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THE NEW / NEW TESTAMENT

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"All that you Change, Changes you. The only lasting truth is Change. God Is Change."

Octavia E. Butler

the following must be recited by BEL before the genesis of each show

somewhere between the old world and the new. there's always some old. the new is just a shiny old built
on another less chrome old. therefore, we declare a new testament, a newer testament, a new new
testament, in order to make sure our new, not your new, stay new; and the old stay old. this is not a remix,
this is not a retelling. this is a continuation of what was Before in order to reveal what is the Now. the
Now is our testimony and we are what we've always been. your Prophets.

dramatis personae

all characters are:
black
know AAVE
reflect divinity
identify with womxnhood but not necessarily femininity

BEL: catalysts change.

EVE: fears change.

EDEN: craves change.

THE LAZARUS: incubates change.

Chapter [redacted]: Verse..

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VERSE I. Heart to Heart Scene

the chaos of move-in day. boxes litter a nearly empty apartment. imagine the earth, unshaped by God's hands. that is this apartment. shapeable, but unclaimed and almost without definite form. anything is movable, anything is arrangeable. stacked but not a mess. there is a method, somewhere, in the madness.
from off stage, we hear our proto-deities in their land.

EDEN
FUCK.

EVE
Please don't drop my couch.

EDEN
I'm going to drop your couch.

EVE
Please don't drop my fucking couch. It's a Chesterfield.

EDEN
I'm going to drop your FUCKING chesterfield.

EVE
I'm going to dropkick you.

EDEN
Then open the door.

EVE
I'm trying to.

EDEN
Open the DOOR.

EVE
I can't find the knob.

EDEN
OPEN THE DOOR.

the door flies open. EVE flies out wildly. Like a cartoon. This is serious though. From the floor, EVE speaks

EVE
(Unintelligible noises).

EDEN (O.S.)
So you dropped your own couch.

EVE
You failed me.

EDEN
I had the couch.

EVE
You didn't have me.

EDEN
It was a Chesterfield, Eve.

EVE
You might as well take a hammer to my shit.

EDEN
You are the hammer.

EVE
Nah I'm the horrified patreon watching you TEAR my shit UP. *You're* the hammer.

EDEN
Aight next time you take point.

EVE
Stop talking to me from my door.

EDEN
One second, there's a whole ass *Chesterfield* in my way.

EVE
E, girl. E!! Don't climb on my SHIT. **EDEN. NOT WITH THE TIMBS.**

EDEN doesn't enter. She arrives. If Glory had a form it would be EDEN. Glory in black ass timbs.

EDEN
Why you on the floor?

EVE

Just step on me.

EDEN

What?

EVE

Just fucking stomp me out.

EDEN

You want some attention again or..?

EVE

No. I want to be your doormat.

EDEN

Eeeeeeee, girl.

EVE

Cause that's obviously what I am to you.

EDEN

Eve, you are more than just a doormat to me.

EVE

Just a little spot for you to wipe your stupid ass timbs on.

EDEN

You're not a little spot for me to wipe my dope ass timbs on.

EVE

Don't try to appease me.

EDEN

So what you want me to do.

EVE

I want you to take your foot.

EDEN

Yeah.

EVE

Then I want you to put it on my face. Carefully.

EDEN

Kinky.

EVE

Here's the good part.

EDEN

Give it to me, baby.

EVE

You ready for this?

EDEN

So ready.

EVE

Stomp the shit outta me.

EDEN

I'm going to be honest with you.

EVE

That's New.

EDEN

I'm not doing that.

EVE

I want to be a goddamn pancake. One of those shitty ass floor pancakes.

EDEN

I'M NOT DOING THAT

EVE

But you'll walk all over my sofa. My fucking *Chesterfield*.

EDEN

I wanted to know why you're on the floor!

EVE

Because that's where the doormats be.

EDEN

I promise I will never walk on Chester again.

EVE

Swear to God?

EDEN crosses herself

They both pause and stare at the ceiling for a beat. Continue.

EDEN

Yeah.

EVE

Swear to Chester.

EDEN

No.

EVE

Swear. To. Chester.

EDEN

NO.

EVE

I can't believe you fucking hate me.

EDEN

I'm sorry for stepping on Chester.

EVE

Aht aht. Not to me.

to chester, the Chesterfield Couch

EDEN

I'm sorry for stepping on you, Chester.

EVE

Thank you.

Still to chester

EDEN

That's strike one, you bastard.

EVE

You talking under your breath?

EDEN

I'm talking on my breath. What you mean?

EVE

All that talking and you still haven't helped me up.

EDEN

I gotta do everything for you, huh?

EVE

Not anymore.

EDEN

What does that mean?

EVE

That you can bring me down but not up? You wanna be a glass of wine so bad.

EDEN

Gimme yah damn hand.

EVE

Only if you promise to be tender with me.

EDEN

I can't be any other way.

EVE

Then treat me like the First Woman I am.

EDEN

Wouldn't dare do anything less.

EDEN pulls EVE up like a rocket. What the fuck is 'tender'? The momentum propels them both onto the Chesterfield.

EDEN

We must stop meeting like this.

EVE

I wish I never met you.

EDEN

You couldn't live without me. Stop playing.

EVE

Now we both know that ain't true.

EDEN

How ain't that true? I gotta carry a whole chesterfield for you.

EVE

Yeah. For *my* apartment.

EDEN

So?

EVE

That *I'm* living in.

EDEN

Without me.

EVE

Without you.

EDEN

Why you acting like I'm not finna be over here?

EVE

Cause maybe you won't.

EDEN

Not with that attitude.

EVE

You're crushing me.

EDEN

Stop being so comfy then.

EVE

Can we at least get the rest of the couch in??

EDEN

Can I get the rest of my stamina back in my body first?

EVE

I gotta get all my stuff.

EDEN

I know.

EVE

And the truck goes back tonight.

EDEN

I know.

EVE

C'mon, Eden.

EDEN

Stop saying my name.

EVE

E.

EDEN

So you can rest on the floor all you want and I can't get a five?

EVE

Rest up then you big dumb timbs baby.

EDEN

I was gonna do that regardless! Where did you get the couch from?

EVE

Couch-R-Us.

EDEN

Really?

EVE

No, stop asking questions. Gotta save your strength.

EDEN

Gimme some of yours then, *First Woman*. Huh. I just had a thought.

EVE

You get those?

EDEN

Mess around and catch a black eye to match your black ass.

No, but I had a thought though. What if, and hear me out,

What if I was the first woman?

EVE

After me?

EDEN

Before you.

EVE

So first as in... Second?

EDEN

No. First as in the world revolved around me before it revolved around you.

EVE

First of all, the world doesn't revolve around me.

It should, don't get me wrong. But it don't.

EDEN

Where's your bible? We brought your books up, yeah?

EVE

Look over there.

EDEN lifts herself from the couch and crosses over to some boxes. She searches in multiple boxes, finds the bible, and looks through pages occasionally stopping to study a verse.

EDEN

Ah, King James. Always hated that negro. Just as I thought. Or just what we both knew. There are 66 books in the bible. 166 verses are about Jesus. 100 for Solomon. And Adam..

EVE

I don't wanna talk about Adam.

EDEN

At least he's mentioned in the New Testament. Are you in the New Testament?

EVE

Are you?

EDEN

Occasionally. Do you know how many 'Peters' there are? Seven of them are dicks.

EVE

There's only one Peter.

EDEN

Don't you think it's strange?

EVE

Yeah there should be more Peters.

EDEN

No, that we don't have our own chapters.

EVE

I'm not on good terms with folks.

EDEN

Even Lucifer gets shouted out.

EVE

I don't wanna talk about Lucy.

EDEN

I wanna talk about what's right.

EVE

You almost had a book though. Let's talk about that.

EDEN

I never had a "book".

EVE

But you could have. I still appreciate that. What you did I mean.

EDEN

It's simple. You left the Garden, so I left too. No biggie.

EVE

Yes biggie. You almost had a book book. With chapters, numbers, and verses.

As if speaking a lover's name.

EDEN

“THE NEW / NEW TESTAMENT”

EVE

Now that's a title. Do you still have the manuscript?

EDEN

No.

EVE

Stop lying.

EDEN

I don't.

EVE

You probably still read it too.

EDEN

Not anymore.

EVE

Why didn't you self publish?

EDEN

The same reason why you ain't go back to the Garden.

EVE

What?

EDEN

Yeah.

EVE

E. I didn't have a choice.

EDEN

And you think I did?

EVE

I was made for Adam, Adam wasn't made for me. How is that a choice to you?

EDEN

I was made for y'all.

EVE

I know that, E.

EDEN

Do you know who was made for me though? Jesus had disciples, you had a family. And I had myself.
Who keeps the Garden when the Gardeners dip?
How come nobody wants to know about that?

EVE

Wait, wait, wait, wait. Are you mad at me?

EDEN

It's not your fault.

EVE

Are you mad at me?

EDEN

Some days.

EVE

Today?

EDEN

What do you want me to say?

EVE

"No".

EDEN

Okay.

EVE

Are you going to say it?

EDEN

"No."

EVE

Can you help me move the rest of the couch in?

EDEN

You and this couch man.

EVE

It's a *Chesterfield*, E. I want to close the door. We need some privacy.

EDEN

There's nothing to be private about.

EVE

Fine.

EVE gets up from the couch and attempts to pull it into the apartment. She needs help. She tries different methods to move the couch. Each is a fantastic failure.

I don't need your help. I don't need your help.

I don't need your help. I DON'T need your help.

I don't NEED your HELP.

Eden. Eden. Girl. I need your help.

EDEN

You have to turn it.

EVE

Is this pleasurable to you?

EDEN

Yes. Hold on. Go on the other side.

EVE does.

Alright. LIFT. And FLIP. FLIP. Nuh-uh. NUH UH. STOP.

EVE

What?

EDEN

Lift with your legs.

EVE

Are you serious?

EDEN

About not fucking up your back? Absolutely. Lift with your legs.

EVE

Like this?

No

EDEN

Good enough.

They bring the couch in and make room for it. They reposition on the chesterfield. They do not look at each other.

EDEN

What else do you have to bring in?

EVE

My records.

EDEN

Let's knock that out.

EVE

I don't like what you said earlier. Why you do all that?

EDEN

Because I wouldn't like not saying it either. I don't want to do that anymore.

EVE

I don't think this was exactly the right time though.

EDEN

Is there such a thing as the right time? Is that a real thing?

EVE

How 'bout any day not today?

EDEN

I understand. Your truck goes back tonight.

pause.

EVE

I shouldn't have brought up your book.

EDEN

Does God just have a "book", Eve? It's a Testament. My Testament.

Co-signed by the *official* word of Yahweh. It's not about legitimacy.
it's about *approval*
I shouldn't have to write my own *bootleg* bible.
There's a perfectly good one right there.

Eden points to EVE's bible

The bible isn't just a "book." It's a platform. Only the baddest bitches get in there!

EVE

If you stayed, you would've had your Testimony.

EDEN

Yeah.

EVE

That's what you honestly think?

EDEN

That's what I know.

EVE

You *think* they wouldn't find another reason to write you out?

EDEN

No.

EVE

Or spay you?

EDEN

Shut up.

EVE

Think about it.

EDEN

That's all I do.

EVE

You left!

EDEN

Your choice.

EVE
Our's.

EDEN
Sure.

EVE
It was.

EDEN
What about the women who stayed?

EVE
What about them?

EDEN
The bible is full of powerful women.

EVE
With what Testaments?

EDEN
The bible is full of powerful women.

EVE
But where are their testimonies? Where are their *testaments*?

EDEN
I could have had one.

EVE
But you don't.

EDEN
There were Queens.

EVE
Slaves too.

EDEN
I know--

EVE
Do you?

EDEN
Can I fin...

EVE
I see women praised for obedience.

EDEN
And duty.

EVE
Servitude.

EDEN
Or devotion.

EVE
You're being defensive.

EDEN
You're being defiant.

EVE
Defia-? What?!
How many times have I heard VARIANTS of what you're saying?
How many YEARS? Literally since the beginning of TIME.
Literally since your STUPID garden and onward

EDEN
Are you calling Paradise stupid?!

EVE
I'm calling "Paradise" dumb as FUCK.
What's a paradise where a man gets a companion
And I get a RESPONSIBILITY?

EDEN
Can you lower your...

EVE
What's a paradise where that same man has to give up a RIB and I have to give up my LIFE?

EDEN

Okay, but..

EVE

What's a paradise where Jonah can get SWALLOWED by a whole ass whale

For DISOBEDIENCE

And still come out on the other side clean as SHIT? Like he didn't tell God to go fuck themselves.

EDEN

Eve...

EVE

As if Sin was a concept or a theory instead of an absolute

Or a legend

Or a stain

EDEN

You're not listening...

EVE

You're not listening! I know whole men who RAN from Yahweh and did NOT turn to stone.

Men who sought to persecute JESUS

And got REDEMPTION instead.

It's ALWAYS the Father! It's always the Son! The light!

But where's the Mother? The Daughter? The dark!

The Feminine!

Where do we fit in that's not under someone's foot, Eden!

What if my wholeness, WAS my holiness?

I know you're all jaded from not being in the Bible.

Oh I get that very much.

EDEN

I don't think you do.

EVE

Yes I do! But I want you to see what a *blessing* that is.

Wouldn't you rather make your own Paradise?

One where we're not First Women or Second Women.

Or Obedient Women or Sacrilegious Women

Just Women. Just Eve & Eden. Do you get what I'm saying?

EDEN

If I said yes would you shut up?

EVE

Like actually?

EDEN

Actually.

EVE

Yes.

EDEN

Then yes.

They sit in silence on the Chesterfield.

EDEN pages through the bible. EVE studies the textures on her couch.

They want to look at each other. They do not.

Hold. Hold. Hold.

EVE

Did you bring my *Arslantepe* baby up?

EDEN

It's in your room.

as lights transition to red BEL begins to sing

VERSE II: Seduction Scene

the Lazarus Bar on a tuesday night. nearly empty to empty. the night makes it feel alive though. a darkened, warm atmosphere. the blues play. somewhere. red lighting is prevalent. red brings desires to the surface. the drinks keep them there. as the set changes, BEL sings the following from behind the bar while tending it semi acapella. EDEN is at the bar writing in her journal. BEL'S soliloquies are reminiscent of Son House covering *John The Revelator*. longing and haunting; all that is lost can be resurrected here.

BEL

*And at times we don't mix
Your blood
to my water
My water
to your blood
Tell me, tell me, tell me, tell me
Did you ever love me?
Darling, your love to me
Feels so incendiary
Got me on my knees
Crying and begging
Can I have some more please?
Can I have some
love?*

EDEN

You talk too much.

BEL

You drink too little.

EDEN

I don't drink.

BEL

Then you don't pay either.

EDEN

Not for chit chat, no.

BEL

The air is free. Your attitude isn't.

EDEN

Come again?

BEL

Your attitude. It stinks.

EDEN

I don't have an attitude.

BEL

People with attitudes don't drink.

EDEN

Correlation is not causation.

BEL

What's your cause then?

EDEN

I fucking hate couches.

BEL

You're... a strange one.

EDEN

I'm from a different time.

BEL

Can you get some water at least?

EDEN

The water's free too.

BEL

The cup is 50 cents. I'm not wasting a glass on you.

EDEN

Had no idea you ran a McDonald's.

BEL

Our water machine ain't broke.

EDEN

Your mouth is working fine too. Shame.

BEL

I'll ask again. I know you don't *want* anything to drink. But do you *need* anything?

EDEN

That's a different question.

BEL

I'm hoping to get a different answer.

EDEN

Maybe you hope too much.

BEL

Are you like one of those poets? The sad ones?

EDEN

Aren't all poets sad?

BEL

Yeah but some be sad about Trees or Nature or some shit.

EDEN

Don't worry. I don't even like Trees.

BEL

What kind of psychopath don't like trees?

EDEN

Do you always insult your customers?

BEL

Is that what we're calling you? A customer?

EDEN

What if I wanna speak to a manager?

BEL

The manager don't like attitudes neither. I be her.

EDEN

You manage this place?

BEL

I Queen this kingdom. Don't you see my gold?

BEL gestures to the bottles behind her

And my silver?

BEL gestures towards the empty bar

EDEN

So you be cleaning the toilets and serving the drinks? Queen of Nasty.

BEL

Did you know people, when under duress, will sometimes disrespect other people in order to make themselves feel better?

EDEN

Hurt people hurt people.

BEL

No. Incomplete people dismantle others.

EDEN

Sounds like a dick move.

BEL

It is.

EDEN

Does it work?

BEL

Does it, negroid?

EDEN

I wouldn't say I'm under duress.

BEL

You could be under something else.

EDEN

If it's worth being under.

BEL
It is.

EDEN
I wouldn't know.

BEL
You could.

EDEN
Like everybody else right?

BEL
What you implying?

EDEN
You have a slick tongue.

BEL
It pays the bills.

EDEN
I hate sweet talkers. Why you talking sweet? You know sweet almonds have cyanide in them? But how would you know? You'll eat poison and think *hmmm almonds*.

BEL
What?

EDEN
People will eat anything if it's a little sweet. Even poison. Say something else.

BEL
Why?

EDEN
I have a sweet tooth.

BEL
Nah. Requests are for my lovers.

EDEN
Oooooo, the "L" word. And plural too.

BEL

My favorite word.

EDEN

You should get a new word.

BEL

Or a new lover.

EDEN

You're polyamorous?

BEL

Just amorous.

EDEN

Or that show on ABC.

BEL

Which one?

EDEN

"Whore-ish".

BEL

You fucking freak. What you writing anyway? Your standup material?

EDEN

A story.

BEL

Fiction or Nonfiction?

EDEN

One of those self help books.

BEL

Oh, you got a story to help folks?

EDEN

Yeah I do. I'm calling it "Business: How to Find and Mind Your Own".

BEL

You wanna talk to somebody though.

EDEN

Do I?

BEL

Nobody comes to a bar to “chill”.

EDEN

I must be Nobody then. I like the silence.

BEL

Be nice. It's Tuesday. Welcome to the Lazarus, Nobody. Come as you are, leave as you weren't.

EDEN

So I can't leave pissed?

BEL

Lover got you down?

EDEN

Friend.

BEL

With benefits?

EDEN

If you call a headache a benefit. We had a fight.

BEL

Fist fight?

EDEN

Word fight.

BEL

What words?

EDEN

I don't know you.

BEL
Do you want to?

A moment

EDEN
Vodka cranberry.

BEL makes it. EDEN sips it. EDEN sips again. EDEN sips some more.

EDEN
Maybe it's better being alone.

BEL
Seems like you've never been alone.

EDEN
There would be less fights.

BEL
There would be less of everything.

EDEN
Okay, but if a friend was giving you shit?

BEL
Like talking smack?

EDEN
Like stealing shit.

BEL
Jewelry?

EDEN
Joy.

BEL
Doesn't sound like a friend.

EDEN
They are.

BEL
Friend, foe. Nobody can do that.

EDEN

But you never met them.

BEL

It's still *my* joy.

EDEN

It used to be our joy.

BEL

Mmm, sounds tricky. What are they like?

EDEN

Great, when they want to be. They're not a bad person, but it's just like you said. Hurt people, *smother* people. Sometimes with love, sometimes with a pillow. Love is anything that doesn't drown. That's what she taught me. But they were my first memory before anything. My Big Bang. I wasn't always a part of her life, but she was always a part of mine. You get me?

BEL

The first archetype.

EDEN

She would tell me everything.

BEL

Hmm.

EDEN

But the Truth.

BEL

Damn.

EDEN

Even though she never lied, she never opened up either. But I was always there.

BEL

Always keep a pair, and a spare. That's what my Mama says.

EDEN

People aren't disposable.

BEL

Neither is your wellbeing. Seems like the problem is you wanna stop crying, but you don't wanna know *why* you're crying. Get rid of the symptoms, 'stead of the cause and such.

EDEN

I want the pain to stop.

BEL

What about preemptive care? No need for arks if you stop the leak in the dam y'know.

EDEN

But there were always two for the ark. Two birds, two bees, two of everything. I can't leave my partner to drown.

BEL

"Love is anything that doesn't drown", remember? You said that. It's not about sinking or swimming. I'm just saying, have you ever tried getting your feet wet? Walking on water? Doing something, anything, for yourself? Maybe you're terrified, not that your prayers won't be answered, but that they will.

EDEN

That's selfish.

BEL

It absolutely is.

EDEN

You're selfish.

BEL

Now you get it.

EDEN

And New.

BEL

A little New never killed nobody. And even if it did, there's life after death. Trust me on that.

EDEN

What do you mean?

BEL

Your Faith is just as valid as your Fears. Fear is doubt, Faith is certainty. And I'm certain you'll be fine. You too testiFINE to be depressed. Refill?

EDEN
Corny ass. Please.

BEL makes it. EDEN drinks.

BEL
Home. You got one of them?

EDEN
I do.

BEL
What it look like?

EDEN
Messy.

BEL
Depressed messy?

EDEN
Good pussy messy.

BEL
Can I see?

EDEN
My room?

BEL
That too.

EDEN
No.

BEL
Why not?

EDEN
I don't know your name.

BEL
So?

EDEN

I don't know *you*.

BEL

Do you need to?

EDEN

Yes.

BEL

I don't know yours.

EDEN

I'm Nobody.

BEL

C'mon. Give me a minute.

EDEN

I'll give you a second.

BEL

And seconds?

EDEN

Depends on how long you last.

BEL

I got stamina.

EDEN

I'm not asking for stamina, I'm demanding drive.

BEL

What'll I get in return?

EDEN

The ride of your life.

BEL

Let's play a name game first.

EDEN

You could tell me your name now.

BEL

I could.

EDEN

Why the game?’

BEL

I like foreplay.

EDEN

I don’t.

BEL

Why?

EDEN

I’m a sore loser.

BEL

Then win.

BEL takes out 2 shot glasses and pours tequila into each of them. They are perfectly measured. The bottle is left on top of the bar.

BEL

This is on the house by the way. I’ll give you 5 options to guess my name. You get it wrong, you drink. You get it right, you remain “Sober-ish”.

EDEN

Ha. So I lose.

BEL

Exactly.

EDEN

Five random names?

BEL

One is your real name.

EDEN

I don't believe in real names.

BEL

What does that mean?

EDEN

I don't believe in anything right now.

BEL

Do you believe in God?

EDEN

Love is my God.

BEL Smiles.

BEL

Okay, poet! We'll take turns. I guess, you guess, I guess, you guess.

EDEN

So as we play, it'll get easier. Percentage wise.

BEL

Maybe. So is my name Lilith, Joan, Hagar, Jael, or Vashti?

EDEN

Lilith is the most unique one.

BEL

Drink nigga.

EDEN does.

EDEN

Alright, I'm game. Eli, Essence, Eden, Elizabeth, or Evelyn.

BEL

I'm guessing people call you E.

EDEN

Only my friend.

BEL

Your boyfriend?

EDEN
Hell no.

BEL
Girlfriend?

EDEN Smiles

EDEN
Guess.

BEL
Eden.

EDEN
Bullshit!

BEL
I'm guessing I'm right.

EDEN
Drink. Now.

BEL
Yes, Ma'am.

She does.

EDEN
Jael.

BEL
No.

E drinks.

EDEN
How did you know?

BEL
Correlation. You hate trees.

EDEN
I could've been Evelyn.

BEL
But Eden looks better on you.

EDEN
Call me E. Drink.

BEL does.

EDEN
Vashti.

BEL
Go to hell.

EDEN drinks.

EDEN
How old am I?

BEL
Pass.

EDEN
Answer.

BEL
Eternal.

EDEN
You know something?

BEL
Maybe.

EDEN
Drink.

BEL does.

BEL
Are you Eden? Like The Eden? Biblical Eden?

EDEN
What makes you ask?

BEL
Instinct.

EDEN
I am who I am, Hagar!

BEL
Nope.

EDEN drinks.

What's a garden like you doing in a Tartarus like this?

EDEN
You're the Queen of Tartarus now?

BEL
Some might say.

EDEN
What do you say?

BEL
That a Queen is a Queen, no matter her castle. Say a garden. A castle without walls.
I always thought Eden was a garden.
How's Yahweh doing?

EDEN
Oh my father? Wonderful. As long as you don't need anything. Y'know what?

BEL
What?

EDEN
You don't look like a Joan either.

BEL
They call me Bel.

EDEN
Who's they?

BEL
Myself.

EDEN
Liar must be your nickname.

BEL
No, it's Bel.

EDEN

Like I care now, Isabelle.

BEL

Just Bel. It's so basic compared to something like Eden.

EDEN

Lying is basic. Cheating is basic. Games are basic. Not Queen behavior.

BEL

What does your finger taste like?

EDEN

You tell me.

EDEN holds two fingers out to BEL.

BEL takes her hand, and kisses the top of her knuckles

EDEN

Drink.

BEL

You want me shitfaced?

EDEN

No. I don't want to remember you in the morning.

BEL

I'll remember you.

EDEN

Prove it.

BEL chugs from the bottle instead. EDEN watches. BEL wipes her mouth.

To be beautifully honest...

EDEN drinks another shot

I don't care who you were before you stepped in here. Perhaps you were a business woman..

EDEN

No. Business women negotiate. I take what I want.

BEL

What do you want then? Confess your desires.

EDEN
An offering.

BEL
Are you ever honest?

EDEN
A sacrifice.

BEL
Oh?

EDEN
Only sacred things are sacrificed.

BEL
To the night?

EDEN
To me. What will you offer me?

*BEL kisses EDEN on the lips
EDEN kisses back.*

BEL
Let the Heathens say Amen.

EDEN
Amen!

BEL
Amen!

BEL
Amen!

EDEN
Amen!

THE LAZARUS
AMEN!

The blues begin to play noticeably faster.

VERSE III: Chaos Scene

Later that night. The fast blues continue to play. Maybe transition into bebop jazz. Something warmer in tone. Lights dimmed. EDEN & BEL burst into the apartment.

EDEN

We have to be quiet.

BEL

I'll do my best.

EDEN

Seriously.

BEL

I'll do my worst then.

EDEN

Sssh. I have a roommate.

BEL

You also have a room, yes?

EDEN

What if I want you now?

BEL

Here?

EDEN

Now.

BEL

Your roommate?

EDEN

Now.

BEL

Shit that feels good.

EDEN

I know.

BEL
Be quiet.

EDEN
You be quiet. And lay back. I wanna show you something.

BEL
Show me.

EDEN
This belt has to go. And that too.

BEL
Why don't you help me out?

EDEN
I wouldn't get to watch you.

BEL
Sounds like you wanna remember me after all.

EDEN
I want to remember every sound you make.

BEL
You like my voice?

EDEN
I like your everything.

EDEN gently undresses BEL. each 'like' is a kiss.

I like your lips. I like your belly. I like your ears.
I like your nose. I like your legs. I like your breasts.

BEL
Hey, my eyes are up here.

EDEN
But your everything is down there. Maybe I should give you a kiss.

BEL
You been kissing me.

EDEN

A different kiss. A holy kiss.

BEL

This is a nice couch.

EDEN

It's New.

BEL

Where'd you get it from?

EDEN

The store.

BEL

What store?

EDEN

Focus.

BEL

On...

what?

Shit.

Do that again.

Again.

Wait. Again.

Okay. Okay.

Fuck. FUCK.

Lights up. Music stops abruptly.

EVE

WHY IT SMELL LIKE SIN UP IN HERE?

BEL

Who the hell is this?

EVE
WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?

EDEN
Ssssh. The neighbors.

EVE
WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN MY APARTMENT?

BEL
Is this your roommate?!

EVE
ARE YOU FUCKING?

EDEN
Just first base.

EVE
ARE YOU FUCKING ON MY CHESTERFIELD?

EDEN
JUST FIRST BASE.

EVE
ON MY CHESTERFIELD

BEL
The couch?

EDEN
THE NEIGHBORS. PLEASE.

EVE
YOU DON'T LIVE HERE.

BEL
YOU DON'T LIVE HERE?

EDEN
BUT THE NEIGHBORS DO.

EVE
Stay right there!

EVE exits to her room

EDEN
Uh-oh.

BEL
Uh-oh?

EDEN
Put on your clothes. Now.

They begin to dress.

BEL
You don't live here?!

EDEN
Yes and no.

BEL
Is it yes or no?!

EDEN
A little bit of both.

BEL
What the hell is wrong with you?

EDEN
I'm a creature of habit.

BEL
I don't understand.

EDEN
They never do.

*EVE enters with her Aslantepe baby, her sword from the Age of Bronze,
in her hand. Ancient, but sturdy; she is more than experienced with it.*

BEL
WOAH WOAH WOAH WOAH.

EVE
Why are you here?

BEL
I wanted to get laid!

EVE
On my COUCH?

BEL
YOUR couch?!

EVE destroys a lamp in one swipe. It explodes. BEL falls in fear.

BEL
I don't even know you!

EVE
Yet your coochie stains are on my COUCH.

EDEN
Eve STOP.

EVE
Get off me!

EVE forcibly pushes EDEN off. EDEN falls.

BEL
Listen!

EVE
This what you wanted?

BEL
I was invited!

EVE
Some INTIMACY?

BEL
I swear!

EVE
LET'S GET INTIMATE

BEL
WAIT.

EDEN
NO!

EVE
LET'S GET ACQUAINTED.

EVE raises her sword. BEL bows her head.

EDEN
I let her in with the spare key!

BEL begins to pray

EVE
You WHAT?!

BEL
The great Baal is my river.
My wine. My water.

EDEN
I let her in!

BEL
I am loved, I am whole.

EVE
What Demon possessed you to do that?

BEL
I shall desire. I shall want. I shall flow.

EDEN
Why is it always possession with you?

BEL
Give me strength, my daily Pride.

EVE
Because you're a FOOL! A fucking dummy!

BEL
Give me fire, my daily iron.

EDEN
Ain't no devil here, so don't treat me like one!

BEL
Give me my sword, my extended arm.

EVE
Ain't no Angel either!

BEL
Give me war, my sweet boon.

EDEN
I never said I was! And I shouldn't have to be either!

BEL
Give me Freedom, my sweet war.

EVE
When you get this STUPID?

BEL
Give me my wisdom, my complete insight.

EDEN
Why are you talking to me like this? I'm your friend!

BEL
Give me instinct, my spear.

EVE
You're my PARASITE. My resident FUCK UP.

BEL
And deliver me, deliver me, DELIVER ME!

BEL sucker punches EVE. EVE swings with precision at BEL
BEL dodges and gracefully disarmS EVE.
BEL kicks EVE's ARSLANTEPE BABY across the floor
EDEN scrambles for it while BEL and EVE take fighting stances.
BEL is Southpaw. EVE is Orthodox.

EVE
You're trained.

BEL
Shhhh.

EDEN
EVE!

EVE
WHAT?

EDEN
I let her in. Just me.

BEL
Eve?

EVE
Why would you do that?

EDEN
Can we calm down?!

EVE

Don't tell me to be calm!

BEL

Are you THE Eve?!

EVE

Bitch, I might be.

EDEN

STOP!

EDEN sloppily swings at both BEL and EVE. They dodge.

BEL

We had a few drinks..

EVE

Who told y'all to do that?!

BEL

I'm a bartender!

EVE

What were you doing at a bar? You don't drink!

EDEN

I. Always. Drink!

EVE

Since when?!

EDEN

Since the beginning of my "STUPID" garden!

EVE

Calm down!

EDEN

Don't tell me to be calm!

EVE

Nigga, I gotta tell you something!

EDEN

Why you always got something to say?! Always! ALWAYS.

BEL

Not like this. Not like this.

EDEN

Stop pretending you know what's best for me all the time! Cause you don't. You really really don't. You said "Oh Eden, let's leave". And I was like bet. Or something like that cause "bet" wasn't a thing yet. I didn't even have to think about it cause why would I? You said "let's see the world!", and I was like that's a big place, and you were like "that's the point", and I was like there's a whole world here and you were like "but not our world"

But this isn't our world either! Back in my garden, nobody would try to touch me, or hit on me, or fuck me, or talk to me as a prerequisite to fucking me. In the garden, I was a GODDESS, and here I'm just MEAT. Chopped fucking LIVER. A pussy with some goddamn legs! There was a time where the soil worshiped me! Where the animals worshiped me! Where YOU worshiped me! There was a time where the fruits were FORBIDDEN to touch and NIGGAS KNEW THAT. Niggas were TAUGHT THAT! Niggas were punished for even thinking about me! God said "Don't touch her!", and niggas not only didn't touch me, I was EXALTED. My skin was clear, my hair was braided! My titties could hang out! I could live in PEACE. I didn't have to carry my keys in my hands. I didn't have to walk faster at night. I wasn't whistled at like a DOG — Sorry, like a BITCH — when I went outside. Now we're all picked fucking fruit! Even before we're ripe. Now we're all somebody's woman, or we pretend to be! Cause if we ain't, then devils come! Then the devils grab! Then the devils take! Then the devils DEVOUR. Back in my garden, at least there was one devil! One! Now half the population is one!

I don't wanna be in this fucking body anymore. Somebody give me theirs. I don't wanna do this anymore. I don't wanna...

Ughhhh. I don't feel so hot.

EDEN runs to EVE's bathroom with EVE's ARSLANTEPE. The sound of vomiting can be heard occasionally O.S.

EVE

You're still here.

BEL

Where does E live?

EVE

You're on a first name basis?

BEL

She told me to call her that.

EVE

She took my sword.

BEL

Don't ignore me.

EVE

Can you let me help my friend?

BEL

Your friend, the garden.

EVE

My friend, E.

BEL

Y'all have a dynamic friendship.

EVE

We're dynamic people.

BEL

We call that dysfunction where I'm from.

EVE

Excuse me?

BEL

E was telling me about you tonight. What do you call two people in a relationship looking to change each other?

EVE

You can leave now.

BEL

A disaster.

EVE

Who are you?

BEL
I'm Bel. A bartender.

EVE
Just a bartender?

BEL
What else could I be?

Audible vomiting.

EVE
You got my girl white girl wasted.

BEL
I'm a professional. Y'all must've been beefing for a while.

EVE
Do I need to call the police?

BEL
You fuck with 12?

EVE
Nah, fuck 12.

BEL
Fuck 12. Let me make sure she's fine too.

EVE
A little hangover ain't gonna kill her.

BEL
But you might.

EVE
Huh?

BEL
You a pulled a fucking sword on me.

EVE
You're a stranger.

BEL

It wasn't my choice to be here.

EVE

So why would you think it's your choice to stay?

BEL

...

EVE

Where did you learn to fight?

BEL

Let's play a game. A question one.

EVE

I'm done playing with you.

BEL

Do you want to hit me again?

EVE

I wanna bash your head in 'til the meat shows.

BEL

You know I could crack your rib cage.

EVE

Yes.

BEL

Crush your windpipe.

EVE

There's something about you.

BEL

I'm strong.

EVE

Too strong.

BEL

You held back though.

EVE

I didn't want to kill you.

BEL

Why not? It would be your right to do so. This is *your* paradise right?

EVE

You understand.

BEL

Then expel me.

EVE

Not yet. Where did you train?

BEL

Self taught.

EVE

You trained yourself to kill?

BEL

Dogs did.

EVE

You were attacked.

BEL

I was.

EVE

Whose dogs?

BEL

Strays.

EVE

Were you scarred?

BEL
Marked.

EVE
Where?

BEL
Here, the temple.

BEL points to her temple

Here, the throat.

BEL points to her throat

Here, the spirit.

BEL points to her chest

No man will ever touch me again.

EVE
You're not just a bartender.

BEL
No.

EVE
You're something else.

BEL
Of course.

EVE
What?

BEL
A Queen.

EVE
Where's your castle?

BEL
Taken.

EVE
By who?

BEL

The same ones who took yours. Your God.

EVE

I have no God.

BEL

How can you say that being who you are? You're linked.

EVE

I'm linked to no man. No one at all.

BEL

I never said God was a man. A God creates.

EVE

And destroys.

BEL

And loves.

EVE

So you say. As far as you're concerned, I created myself. The Bible is an outline, a burn book for prophets. I'm the paper that gets written.

BEL

You're authentic?

EVE

I'm specific. The Eve here is not the Eve there.

BEL

Who was that Eve then?

EVE

A paper thin woman with no desires. Leaving the Garden for her was a punishment.

BEL

And here?

EVE

Here it's *liberation*. I chose to leave. I chose myself.

BEL

What about Eden?

EVE

What about Eden?

BEL

What did she choose?

EVE

We were abandoned.

BEL

I thought you chose to leave?

EVE

We chose to move on, bozo. Who the hell are you to her anyway?

BEL

A listening ear.

EVE

More like a mistake.

BEL

That's for E to decide. Not you.

EVE

She can barely take care of herself.

BEL

Either way, she must care for herself.

EVE

She doesn't know how.

BEL

Are we talking about Eden or you?

EVE

I don't have to explain myself.

BEL

Because you don't know yourself.

EVE

...

BEL

And you use EDEN to avoid confronting yourself.

EVE

What do you know?!

BEL

You like to acknowledge one Truth to avoid the other, but whether you're OLD TESTAMENT like you Or NEW TESTAMENT like me, it's still OLD. The Old and Older Testament. So light. So holy. So fake. All these years, Eve. All these years, and you *still* haven't left your little garden. Always asking what can you GET, negro, what can you GIVE? Real relationships are exchanges, not taxes. You never wanted a partner, you wanted a canine who would never leave you. I hate dogs! But I hate their masters even more. The ones who hold the leash.

Learn something *New*. *Loneliness is not a sin*. It's an invitation.

EVE

You're still not being honest.

BEL

And you're still not listening.

EVE

You're not human.

BEL

Be *specific*, Eve.

EVE

You're one of us.

BEL

Closer.

EVE

I thought you died.

BEL

Murdered.

EVE

How are *you* here?

BEL

Resurrected.

EVE

What?

BEL

Do you know what it feels like to be baptized by torn flesh? To be fed to dogs?

EVE

What kind of fucked up question is that?

BEL

One that deserves an answer. I know what it *feels* like.

EVE

To be torn apart by dogs?

BEL

To be *born* again.

EVE

I know who you are.

BEL

And guess what?

EVE

What you *really* are.

BEL

I'm *grateful*.

EVE

You're a Demon.

BEL

Do you find the Truth to be demonic?

EVE

A fucking devil.

BEL

You wanna *banish* that too?

EVE

Get out.

BEL

CAST ME OUT.

EVE

GET OUT.

they circle the chesterfield

BEL

What you call me is what you fear. Change.

EVE

Do you hear me?

BEL

Wherever I go, Change follows.

EVE

DO YOU HEAR ME?

BEL

And you're due for some. A reckoning as they say. A wake up call!

EVE

Out.

BEL

Only the Truth survives the fire! That's why honesty feels like hell! After all, what's a bible without a devil?

EVE

OUT.

BEL

What's heaven without hell! And if I have to be anybody's devil, I would prefer to be *yours*. I AM the Spirit of JEZEBEL

THE SPIRIT OF JEZEBEL laughs without restraint. the devil is anything that is not bound. that is this laugh. the laughter of Freedom.

But you can call me Bel.

EVE screams as her lights explode violently

VERSE IV: Revelations

EDEN's apartment. Even Later. EDEN is resting on EVE's Chesterfield. Lit candles replace the electric lighting.

EVE

What are you doing awake?

EDEN

I had to pee. You?

EVE

I had to think.

EDEN

At 4 am?

EVE

Those are thinking hours.

EDEN

Those are sleep hours.

EVE

For some.

EDEN

For you.

EVE

You're feeling better.

EDEN

My head is pounding.

EVE

I'm sorry to hear that.

EDEN

Yeah.

EVE

Yeah.

EDEN

I'm going back to bed.

EVE

There you go again.

EDEN

What am I doing now?

EVE

It's what you're not doing. What you never do. You *never* apologize. Ever.

EDEN

I reflect.

EVE

You deflect. I reflect.

EDEN

You reflect all my insecurities.

EVE

I can't control your insecurities. That's on you.

EDEN

But you can expand them. You're like a giant magnifying glass.

EVE

You mad that I see you?

EDEN

You distort me.

EVE

I can't stand you. The thought of you makes me sick.

EDEN

So we're even?

EVE

Yeah.

EDEN

Yeah.

EVE

You can go back to bed now. I have enough devils in my life.

pause.

EDEN

You know I used to be afraid of you.

EVE

What do you mean?

EDEN

Or rather, the absence of you.

EVE

What do you got to be afraid of?

EDEN

Well. You leaving me. Like God left us.

EVE

Eden. Come on. You're all I have.

EDEN

I know.

EVE

So what's the problem?

EDEN

I'm all you have.

EVE

Do you resent me?

EDEN

Sometimes. It's not your fault though. I realized... We don't really have a relationship with each other.

EVE

Then you sleeping, *fucking*, on my couch is what? An illusion?

EDEN

An attachment.

EVE

So, I'm the bad guy.

EDEN

No.

EVE

That's what you want me to say.

EDEN

NO.

EVE

"It's all my fault." Like I haven't heard that one for the last fucking millennia. Why is it so hard for you to take responsibility for anything you do though?

EDEN

I am.

EVE

Wow, there really is a first time for everything.

EDEN

Do you love me?

EVE

What?

EDEN

Do you love me?

EVE

Of course.

EDEN

Okay.

EVE

Do you?

EDEN

More than you'll ever know. But the difference is you don't respect me.

EVE

Are you still drunk?

EDEN

You don't love me. You're just lonely.

EVE

No, I... Loneliness is not a sin.

EDEN

Then why are the lonely punished like sinners?

EVE

Take that up with your God! Or your precious Jezebel. Jesus! Why can't you poets ever speak NORMAL. For once in your life, in OUR life, say what you mean! Stop being so passive! Tell me the Truth!

EDEN

Then *let* me tell the Truth: there is no love without respect, Eve.

EVE

You don't even love yourself! You're not a prisoner! No one is keeping you in my apartment! Or in my life. You... You didn't have to come with me.

EDEN

What was I supposed to do?! Stay?

EVE

Yes! Live *your* life!

EDEN

You ARE my life!

EVE

I'm a PIECE of it!

EDEN

A big ass piece! Damn near the whole puzzle! Who ever heard of a garden watering itself?! This is your apartment, but you were my HOME. I wasn't going to abandon you! Eve! Come on! Listen!

EVE

Leave me alone. Just go!

EDEN

Being without you is *New* for me!

EVE

It doesn't have to be!

EDEN

It's *hard* for me. I've been lonely, E. But I've never been by myself before!

EVE

All we have is each other. It was never a problem before! It used to be our strength.

EDEN

It's me, Eve! Something is happening. I'm changing.

EVE

No, Eden, it's Jezebel! That demon is changing *everything* between us.

EDEN

Is that a bad thing though?

EVE

We never fought like this before!

EDEN

We were in survival mode.

EVE

So?

EDEN

So we never had a chance to.

Pause.

EVE

But I was lonely, E. I thought I didn't at first, but I was wrong.

I needed someone. A partner. Not Adam. I needed you. I need you.

You are such a beautiful person, Eden. You know that.

EDEN does not know that

But in the Old Testament, giving meant sacrifice. Yourself. Your desires. Who you really were... So to me, Liberation *was* holding yourself. Keeping yourself. Being yourself. Even at the expense of others. I didn't

want to get better if I had to let you go. Or be alone. Please, E. I'm sorry for saying "I love you", when I really meant "Don't leave me". I... should have given you more. Let me give you more!

EDEN

I didn't want you to *give* anything. I wanted you to *share*.

Love isn't sacrifice. It's abundant.

God wanted a rib. I just wanted some space.

Some room for Eve AND Eden.

There is a reason why REVELATIONS is at the end of the bible.

Great Truths often feel like the end. But this, what we just did, is the beginning.

Can you see them, Eve? Lilith, Jael, Joan, Jezebel, Hagar, Vashti... All the women who dared to want more? It's not just me and you. We all have a testimony. But we're the archetype, Eve. Me and you. Once we heal, we could all heal. Who cares what Yahweh thinks? We can write, hell, we can rewrite our own stories. We can be our own prophets. Our own saviors. You were right. I wasn't trying to hear you before though.

I... I shouldn't have brought Bel here. I knew I was being disrespectful. I was being passive aggressive, rather than honest. I'm sorry I hurt you. I'm sorry for dismissing that hurt. I knew how important this apartment was to you. You were trying to move forward, but I didn't want you to move on without me. I was trying to be NEW too. Someone I've yet to become. Completely free. But I was treating you like you were my burden instead of my blessing.

But my beautiful friend. We are not our past.

We are so much more than that.

And even when we change

When we get some New

We will always be Us. But stronger. Healthier.

Love is acceptance, Eve. I accept myself. I accept you.

Can you say the same for me?

EVE

Yes. I accept you. I accept all of you.

EDEN

Will you help me write a script then? Your story *is* my Testament. Our Testament. Are you ready for your chapter in *THE NEW/NEW TESTAMENT*?

*Lights turn to red
BEL begins to sing*

somewhere, a choir is heard stirring

VERSE V: THE NEW NEW SERMON

The Lazarus Bar

noticeably brighter. a new dawn. or Wednesday.

BEL

*You were my love
Queen of the Damned
Blood of my Blood
Sweet Child, Bethlehem
you were my love
If love was Golden
If Gold was Chai Tea
If Beauty be you
If you my Boo
If you my Thang
At last, my good thing
At last, my blessing*

The past is the past
And what's done is done
And what is to come
Has yet to come
Here in the Now
And Now in the Here
We constitute each other completely
The past
Ever fixed
And the future
Ever fluid
Reminds me of the illusions we conjure for ourselves
How a god can hate,
How a devil can love.

Can the past ever be fluid?
Can the future ever change?

Can one resurrect themselves? The phoenix says duh. The butterfly says of course. But the ego? The ego says Nah. There is no life. Not after death. There is only the Now. The suffering, and not the ceasing. The ego says there are magicians, but no magic. Thorns, but no roses. Everything, even miracles, are parlor tricks. How do I walk on water, when I never learned to swim? See, I used to think about drowning even before I stuck my toe in the water.

Speaking of losing your breath

I had a dream about my lover.
I had met her again but
She had moved on.
She was my lover, but not my lover.
So I knew I was in Hell, but not in Hell.
I had asked for a kiss. Not a peck. A real kiss.
The ones I used to get. The ones I used to give.
But she would not speak to me.
Not as friends nor lovers. Or even strangers. All we had was the New. The Beautiful, Cruel New.
She was gone, and I was completely transformed.

But I like what this New has brought me.

There's watching, there's observing

Then there is Bearing Witness

And one can never witness What Is when obsessed in What Was

The first creation was not Adam, Eve, or Eden. Fuck them niggas!

It wasn't even light.

God said: "Let there be Light". And it was the Spoken Word that became the first being

And Creation the second

Therefore, if we want some New, // We must first speak it.

If we want manifestation // we must first declare it!

If we want some change // we must first SHOUT it!

Let there be Change! Let there be ended Cycles!

Let love lead to LIBERATION

Love is LIBERATION

Therefore Let there BE some New for us all!

We don't have to be HOLY. Just wholly ourselves!

Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Amen!

The Lazarus Bar transforms into a Church. Every church has a choir, and every choir must sing gloriously. JEZEBEL stretches her arms out and The Lazarus harmonizes until blackout.

END OF PLAY