

Love Is Blind and Deaf

By [Jonathan Safran Foer](#)



Illustration by Mike Ellis

Adam and Eve lived together happily for a few days. Being blind, Adam never had to see the oblong, splotchy birthmark across Eve's cheek, or her rotated incisor, or the gnawed remnants of her fingernails. And, being deaf, Eve never had to hear how weakly narcissistic Adam was, how selectively impervious to reason and unwonderfully childlike. It was good.

They ate apples when they ate and, after a while, they knew it all. Eve grasped the purpose of suffering (there is none), and Adam got his head around free will (a question of terminology). They understood why the new plants were green, and where breezes begin, and what happens when an irresistible force meets an immovable object. Adam saw spots; Eve heard pulses. He saw shapes; she heard tones. And, at a certain point, with no awareness of the incremental process that had led them there, they were fully cured of their blindness and deafness. Cured, too, of their marital felicity.

What, each wondered, have I got myself into?

First they fought passively, then they despaired privately, then they used the new words ambiguously, then pointedly, then they conceived Cain, then they hurled the early creations, then they argued about who owned the pieces of what had never belonged to anybody. They hollered at each other from the opposite sides of the garden to which they'd retreated:

You're ugly!

You're stupid and wicked!

And then the first bruises spread across the first knees, as the first humans whispered the first prayers: *Diminish me until I can bear it.*

But God refused them, or ignored them, or simply didn't exist enough.

Neither Adam nor Eve needed to be right. Nor did they need anything that could be seen or heard in the world. None of the paintings, none of the books, no film or dance or piece of music, not even green nature itself was capable of filling the sieve of aloneness. They needed peace.

Adam went looking for Eve one night, as the newly named animals had their first dreams. Eve saw him and approached.

"I'm here," she told him, because his eyes were covered with fig leaves.

He reached in front of him and said, "Here I am," though she didn't hear him, because her ears were stuffed with rolled-up fig leaves.

It worked until it didn't. There were only apples to eat, so Adam bound his hands with fig-leaf stems and Eve stuffed her mouth with fig leaves. It was good until it wasn't. He went to bed before he was tired, pulling a fig-leaf quilt up to his nostrils, which were plugged with torn fig leaves. She squinted through a veil of fig leaves into her fig-leaf phone, the only light in the room of the world, and listened to herself listening to him struggle to breathe. They were always inventing new ways not to be aware of the canyon between them.

And the unseeing and unhearing God in whose image they were created sighed, "They're so close."

"Close?" the angel asked.

"They're always inventing new ways not to be aware of the canyon between them, but it's a canyon of tiny distances: a sentence or a silence here, a closing or an opening of space there, a moment of difficult truth or of difficult generosity. That's all. They're always at the threshold."

"Of paradise?" the angel asked, watching the humans reach for each other yet again.

"Of peace," God said, turning the page of a book without edges. "They wouldn't be so restless if they weren't so close." ♦

Jonathan Safran Foer is the author of "Here I Am,"