

Way back when. A long time ago. When colors could sing.

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Once upon a time, I start off, everyone lived in a *garden*. This is way back when. A long time ago. When colors could sing.

Colors can't sing, Cindy tells me.

Not anymore, I say, but this was a really *really* long time ago. No one lives in the garden anymore either. No one can even *find* the garden nowadays. And way back then in the garden everything was transparent. Like shimmering glass. Like shimmering glass statues that moved. That's what the animals looked like.

Everything was *transparent*? she asks.

Everything, I say. The flowers, the trees, the animals, the insects, the birds, the little stones, Adam and Eve. Even the ground. Even rocks and boulders.

Everything could break? she asks.

No, no, I say. It's not that everything was made of *glass*. There was no glass way back then. There was no need for glass. *Everything* was transparent. Wood, flesh, stone. It was all transparent.

Adam and Eve in the garden? her mother says, I think I've heard this story. Are you sure it's suitable? She's warning me. But she doesn't have to worry. Not all my stories are unsuitable for children.

Yes, I say to her, you've heard the rumors. We all have. But this is the real story.

In the garden, I tell Cindy, there were no shadows. Ohh, she says. And colors weren't trapped in objects like they are nowadays, but traveled around from object to object like gifts. One moment the bears would be purple and then the next moment they would be green. Tulips and roses weren't just one color the way they are now. They would shift over the course of the day as different colors gifted themselves onto different objects.

It was so beautiful, I say. Cindy nods, listening. And the colors were so happy that they could go from one object to another that they would sing as they moved. If you stood in the middle of the garden of Eden you would hear this wonderful singing, like a chorus of angels, and you'd watch as green and orange, weaving around each other like friends, would drain off from Adam and Eve through the ground they were walking on, and then up the flowers around them like sprouting candy canes.

And Adam and Eve, they'd be transparently clear, without any colors, for only a moment, and then the sky would echo shades of blue onto them, the colors spreading in them like living ponds, spreading the blue out to all their fingers and toes, and then out into the bare air. And everywhere from within their bodies there would be this singing like angels.

Adam and Eve would stroll through the garden holding hands, and the colors would leap to and fro from them to the flowers, the animals, the rocks, and back again, singing. Just like small happy creatures. Only they were colors, and not creatures at all.

What happened? Cindy asks. Something bad always happens. That's not true honey, her mother tells her.

Wait, wait, I say. You're right about this case, of course. Because things aren't like this anymore. No, Cindy says, colors don't sing anymore. What happened? she asks.

Someone told a *lie*, I say. A lie, she says. A secret, I say. A lie hides something. A lie is opaque. You can't see through it, you can only see around it, I say. Oh, Cindy says.

And the lies spread everywhere. And the world became full of secrets. Everything turned opaque. And the colors were trapped in objects. That's terrible, Cindy says. And they stopped singing, I said. All the colors stopped singing. And even Adam and Eve, I tell her, they kept secrets from each other, and they became opaque too. The last colors that visited them were the colors trapped in them. Forever. The colors that you are now. And now colors are mute too, I say. Everywhere.

Cindy looks at me. She doesn't say anything.

For some reason, I say, water was still transparent. There was a little pond in the garden, and now you could see down to its bottom, the once transparent plants waving in the currents, the once transparent fish swimming around. And all the animals were standing around the pond, watching water, watching the one thing left in Eden that was still transparent. And then they started crying. And those were the other things that were still transparent in Eden. Their tears.

I fall silent. And then my daughter asks me the one question I hoped she wouldn't ask. Who did it? she asks. Who did what, honey? I say. Who told the first lie? she asks me. Her mother's expression says to me: Let's see how you get out of this one.

No one knows, I tell her. It's a *secret*, I whisper to her. Oh *Daddy*, she says, annoyed with me. No, no, I say, it's true, it's true. No one knows. There's a rumor that a snake did it, that a

snake told the first lie. But that's hard to believe. What would a snake lie about? Snakes have nothing to hide from anyone.

Everything is opaque now, Cindy says. Yes, I tell her. And that's why we invented science, I add, to discover all the secrets that hide in objects now. Her mother laughs. Kipling it's not, she says. Synesthesia, she says. You got this from thinking about synesthesia, right? she asks me. I guess, I say.

Soon Cindy will also think the stories I tell her are silly. But not yet. Not yet.

Did you make this up, Daddy? she asks me. No, I say, of course I didn't. It's in the Bible. In Genesis, I think. Her mother tinkles with laughter. Yeah right, she says finally. Cindy looks at her and then at me and then at her again. She doesn't quite get sarcasm yet, I think, but she will soon. Meanwhile, she wonders who to believe.