

# The Garden of Eden Point

By Michael Danese

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In a bunker very deep below the ground, two men and a woman were having drinks

Mary turned to Mark and said, “Mark, I know I’ve said it before, but we simply can’t thank you enough for what you’ve done for us!”

Her husband, Jamison added, “Right, man, you saved our lives!”

“Well, it would have been *pretty* lonely these past few weeks down here all alone, with no one to share the time with!” Mark responds.

They clinked their glasses together.

The bunker was, under a small coastal town in Florida called Eden Point. At least that is what it used to be called before all of this. Mark had lived here for years, and Jamison and Mary were just getting settled into the bungalow next door when the warnings came. The young couple tried to laugh it off, but Mark insisted that they join him, at least for a few hours. Those few hours turned into weeks.

When the Covid 19 virus swept the world, it seemed like it was being contained, then racial violence erupted, first in Minneapolis, then in every city, large and small. As the president fanned the flames, the burning and looting engulfed the country until most businesses were destroyed. As a result of all of the close personal contact, the virus mutated and spread, and humanity was decimated.

“I can’t imagine what it was like up there,” Mary said. A tear dripped from one of her striking blue eyes. Mary was tall, with an athletic body. She had long, curly auburn hair and a smile that was like money in the bank.

Mark handed her a tissue and said, “In a few days we can go up and check it out.” Mark was what most women would call attractive, not quite Brad Pitt, but not bad. He was in his early thirties, with brown hair and dimples.

“What I wouldn’t give for a Big Mac with cheese!” added Jamison. Jamison was a big guy, rugged and handsome, a real man’s man. He had a head full of shaggy blonde locks and a big toothy grin. He had slacked off from the gym in the past few years and made up the time drinking beer with his buds. The results are evident in his waistline.

“Well, perhaps you can enjoy a picture of a Big Mac, because I’m afraid that’s a thing of the past, just like a cheese steak, and a Subway sandwich.” Mark said.

Jamison pulled Mary close and said, “It’ll be great just to feel the sunshine, eh, babe?”

Mary snuggled with her husband and agreed.

Jamison and Mary were an item all through high school. He was a three-letter man in football and baseball, but basketball was his sport. As with many people in the Deep South, religion played a large part in his life.

Mary was a cheerleader and was always on the sidelines cheering on her guy. They were named homecoming king and queen in September, and prom king and queen in May. Shortly after graduation they had a storybook June wedding and most of the town turned out.

It was on that night, in the honeymoon suite at the Holiday Inn when they first made love. Mary was ready and willing for months, but she respected Jamison's wishes to wait until they were married in the eyes of God.

Jamison got a partial scholarship to Southern Florida University, and Mary applied and was easily accepted. With her stellar grades, she could have gone to any school. She excelled in her college classes as she majored in elementary education. Jamison didn't fare so well. He was a hit at the frat parties, but the schoolwork was too overwhelming, and he dropped out after the first semester. He took a job at his dad's auto body shop which turned out to be a good fit for him.

Jamison worked while Mary finished college, and then she was hired to work at the school in town teaching first grade. This has been their life for the past three years. eventually they saved up enough money to buy the bungalow in Eden Point. This had been their dream since graduation, and they were happy to begin this next chapter in their lives.

Mark, on the other hand, had been living in or near this town all his life. His parents and grandparents were both from here, in fact; the bunker that saved their lives was built by his grandfather. Mark was a mechanical engineer and part owner at a local solar energy company. Business was booming, pardon the pun, but that is all over now.

Mark married his college sweetheart, Leslie. She was a researcher and also worked at the solar energy company. They were happily married, as least Mark thought so, until about two years ago, when Leslie announced that she was leaving him for another scientist at the company, and that they were moving to take jobs at a rival company up north. After that, Mark threw himself into his work and he hadn't dated since. The scars were pretty deep. But he was sure glad to be around Mary, she was like a breath of fresh air to him.

"Ready to call it a day, love?" Jamison asked.

"Yeah, sure. I can't really tell one day from the next anyway," said Mary.

"OK you two, I'll see you at breakfast," said Mark.

They pulled each other off the couch and headed to their room. Luckily, the bunker was big enough for up to six people, complete with three small bedrooms, a bathroom, kitchen, and a combo sitting and eating area.

Mary was in the bed and Jamison snuggled up to her and said, "I'm sure that you realize the big responsibility that God has given to us."

"Huh?" said Mary.

"It is all up to you and me. In a thousand years the population of the world will all be our descendants. When they preach in church about who begat who, it will end with *Jamison and Mary*. Pretty amazing, ain't it?" he added.

“Eh, I guess so ...” sighed Mary.

“I think we should get started with God’s work right away,” Jamison said pulling her closer.

“I think God will be fine with waiting, I’m pretty tired tonight,” said Mary.

“Okay, well then pray with me,” Jamison said as he took her hand. “Dearest God, please give us the strength, wisdom and courage to fulfill the destiny that you have chosen for us.”

“Amen,” they said together.

Morning came quickly and soon they were all gathered for breakfast. Today they feasted on canned peaches and water. Mary turned to Mark and asked. “Mark, tell us more about your grandfather and whatever possessed him to build this place.”

“Ah, he was a great guy, larger than life as they say,” he began. “His name was Jim and he was a nuclear engineer in the 1950s and 60s, and the possibility of a nuclear war loomed large in his head. I vividly remember him and my grandmother, who was also named Mary, did I mention that to you before, Mary?”

“No, but I’m honored,” said Mary.

“Well, she was a beautiful woman, and you have her eyes,” continued Mark. “I was adopted; as my parents could not have children, and between my parents and grandparents there was a lot of love around here. My grandfather died when I was 10. Anyway, he was a bit of a “Captain Nemo,” but instead of building a submarine, he built this bomb shelter. Back in the 50s and 60s the possibility of this event was something that everybody was aware of. Schools had A-bomb drills along with fire drills.”

“Right, I remember seeing old school movies about the drills, all of the kids huddled under their desks,” said Mary.

“Ha, like that would actually help!” added Jamison.

“Crazy, huh?” Mark continued, “but still serious business and paranoia was rampant. Most people had a supply of food and water in their basements, many built bomb shelters to protect their families. None were anywhere near the quality of this place.”

“He began it in 1955 There was an old mine here, and the shaft was very deep. He built off of that, and it was functional within a year. But, as time went on, he expanded and improved it. He devised his own method of distribution for the bottled air, storing water, generating power and eliminating waste, along with storing canned food. I remember playing here all the time.”

“He probably spent a lot of time doing this,” said Mary.

“And all of his money too,” Mark continued. The door is solid lead, a few inches thick, and so are all of the walls down here.”

“That’s so sad,” said Mary, “but incredible dedication to what he believed in.”

“Yes, it was his life’s work, obsession actually,” said Mark.

“It was all part of God’s plan ... all leading up to our ... destiny. I’m sure he never even dreamed that it would protect his grandson and the future of humanity from a deadly pandemic!” beamed Jamison.

“Well, he was a great planner and dreamer. He tried to think of everything,” said Mark.

“When my grandfather died my dad maintained it and kept it all up to date. He kept the dream alive, so to speak. He died about ten years ago, and of course I kept it up to date after that, never thinking that someday it would protect us from a deadly virus!”

“That someday it would save our very lives!” exclaimed Mary.

“Well, yes,” said Mark. “He was a stickler for detail. He wanted to make it sufficient for up to six months, but he said that even in the worst possible scenario, it would be safe to emerge in three weeks if we had to, but a month would be a safe minimum. So, we should be able to emerge today!”

“It sure seems like a lot longer than a month, since all radio and TV went black three weeks ago!” said Mary.

“I can’t wait to jump on my motorcycle and gun it! No cops, no speed limits!” said Jamison.

“That’s true,” added Mark, “it will be a different world, but if we can keep our heads on straight, and maintain a positive attitude, we should be okay. We need to be prepared for what we might see. The devastation, the bodies of our friends and neighbors.”

“Yes,” added Mary. “I must admit that I’m dreading that. I’m not sure that I can take it. My students, those sweet, innocent kids, and their families.”

Jamison pulled her close as she began to cry.

Mark tried to lighten the mood and put a positive spin on the situation, if that were even possible. “Yes, we will unfortunately need to face all of that, but for our future, all of the canned goods in the stores should be fine, and there will be enough for years. Plenty of bottles and canned drinks too. Also, a large supply of gasoline, and who wants a new car? We can take our pick!”

“I ... always wanted a convertible,” said Mary, almost in a whisper.

“I hope my truck is okay, I had it tuned up perfectly!” said Jamison.

“By next year we should be able to eat fresh fish and grow crops of our own,” said Mark.

“I know that you have a generator at your house already, but I’ll go *shopping* at Lowe’s and get the biggest one there for our house,” said Jamison.

“Wal-Mart and Target and the library will have an endless supply of books and DVDs,” said Mark.

“While you are out, dear, pick us up a few of those 70-inch TVs, you know, like you always wanted,” said Mary.

“Excellent idea, and new Blu-Ray players for everyone!” said Jamison.

Mary turned away and began to cry again, "I'm sorry, but I can't stop thinking about how hard it will be. All of our friends ... the people that we were saying hello to a month ago, like Mr. Gibson down the street."

"And Pastor Pfeiffer," added Jamison sadly.

"My mom, my dad, my little sister ..." Mary said through her tears.

"I know," said Jamison as he hugged her, "this won't be easy, but we are the chosen ones, we need to be strong," he said as he wiped her eyes again.

"Right, it will be very upsetting, but we need to keep our chins up," said Mark as he put his arms around them both.

An hour later they pushed back the lead door and started the long trek up the steps. Then, almost ceremoniously, they all push open the lead door that sealed the bunker. They stepped outside and were bathed in warm sunlight. It was a typical Florida sunny day, but of course it was anything but. The silence was deafening. There wasn't any traffic, no planes flying overhead, save for the birds and the occasional light breeze softly whistling through the trees, there was no sound at all.

The very faint aroma of rotting flesh was still evident in the air; a reminder of what they knew was around them.

"The houses look fine, from here at least," said Mark. "I'm gonna check out mine and I'll see you a little later."

"Ok, boss," said Jamison.

"Thanks again, Mark, I can't wait to see our house again, we'll see you in a little bit," said Mary.

Mark entered his house and it was eerily exactly as he left it. He quickly looked around, and then settled into his favorite chair. From there he could see Mary and Jamison entering their house. He could not take his eyes off of Mary. He always had a thing for her, but after spending a month in close quarters, the feelings intensified.

In their house, the young couple also found their home intact. Mary impulsively began to dust the tables.

"Well, if you are going to clean, I'm gonna go exploring," said Jamison. He gave Mary a hug and a quick peck on the cheek, grabbed his keys and headed for the garage. He threw the door open and hopped onto his Harley and sped away. He felt free tooling down the highway towards town. Mary seemed a bit relieved to finally have some time away from him.

A few minutes later there was a knock on the door. Mary opened it and of course it was Mark, who else could it be? "Can I come in?" he asked.

"Of course, make yourself at home," she said smiling.

"Hey, I just realized that I'm in the presence of the most beautiful woman in the world! Miss Florida, Miss America and Miss Universe!" smirked Mark.

"Shut up you jerk!" said Mary.

“But seriously, I would have never made it through this ordeal without having you around. You kinda made it all worth it,” confessed Mark.

“Now you’re embarrassing me!” blushed Mary.

“I’m sorry, Mary, but I just gotta say that I’ve been a bit enamored by you since you moved in, and this past month has really stoked my feelings for you,” said Mark as he touched her hand. Those many nights when we talked into the wee hours after Jamison drank himself to sleep. I simply loved staring into your eyes!”

“Mark, I ... I can’t,” she said as she pulled his hand away and turned her back to him.

Mark put his hands on her shoulders and said, “Mary, come on, you can’t deny that you at least have *some* feelings for me!” Mark said tenderly.

Mary turned around and Mark’s arms enveloped her as she said, “That isn’t the point ... or relevant ...”

“He looked directly into her eyes and said, “So you *do* have feelings ...”

“Mark, I’m *married*, you *know* my husband! He plays for keeps, he would kill us both!” she pleaded.

“I’ll talk to him, times have changed, and the old rules don’t apply anymore,” said Mark.

“You’re *wrong*. The only rules he lives by are *God’s* rules, and they haven’t changed. The vows say *till death do us part*, and that’s that,” she said.

He grabbed her and kissed her hard and soft at the same time. She initially pushed him away, and then collapsed into his arms.

Jamison arrived in town and was a bit freaked out by a strange mix of his new freedom and the dead bodies that reminded him of how this all came to pass. He first stopped at Watson’s Liquors, smashed the front window just for fun, then grabbed a bottle of Jack Daniel’s from the display. He opened it and took a good, long swig. He surveyed all of the other buildings and stores in his new kingdom.

“The world is ours!” he thought to himself.

Now he was like a kid in a candy store. He ran over to Pope’s Gold Mine and waltzed in the front door. He hopped over the counter and grabbed a three-carat diamond ring and matching necklace and earrings.

“Mary deserves these and more!” he said. He took another long drink and then threw the bottle into the street.

He walked over to the body of a dead policeman; he crouched down next to him and just looked at him for several seconds. He reached down and unbuckled the officer’s holster and slid it out from under him. He grabbed the ammo supply then strapped on the side-arm. He spun around, pulled out the gun and squeezed off a few shots at an imaginary assailant. He holstered the weapon and smiled. He went back to the liquor store, grabbed another bottle of Jack, a bottle of chardonnay for Mary, and some merlot for Mark. He packed them into his saddlebags and headed for home.

When he got there he was very excited. He found Mary dusting in one of the bedrooms. He hugged her and sat her down. She was startled by the gun in the holster around his waist.

“What’s that!? she asked.

“Oh, this ...” he started, “just a little protection for us.”

“From what? There isn’t anybody else around, remember?” she said.

He removed the holster and put it on the bed. “Who knows what or who is out there, there could be giant mutant crocodiles, zombies, whatever!” said Jamison.

“You’ve seen too many science fiction movies, mister!” said Mary.

“Well, maybe, but we can’t be too safe. And, forget about that – I have a present for you! Now sit down and close your eyes, close them tight!” he said.

“Okay, they’re closed,” she said.

Jamison took out the jewelry that he packaged in a velvet box. He placed the box in her hand.

“Okay, you can look!” he said.

She opened the box and was amazed by the treasures in her hands. “My goodness, Jamison, where did you get them? I hope you didn’t steal them!” she said.

“Steal? From whom? It’s just us, remember?” he added.

She slipped on the ring and the necklace. “Why . . . they are so beautiful, thank you!” she said.

“Not as beautiful as my wife, and from now on nothing is too good for you, *nothing!*” he said.

“He pulled out the bottles, took a big gulp from his bottle of Jack, then poured a glass of wine for her. They clinked the bottle and the wine glass together. She took a long sip, then he took the glass from her and put it on the bedside table, then he put his bottle there too and laughing, he pushed her back onto the bed.

Guilt swelled up in Mary, but she certainly loved Jamison at this moment and gently surrendered to him

That night they dined at Mark’s house, since he had electricity from the generator. They had spam and beans, with some fruit cocktail. Jamison gave Mark the bottle of wine, which Mark appreciated.

“Tomorrow I’m gonna take the truck into town,” said Jamison. “I have some heavy duty shopping to do. I’ll hit Lowe’s for our generator, fill up some gas cans, pick up a few big TVs, grab us some Blu-Ray players, and anything else you can think of.”

“Great! said Mary. “Mark, perhaps you can come over and help me set up a space for the TV?

“Of course. I think I also have a table that would be perfect for that.” Mark replied.

“Also Mark, I *will* need your help hooking up the generator and getting us powered up,” said Jamison.

“No problem - I want to propose a toast,” said Mark raising his glass, “to our new beginning!”

“Amen!” added Jamison as the three of them clinked glasses.

The next day Jamison left after breakfast for town. He was happy to be behind the wheel of his big red truck again.

Mary fought with herself about seeing Mark. Her first instinct was to run over and throw her arms around him. But she knew that it would be a betrayal to Jamison, as he loved her like a puppy dog. But her feelings for Mark were getting stronger every minute. Jamison was the only man that she had ever been with ... until the day before at least, and now that she had tasted the forbidden fruit, that wrong can never be righted.

She went over to Mark’s house, and he was expecting her. He immediately took her into his arms, and she didn’t resist.

Over the next few weeks Mark and Mary stole time together whenever they could. Jamison took to drinking himself to sleep almost every night, partly due to an endless supply of good free liquor, and partly because he sensed that Mary was drifting away from him for some unknown reason. He felt like he wanted to confront her but didn’t want to open up the possibility that he would somehow lose her. The bottle was the easier choice.

After Jamison passed out, Mary would visit Mark for a short time before climbing into bed with her husband. They would savor the time when Jamison went into town, because they knew that they would have at least an hour to spend together.

Mark tried to convince Mary on several occasions that perhaps they should come clean, come up with a new arrangement that would make everyone happy. Well, at least Mark and Mary would be happy. Mary always protested, repeating that Jamison would kill them both. Mark eventually believed that she was right.

Mark was becoming very frustrated. He was deeply in love with Mary, and he was tired of the charades. One night he decided to take matters into his own hands. He visited their garage and did a little mechanical work on the brakes of Jamison’s Harley. He rigged it so that when the bike reached a speed of 60 miles per hour, the brakes would disengage completely. It pained him to do this, because he really liked Jamison, but his desire for Mary was stronger.

That morning, Jamison told her that he was heading a little further north to look at another town that he wanted to explore.

The admiration that Mary had for Jamison was eroding a bit as she remembered her times with Mark, but she admitted to herself that she still had love for her husband. Again, she had the internal struggle, which took quite a while to resolve. She swept the floor, folded some laundry, and eventually her desire won out.

Jamison drove too fast while gulping from a bottle of Jack. He got about a mile out of town when he came to a turn in the road and took it pretty fast. When he cleared the



curve, there was a car stopped sideways in the middle of the road. He turned hard to the right and went onto the shoulder, caught a rock, and turned end-over-end and then hit a tree.

He was knocked out for a few minutes, then he opened his eyes. Luckily, he was wearing his seat belt. His face and chest hurt a lot, and his nose was broken, mainly from the air bag deployment. He was hanging upside down. Then Mary's lovely face flashed into his mind, which made him feel better for a second, then quickly that happiness turned to sadness as he remembered their current situation. He unhooked his seatbelt and fell onto the roof. He climbed out of the truck and assessed the damage to his body. He hurt all over, but appeared to be alright. He reached back into the truck for his gun and the bottle. He was pissed at himself for wrecking the truck, but he thanked God for sparing his life. He began the long walk back to town.

As he came over the hill, he could see his house in the distance. He took one last swig from the bottle and threw it aside. He saw his wife in the distance and tried to scream out to her, but the pain in his chest prohibited that, probably a cracked rib. He saw her walking to Mark's house, then watched her enter.

In a few minutes or so he was outside of Mark's house. It was a hot day, and the windows were all open. He was about to knock on the door when he heard some familiar, yet alarming noises coming from the bedroom to his right. He walked to the window and could not believe his eyes. The sight of his wife, naked, on top of Mark sent him into a rage. He quickly and quietly walked into the front door, went to the bedroom and pushed open the door. They turned to see him, but it was too late. In what seemed like slow motion, they raised their arms to shield themselves as he emptied his gun into them.

When it was over, he screamed at the top of his lungs. He could not believe what he had done. He dropped the gun and went over and picked up his wife. She was still gurgling as the blood spurted from her chest. He looked into her eyes and told her that he loved her as the last bit of life left her body. He continued to hug her for what seemed like hours.

He picked up his gun and went back to his house. He sat on his chair. Realizing that he had nothing left to live for, he re-loaded the gun and put the barrel into his mouth. Even through his drunkenness he knew that he had sinned, broken a Commandment. But, he knew that taking his own life was a one-way ticket to Hell. Then, perhaps through divine intervention, he put the gun aside.

"Dear God, please forgive me. I know that I failed you; I ruined your plan for me and my wife. I am weak. Please help me. I will carry on as you see fit, I will never drink again. I will do my best to represent what is left of the human race," he prayed.

The next few days he worked around the house, doing the best he could to keep a positive attitude. He dug graves for Mary and Mark and did his best to give them both Christian burials. He forgave them for what they did. He realized that Mark was in a terrible situation – and that Mary's beauty was impossible to resist. He also thought about why she did what she did. He blamed himself. He was drinking all the time and Mary and Mark did most of the work.

Eventually he decided to go into town. He sped away on his bike, since the truck was still upside down.

As he approached the big curve in the road, he applied the brakes, and you, dear reader, already know what happened next. He was going too fast for the curve and the bike went onto its side. He skidded along the road and his head met a tree. It rattled inside of his helmet and everything went black.

Time passed. He saw a bright light. Somewhere deep in his mind he readied himself to meet his Maker and atone for his sins.

“He opened his eyes! Dad, he opened his eyes! He is going to be okay, my prayers are answered, I will be able to have my husband and raise a family!” said a young woman. “Please call the doc!”

Jamison was lying in a bed, and he was in a lot of pain. His sight was very blurry, at first he could only make out some light, then the figure of a woman. To himself he whispered, “It’s Mary! Oh, Mary! Thank you, dear God, thank you for this second chance, I will do my best this time I promise, thank you!”

The woman leaned over him. “Are you speaking? I can’t hear you,” she said.

“Mary, is it really you?” he whispered.

“Of course it’s me, silly! Who were you expecting, Marilyn Monroe?” she giggled as she kissed him on the cheek. “You just get some rest now.”

A while later a man entered the room and said to Jamison, “Hey Jim, you remember your old pal Huck don’t you? How were things over the rainbow?”

“Mark, is that ...?” he questioned.

“Close, it’s me, Mike! And let me tell you, after the knock you had on the noggin, I can understand how you would be loopy. When those barrels fell, I thought you were a goner. It was a tough way to learn that you need to wear that hard hat! The guys at the plant have a little pool going – the question is what will happen first – Eisenhower will raise our taxes again or you will wake up!”

“I ... I’m sorry, I’m just a bit out of sorts, Eisenhower?” Can I see that paper for a second?

Mike took the newspaper from under his arm and opened it for Jim. He took it and held it close to his eyes – the date at the top of the page said March 12, 1955. “1955?”

Just then Mary returned. “Mike, please let Jim get some rest, maybe come back tomorrow.”

She pulled the covers up and tucked him in, kissed him on the cheek again and said, “Just get some rest now, darling.” Then she pulled down the shade and left the room.

The next day Mary brought him a tray of eggs, bacon, toast, and coffee. He sat up in the bed and said, “I’m starving, thank you, dear.”

“You’re welcome, I’ll have you back at the plant in no time,” she said lovingly.

Jim prayed again to himself, thanking God for this miracle.

A few days later he was sitting in the kitchen with Mary. He took her hand and said, “Mary, I’ve been thinking, the way things are in the world, a man has to do all he can to protect his family. You know the old mine that’s at the end of the property, well. I’m gonna build us a bomb shelter there. I hope that we never need it, but who knows, maybe someday ...” then he pulled her close and kissed her.

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