



Adam & Eve

By Sena Jeter Naslund
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Introduction

The *New York Times* bestselling author of *Ahab's Wife*, *Four Spirits*, and *Abundance* returns with an audacious and provocative new novel that envisions a world in which science and faith contend for the allegiance of a 21st Century Adam and Eve. Set against the searing debate between evolutionists and creationists, *Adam & Eve* expands the definition of a "sacred book," and suggests that true madness lies in wars and violence fueled by religious literalism and intolerance. A thriller, a romance, an adventure, and an idyll, *Adam & Eve* is a *tour de force* by a master contemporary storyteller.

Questions for Discussion

1. What are the implications of Naslund's title *Adam & Eve*? Why did she use an ampersand instead of the word and? Why do you think she set the novel in the year 2020, "the year of clear vision"?
2. "What happened to Eden?" is a question central to the book. How would you answer it? What are your thoughts about the Genesis story? What truths does it hold for Lucy (the novel's heroine and "Eve" of the title)? What creation story does she believe in?
3. Why would the discovery of proof of extraterrestrial life be threatening to some people? How might it affect how we consider our identity, our ideas about being human?
4. Lucy holds the codex and the flash drive. What does each signify for humanity? How are they alike and how do they differ? How might they change the world? Why would someone want to murder to keep the contents of both the codex and the flash drive secret?
5. How does Lucy's background as an art therapist help her in dealing with Adam? Why does he insist on calling her Eve? How do Naslund's characters compare to the characters in the Biblical Genesis story? What propels Lucy and Adam to finally leave Eden? Should they have stayed?
6. Describe the Eden of *Adam & Eve*. If you could create your own paradise, what would it be like? In what way is this Eden a paradise for Lucy? What about Adam? What happens when a third person, Riley, appears in Eden? What about the feral boy?
7. Are religion and science truly as opposed as some people try to make them appear? How would the key characters answer this question? After they have come through their ordeal would Adam insist, as some people do, that science contradicts religion or that science merely contradicts certain ways of perceiving religion and of reading sacred books? How do you feel that religion and science relate to each other?
8. In *Adam & Eve*, Perpetuity is a group of "protectors of faith" comprised of literalist Jews, right-wing Christians, and Muslim extremists. Why do some religious people submit to the mindset of various extremists? What drives a zealotry that fosters man's inhumanity to man? Pierre Saad tells Lucy, "If the Jews, the Christians, the Muslims learn nothing new about their own origins'the mutual origins of their religions'we will have another world war. There will not be enough humanists or people of simple reason to stop them. Each faith will call it a Holy War, and the carnage, the bloodshed of the Medieval Crusades and the more recent European Holocaust will pale in comparison." Do you agree with Pierre's outlook? Are we headed for a "Holy War? How can we stop it? Why is so much bloodshed tied to religion?
9. When they get to France, Pierre shows Lucy and Adam the rare cave paintings that were the first human drawings ever discovered. What do the drawings signify? What is their role in Naslund's story? How do they relate to the codex and to the flash drive that Lucy carries?
10. Late in the novel Lucy remarks, "We must not repeat Cain and Abel billions of times. Sin was the joint failure of Adam and Eve to teach their sons the sacredness of life." Is she correct? Is violence'not disobedience, or knowledge of good and evil, or lust'"original sin?" What do you think of as original sin or as a universal root of human imperfection?