty said brusquely as he glanced up at Satan. He was about to return to select another grape from the vine, but something made Monty stop and stare a little harder at Satan. For the first time since they’d met at the Armageddon Battle reunion of ’62, Monty didn’t know how to read the look on Satan’s face.

“Err yes?” Monty said, “I’ll catch up with you tomorrow then?” He wasn’t sure whether or not Satan was really listening. His friend had a faraway look in his eye and he was pulling at his red goatee thoughtfully.

“Well Satan, it’s been awfully good to see you, do give my regards to the wife and all that.” Monty decided that picking grapes was the best way to deal with the situation and he selected another two plump specimens from the vine. But Satan hadn’t moved.

Finally Satan spoke.

“Monty, you’re bored!”

“I am?”

“Thoroughly! You know all the answers to the mysteries of life, you’ve gotten sick of the endless, perfect summer days, and you spend all your time under the willow tree, complaining about how the town administration meetings have no spirit to them. You are most definitely bored!” Satan said, a little gleam starting to show in his eyes.

“Well, okay, so what if I am?” Monty asked.

“Well if you’re bored, what’s the bet sooner or later somebody else will become bored as well!” Satan continued.

“Yes,” Monty said slowly, “and so what?”

“Monty don’t you see?” Satan said excitedly, crouching down to whisper in his friend’s ear.

“Paradise isn’t so perfect after all! It’s a sham!” Satan spluttered.

Monty tried to take in what his friend was saying. A few minutes ticked by and the lioness continued lapping at the rivulet; another fish flipped into the air with a double somersault, and the two young lambs gave a contented “baa” and continued their half-hearted munching. But Monty knew Satan was right. The Messiah had come, the forces of evil had been defeated, and Paradise was home for all the believers, except that something had happened which no one had expected. Monty’s boredom had destroyed Paradise!