

**NAKED**  
NARRATIVE

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HACIENDA

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*I have been feasting with mine enemy,  
Where on a sudden one hath wounded me  
That's by me wounded.*

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE  
Romeo and Juliet, *Act 2, scene 3*



*‘previously on all networks’*

## NAKED

The thing with Paradise is that it’s something of the past or for the future. Either you are longing back in nostalgia for a land that was ideal, perfect, or you’re looking forward hoping for a future state that is *grandioso*, in which everything will be settled, solved and perfected for ever and ever! If only we could think of a Paradise Now! Not like the suicide-bomber of course who wants immediate access to the endless happiness of the hereafter by killing himself and his fellow creatures. Very strange reasoning indeed!

We don’t want a Paradise motivated by fear, now do we? Though some seem very much attracted to catastrophes.

The longing for Paradise is the desire to overcome suffering and death, the desire for immortality. Ironically, on the quest for immortality we make ourselves and each

other sick and suffer. Yeah, the desire to become immortal is really killing us.

Appreciation of life seems healthier.

‘Paradise, they say, was located somewhere in Mesopotamia, land between the rivers Euphrates and Tigris, fertile land, a bit muddy even, nowadays Iraq, near the Persian Gulf. Sumer, the cradle of civilization.’

Jona’s uncle used to tell this during *Yom Kippur* when the families, or what remained of them, sat around the dishes, or what remained of them, serving it with a kind of sick joke, addressing the family as ‘left-overs’...

‘Now, dear left-overs, we all know the story. Two people there in this Garden of Eden called Paradise, deriving from the ancient Persian word “*pardes*”, meaning a “walled-in garden”...

Suppose Adam was still a boy, about to become nine, playing with a friend, a girl almost his age, in that beautiful garden with flowers and bushes and a blossoming

orchard with luscious fruit. Animals too, in peaceful co-existence. At home in that same environment between rivers, together, both animals and children of men. Summers seemed to be everlasting. They played in the water and dried in the grass, their hair had that natural smell of water and earth and the rivers of life flowed through their naked bodies.

Naked, yes, but what did they know?

Then, one day, Adam looked at Eve's body and he felt a weakness coming over him, his knees trembled. Eve started hiding from his dark eyes, hoping he would find her but ashamed if he did. They started to cover their bodies, the enchantment of childhood had ended and they left the garden to go out into the world, like Jona and little Samar here will do.

Go to school.

Study.

Join the army.

Work.

Start a family.

Hard labour.

Money issues.

Fornication and divorce.

Then the longing began. Why did they ever leave the garden? When they wanted to return there were gun-men with fire-arms in front of the gate and rockets flying everywhere...'

During his high school days when searching for answers to questions no one else in his neighborhood seemed to have Jona sat in the town library and read:

'The expulsion from the Garden of Eden is a folk memory of the beginning of agriculture. With that transition humans no longer dwelled idyllically in a parkland, feeding on wild fruits or animals, but had begun the toilsome cultivation of cereals.

The serpent of the Genesis narrative may represent seasonal changes and renewal, as with the symbolism of Sumerian, Egyptian and other creation myths. In Meso-American creation myths Quetzal-



coatl, a feathered serpent agricultural deity, is associated with learning as well as renewal.

The leading role of Eve in the Genesis narrative may be attributed to the interest of Neolithic women in shifting away from gatherer life in favor of raising crops. Women also may have taken the role of organizers in early farming settlements, thus effectively leading the shift to agrarian society. Though these settlements may have been relatively egalitarian compared to more modern societies, the Genesis narrative may be interpreted as mourning the hunter-gatherer life as a paradise lost.'

Jona, who wanted to become a historian, found out that the name of the Garden of Eden derives from the Akkadian *edinnu*, from a Sumerian word *edin* meaning 'plain' or 'steppe', closely related to an Aramaic root word meaning 'fruitful, well-watered'.

Another interpretation associated the name with a Hebrew word for 'pleasure'.

So ‘the Lord God had planted a paradise of pleasure’.

And o, how Jona longed for the relatively recent past (his youth in Hebron, his own Paradise of Pleasure), ever since the day that Arab girl next door, Samar, had moved from their neighborhood... His Lost Paradise was a fenced-in garden and that olive green neighborhood, domain of his youth, of first discoveries, friendship with animals, a boy of man in his *natural* state...

Years later, the land had changed, he dedicated a late night lament, in a melancholic, sarcastic and faintly religious mood, to the passage from Paradise till the state they were in then and are still in now:

#### NAKED

Once there were two people there  
in the garden that was held sacred  
where even the animals lived in pairs  
unaware they were naked