



A SYMBOL OF HOPE

A short story

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Published by Silver Fire Publishing

Cover Design by Theresa Linden

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Dedication

This short story is dedicated to the angels who remained faithful to God

and to families throughout the world.

A SYMBOL OF HOPE

“This day sure is taking a long time compared to the others.” Lucifer stood hands on hips, giving God the Father an accusing glare.

God waved his hand dismissively, without sparing a glance. “I know, I know. Don’t let it trouble you, Morning Star. Michael and I are in the middle of a game.” He leaned over the alabaster and obsidian game board he had created just for the occasion. It hadn’t taken more than a thought and the ornate black and white game had appeared. Much to Michael’s delight.

Lucifer let out a long, loud exhale and turned around. “Day one . . . let there be light, you’d said,” he muttered, though it had been pretty awesome. He hadn’t even known nothingness or darkness until that big blast of radiant light appeared, immense rays in a spectrum of colors shooting out, enormous sparks flickering and spiraling through space.

The sight had bedazzled him. He wouldn’t mind seeing it again. Maybe one day he’d create something himself that could explode into light and change everything. The explosion in his thoughts had more of a mushroomy shape.

“Day two . . . atmosphere.” Lucifer replayed the day in his mind. God had also provided another light display: little, colorful lights swirling on the northern and southern ends of the planet that had sprung from the blast on day one. The angels had all gathered to watch, oohing and ahing. God the Holy Spirit had taken off though.

Still bowed over the game board with Michael, God the Father laughed and clapped.

“Where is your Holy Spirit, anyway?” Lucifer said aware that he’d interrupted a minor victory.

God the Father glanced. “He is moving over the face of the deep. Did you need Him?”

“No, simply wondering.” Lucifer resumed pacing the clouds. “Day three: land and oceans. Day four: sun, moon, planets and stars.” Again, pretty awesome. The sparks that had shot out on the first day had come to rest in their orbits, some fiery globes, others gas balls or rocks like the earth. He wouldn’t mind ruling one of them one day. His gaze slid to God. Had that been his intent all along. Lucifer had always been God’s favorite. Perhaps God meant to let him rule one day. Not a ludicrous thought.

God moved a piece on the board and smiled at Michael. “Ha ha! What will you do now?”

“As if you don’t know,” Michael teased with a loving smile.

“I choose to suspend my knowledge for the sake of the game.”

“And how do you do that?”

“I can restrict the use of certain Divine attributes.”

Michael quirked a brow.

“Never mind. Accept that it’s a mystery.”

Michael nodded and took his turn.

Wings tensing behind him, Lucifer approached. “So on the fifth day, you created water creatures and flying creatures. And days one through five were all the same length. Long, sure, but they’re the same. Now it’s the sixth day and you’re just sitting here, the minutes clicking off.”

God met his gaze. “I don’t remember giving you a clock.”

Michael chuckled then he and God exchanged glances, their eyes like half-moons and the hint of a grin on each of their faces.

“I’m just saying. You’re making all this stuff and talking about these special beings who will enjoy it all, and you don’t even make them. You stop and play a game.

If you give these beings the least bit of intelligence, they're going to wonder why this day took so long compared to the others."

God was suddenly on his feet, towering over Lucifer. "My dear angel, my Morning Star, do not doubt me. I shall speak My Word in due time."

Mortified by the rebuke, Lucifer stepped back and averted his gaze.

When God said *My Word*, he'd referred to His Son. He did nothing without Him. Where was He, anyway?

"Would you like me to tell you about them?" God said in his fatherly tone.

Lucifer did not answer. God knew his burning curiosity. Why did he ask?

"They will be the jewel in the crown of creation, made in Our image and likeness." God often referred to himself as plural, on account of his Trinitarian nature.

Lucifer drew back, his gaze snapping to God the Father. "You plan to make gods?"

God laughed and returned to his game. "No, Morning Star. I make man. Male and female I shall make them. In Our own image We shall make them."

A feeling unknown to Lucifer surged through him. He had nothing to compare it to, but he felt as though he was growing bigger. "Will they be intelligent, beautiful, and powerful?"

"Not as you are. Not as my angels are. Not at first."

"Then, in what way will they resemble you?"

"They will have dominion over creation. And they will become co-creators."

Lucifer drew back. A million thoughts and questions gnawed at his being. Even the angels, radiant in beauty and full of power, could not create.

"They will be confined to the world for a time," God continued, "where they will not see me."

God intended to give these creatures, who would only know him at a distance, the power to create? Lucifer shook his head, not ready to ask another question. Though God would know what thoughts ran through him.

“I want them to return my love freely. If they knew me as my Angels know me, they would find me irresistible.”

“If they do not see you,” Lucifer thought, “how can they love you?”

“All of creation will point to the Creator, the light that shines in darkness, the vastness of sea and sky, the beauty of the flowers, the moving of the wind, the purity of water . . . Most especially, they shall come to know me through love. I will put the flame of my love in their hearts, love that gives of self, love that creates. They will long for deep and true love, and they will know me.”

Understanding dawned on Lucifer. He saw what appeared to be a defect in God’s plan. “Their love, to be real, must be free which means . . .”

God advanced his game piece on the board and faced him. “Yes. They will have the power to choose but not as angels do, for you have great knowledge in addition to freedom. You will have but one test and one choice, whereas they will have many opportunities.”

“You mean, then, that they can choose to love and obey or they can choose to . . . to hate you?”

Making no reply, God the Father returned to the game and lifted an alabaster piece. Michael’s gaze slid to Lucifer.

Lucifer did not let the glance of Michael trouble him. He had grown in understanding and blurted out, “If you allow them to be tempted, they will betray you. If they cannot see you, they will create their own gods which they can see and touch, which they can worship. The jewels in the crown of creation will turn against their creator and against each other.”

“If they but turn back to me, I will forgive them.”

Lucifer could not resist pushing forward. “But even after receiving your forgiveness, they will turn against you. They will commit greater and greater offenses, brother murdering brother, family against family. And as their numbers increase, so will their conflicts.”

“Then they will know something of which even my angels have had no knowledge. It will rain down from Heaven in great torrents, reaching to every corner of the earth.” God the Father turned his attention to something off in the distance.

“They will know my Divine Mercy.”

Lucifer followed the Father’s gaze.

The Son of God approached at an unhurried pace, angels oscillating before and behind him, their wings fluttering as if in expectation of something wonderful.

“What will you do?” Lucifer whispered, fearing the answer.

God the Father lifted a hand and closed his eyes. “I shall make known to you my plan.”

Heaven and earth trembled. Then images appeared instantaneously in Lucifer’s mind. He saw it all, and he gasped, horrified. “No! You . . . you plan to send your Son, making him one like them, to live among them, reducing him to a servant, and then . . . and then elevating him in his human nature above the angels . . . above me. Why?”

“I love them. They have been in my mind for all eternity. Every one of them.”

Lucifer continued to dwell on the Revelation of God, searching for the strongest way to make his point. Then he found it and fell back. He could not believe that the Father would allow this. He turned an accusing glare to God. “They will kill Him!”

God the Father looked at the Son. A deep breath shuddered through the Father and clouds rolled back in its wake. “I know.”

Lucifer had had enough. Anger rose up in him, his wings lifting.

Michael snapped his gaze to Lucifer and froze with a game piece held aloft.

“You plan to create a creature that, once tempted, will be doomed. These creatures you claim to love are destined to feel abandoned by you and to turn against one another. Living without hope, they will kill themselves and die apart from your friendship. None will live in your Kingdom, yet you, the Creator, will have stooped to the level of creature. For what?”

God the Father rose again from his game. Michael stood with him, his wings lifting and his hand creeping to the hilt of his sword.

“I will give them a symbol of hope,” God said. “Their love will so image Our love that it will create something they will love. And when they look upon it they will know . . . We have not given up on them. Our love remains with them.”

“And what will their love produce? What is this symbol of hope?”

More and more angels gathered round, some allying themselves behind Lucifer, others behind Michael. Expectation and apprehension filled the air.

God turned up a palm and stretched out his arm. Then an image appeared before them. “This is my symbol of hope.”

A small, insignificant creature appeared on the clouds, tiny with pudgy limbs and pink, chubby cheeks. Sky blue, innocent eyes stared up at the Father, twinkling with joy. A gurgling sound came from its mouth. And its limbs flailed.

“This?” Lucifer grew taller. If God intended to lower himself to the level of his creatures, how could he expect the angels to worship him? “But it is weak, helpless. It can do nothing on its own.”

“No, nothing. They will have to love selflessly in order for it to live. They will have to love with Our love.”

“And you intend to send your son into the world . . . like this?”

The Father’s gaze connected with the Son’s. “I do.”

“Then, hear me now.” Lucifer rose up even higher. “I *will not* serve.” If God planned to stoop to such levels, then Lucifer would raise his own throne above the stars of God and make himself like the Most High.

Michael unsheathed his blade and lunged, knocking the board game down. It fell to the earth, perhaps somewhere around Egypt. “Who is like unto the Lord our God!”

Myriads of Angels rose up with Michael. Lucifer's band drew arms, and a great battle ensued in the heavens until Lucifer, now Satan, and one third of the Angels, now Devils, were cast out.

And God the Father lamented, "How are you fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn!"

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An ungodly scream tore through the air.

Satan sat crouched on a log, picking apart the dead wood. The tree had fallen last year, having died from a termite infestation. Adam and Eve had stood aghast, staring at the dead thing, not knowing what to think of it. They had no idea how many ants and bugs they killed on a daily basis. If they knew, they'd probably go into convulsions.

They hated for anything to die, even the firstborn of their flocks which they sacrificed to God. God had probably commanded this so they would never forget what happened in the garden. He had given them one and only one restriction. "You shall not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil or you will surely die." Every death reminded them of their disobedience. Of their weakness.

Pride filled Satan from the tip of his pointy ears down to his clawed toes. It had taken little effort to get them to doubt and betray God.

Another scream ripped through the air.

Satan chuckled and peered up at the entrance to the couple's home, a deep cave in the side of a mountain. When would their little creature emerge?

Eve had gone into labor late last night. She had never known such pain. Surely she would hate the creature once she delivered it into the world. How could she not? Then Satan would mock God again, proving him wrong. The couple would not see the baby as a sign of hope but as the harbinger of pain and added hardship.

The next scream came from somewhere deep inside Eve, and it lasted for a full thirty seconds.

Satan leaped to his feet.

A tiny wail sounded, drawing the attention of nearby birds. The thing had been born.

Tingling with excitement, anxious to see their cold welcome of the creature, Satan crawled like a snake into the cave.

His grin faded as he beheld the trio.

Adam helped wrap the pink, sticky creature in a lambskin blanket and handed it to Eve. Propped up with furs, Eve pressed the baby to her breast and gazed at it through teary eyes. She laughed, cried, and then laughed again. Adam scooted close to Eve and embraced her. The two of them lay there, smiling like idiots, gazing at the baby. A moment later, Eve lifted her eyes to heaven and whispered a prayer. "With the help of the Lord, I have brought forth a son."

Anger and irritation clawed at Satan. He saw it in their eyes. They loved it . . . their little symbol of hope.

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About the Author

Theresa Linden, an avid reader and writer since grade school, grew up in a military family. Moving every few years left her with the impression that life is an adventure. Her Catholic faith inspires the belief that there is no greater adventure than the reality we can't see, the spiritual side of life. She hopes that the richness, depth, and mystery of the Catholic faith will arouse her readers' imaginations to the invisible realities and the power of faith and grace. A member of the Catholic Writers Guild, Theresa lives in northeast Ohio with her husband, three boys, and one dog. Her other published books include the *Chasing Liberty* dystopian trilogy, *Roland West*, *Loner* and *Life-Changing Love*, the first two books in this series of Catholic teen fiction. *Roland West*, *Loner* has both the Catholic Writers Guild "Seal of Approval" and a second-place award from the Catholic Press Association.