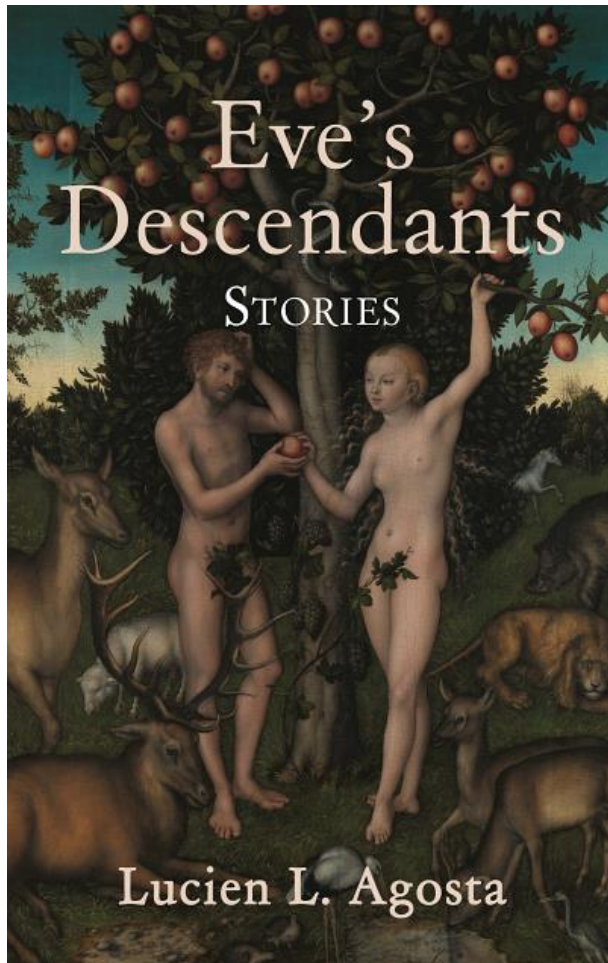




EVE'S DESCENDANTS offers 61 short stories exploring the experiences of some of Eve's numerous progeny, the lives they construct, and what it means to be human in the world our primeval mother left for all of us to wander through.

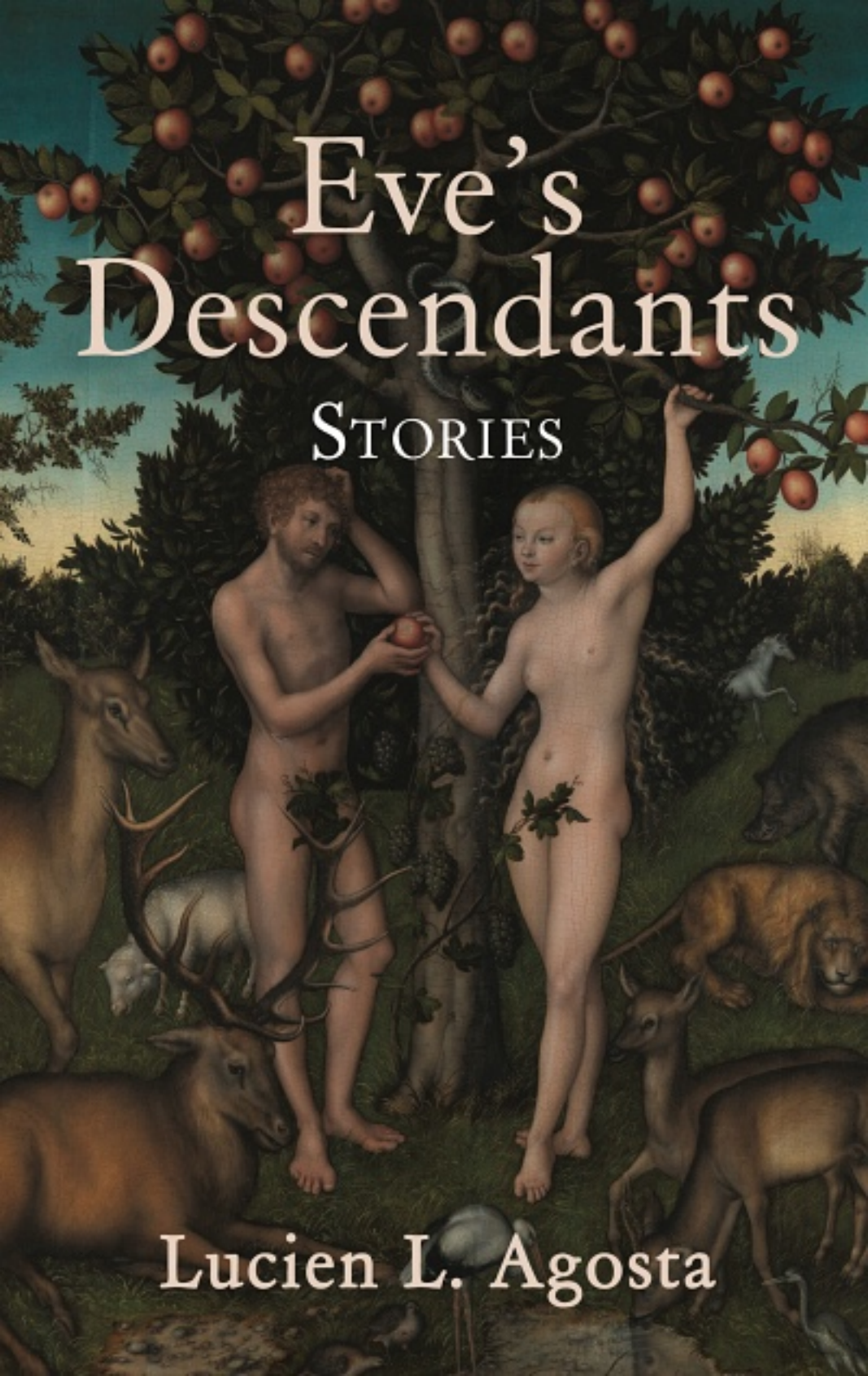
Eve's Descendants: Stories

By Lucien L. Agosta

Order the book from the publisher Booklocker.com

<https://booklocker.com/books/15006.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**

The background of the cover is a classical painting depicting Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Adam stands on the left, holding an apple, while Eve stands on the right, reaching up to a branch of a large tree laden with red fruit. They are surrounded by various animals, including deer, a lion, a bear, and a unicorn. The scene is set in a lush, green landscape with a blue sky.

Eve's Descendants

STORIES

Lucien L. Agosta

Copyright © 2026 Lucien L. Agosta

Print ISBN: 978-1-961269-04-0

Ebook ISBN: 979-8-88532-720-6

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., Trenton, Georgia.

The characters and events in this book are fictitious. Any similarity to real persons, living or dead, is coincidental and not intended by the author.

BookLocker.com, Inc.

2026

First Edition

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Agosta, Lucien L.

Eve's Descendants: Stories by Lucien L. Agosta

Library of Congress Control Number: 2026922167

Cover: **Adam and Eve** (1526, oil on panel) by Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472-1553). Courtauld Gallery, London, reprinted with permission.

This painting is referenced in the story “Glinka” in this collection.

Preface

Eve's Descendants

Stories

The story of Adam and Eve as told in the Bible's Book of Genesis (Ch. 1-5) is among the oldest narratives to emerge from the human imagination. The elements of the tale are well known: Adam and Eve are created in a terrestrial Eden by a benevolent God who grants them authority over the garden they awaken in and the animals which tenant the garden with them. Their freedom is limited, however. They are bound to obey a single stricture: they must not eat of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil placed so enticingly at the center of their garden.

In relatively short order, Eve, persuaded by the wily serpent, strikes out on her own, disobeys the ordinance, and tastes of the fruit of this forbidden tree before persuading Adam to share it with her. As a result of Eve's daring and Adam's acquiescence, they are banished from their garden paradise, condemned to endure hard toil in the fallen world into which they are cast, therein to suffer sickness and sorrow and eventual death, a fate to be shared by their descendants for all time. An added punishment for Eve's

initial disobedience is the pain she and her daughters will suffer in bringing forth their offspring.

The blame for this loss of Paradise and the resultant origination of human tribulation is laid squarely on Eve. She has historically been condemned as the source of sin, the fount by which evil distorts and saddens human experience. Her sin is traditionally seen as bearing the primordial guilt: the sin of Eve is direct disobedience and deceit; the sin of Adam is weakness and his inability to deflect the temptation Eve lures him with.

This attribution to Eve of primal evil determines in due course Western culture's traditional self-defeating patterns: its distrust and consequent suppression of women and feminine power; its anxiety over sexuality and the body; and its suspicion and denigration of knowledge and intellect. These strong currents still surge in and through today's cultural flow.

In the European Renaissance, which saw the flowering of Humanism in the West, these attitudes slowly began to be re-evaluated, though in no way eliminated. The veil of shame that traditionally shrouded Eve began tentatively to lift. Some began to see Eve in a more positive light. Some even re-cast her as heroic, as essentially a liberator. In a more modern, though far from universal view, her act of defiance introduces Adam and Eve—and their descendants—into the fullness of what it means to be

human. Their loss of a limiting innocence in Eden is codified anew as a fair exchange for their gain of knowledge and full self awareness.

In this view, Eve's transgression is thus ultimately advantageous: from her choice to go her own self-determined way emerges full human consciousness and free will, distinctly human traits. Because death stalks the fallen world, Eve's descendants, like those whose stories are recounted in this collection, are impelled to make the most of time, to branch and flourish, to create selves in all the limitless ways open to humankind, both admirable and regrettable, to push beyond the limits imposed on us in our fallen condition, to self actualize, to create selves in profuse and limitless ways. Eve becomes, then, heroic in her valiant and liberating defiance against the limitations placed on her by a God who, though He has made her and her mate in His image and likeness, would deny all that the divine image involves, condemning His children to a static mindlessness unshaped by desire or ambition or imagination or bold action or decision beyond the one requirement He binds them to in their secluded garden confinement.

This collection of 60 stories (plus one for lagniappe) offers a miscellany of human lives, incidents, decisions, choices, and experiences. The variety of these stories originates in the freedom granted to the descendants of Eve to shape

their lives in ways impossible for them without Eve's liberating defiance. A few of the stories—those involving ghosts, fairies, a triton, a talking bird, and other implausible entities—result from Eve's gift of the imagination to her descendants, a power first employed by Eve when she envisions a different life for herself from that determined for her by her Creator.

Some readers will see the flawed characters in many of these stories as struggling in the fallen world brought into being by Eve's willful error, as poisoned and stunted in their very DNA by the bitter juice of the primeval apple which does its negative and divisive work to produce human punishment and sorrow. However, I see these stories as centering in and celebrating the freedom of Eve's progeny to choose, construct, encode, and enable self-determined lives of enormous diversity and complexity. These, then, are the stories of a select number of Eve's innumerable descendants.

EVE’S DESCENDANTS: Stories

Table of Contents

The Third Man.....	15
Hugh and His Parents	25
Samira	34
The Archbishop	42
Sister Angelica of the Child Jesus, OSU	45
Frankie’s Grandmother	53
Buford	60
Arliss	67
Dear Amara.....	73
Beppa.....	77
Thea	92
Seraph.....	98
The Deckhand	104
Arliss’s Son	107
Claire Heatherton.....	110
Bagatelle: A Love Story	121
Celandine	125
Thea’s Boys	128
Beryl and the Fairies	135
Dottie Tox.....	139
Father Brunet	149
David Seton Ward.....	156
Shondra and Claire.....	164

Hermione	172
Glinka	175
Father Felix Marconi.....	185
Gabriel's Gift	199
Alma	213
Jane	222
Meeting Rafe	233
The Princess and the Blackbird.....	240
May 28, 2002	249
Desert Tortoise	253
Haunting	264
Reginald.....	270
Gabriel deAngeles	272
Fatemeh.....	285
Madame Sylvana	291
Strawberry.....	299
Variana.....	305
The Three Ravens.....	314
Olympe	322
Wynton	328
Thea's Completion.....	332
Randal	336
Wife	347
Dymphna on the Bus.....	357
Jude	360
Sterling	370
Yolanda.....	375

Eve's Descendants: Stories

Cole	378
Philamon	386
Rosetta's Ring	391
Olympe Gaudet.....	395
Sinclair	402
Jolie	410
Philip	420
Stellan	428
Rowan	440
Louella	451
Lyra	463
ABOUT THE AUTHOR	475

The Third Man

(for Joan)

This is how I got to Colorado and nearly died there this summer:

I finally got loose from that harpy baggage of a wife I had made the mistake of taking in Holy Wedlock two years before. While I was courting her, she had talked me into a dunking in the chlorine stink of the blue plastic above-ground pool back of the Blowing Rock Assembly of God in Christ Church, even though I did not believe in God and had no truck with Jesus. I never saw any need or credible evidence that belief in a supernatural being was warranted. It follows, then, that I put no faith in angelic emissaries nor, for that matter, in the devil and his imp minions neither. Still don't, though I guess I'm ready to admit there might be occasions or events or happenings that make me question these negating certainties, including what I'm now going to tell you about.

My expulsion from Blowing Rock Assembly Church came quick on the heels of my divorce, which was brought on by the scandal of my diddling the church organist. Nearing sixty, this old virgin had told me that she wanted to know what being with a man was all about at least once before she met St. Peter at the pearly gates. I was game and could

be talked into getting naked with her, though that didn't turn out so good. When I finally got all the way in, her hymen must have shattered rather than obliging us by parting in gentle welcome because she hollered out that it felt like broken glass up in her and to get out, get out, she'd had enough now to know all she ever needed to know. She had about her that same smell as used to waft up from the drawer where my grandma kept her garters and girdles closed up tight, that kind of old stretched-out elastic odor that used to greet me whenever I dipped into the change purse she kept there.

Then I thought to help her over her jitters and her groaning and moaning by offering her a swig from my flask of Cutty Sark before we tried again, but at a sip, she gagged and said it tasted like what she imagined sucking on pennies would taste like and as far as the other went, she was by God done forever with that too.

In an apoplexy of guilt, she soon confessed all to the palsied old pastor whose own advances on her she had repulsed thirty years before. My resulting divorce was fine with me. I no longer had to put up with my ex's two delinquent brats, who, fortunately for me, their father Dwayne had refused my idiotic offer to adopt them soon after my marriage. So Dwayne is now still on the hook for them, not me.

When the divorce papers were signed, I lit out of town, eager to leave all that churchy business and marital aggravation behind me forever. I'm a locksmith by trade and a damn good one, with a tuned ear for the right lock clicks and tumbles and a deft hand for producing the telling ones. So, I closed up my shop, skipped out on my lease, hopped on the Kawasaki Ninja my ex made me buy rather than the meaner, more expensive Harley Road Cruiser I wanted, and headed for Colorado for the summer. Thought I'd nose around the Rockies for a bit before settling down again, maybe in Boulder this go 'round.

I remembered the Aspen area as one of the most spectacular spots on this twirling planet. The summer after my mother died of breast cancer, my dad and I went up there to get away from the carnation-reek of funeral homes, the tuna casseroles, and the long faces. I sat next to him looking out over the Maroon Bells, those two red 14,000 foot bell-shaped peaks with slashes of snow in their diagonal crevices and ridges. When I looked over at my dad after a long silence, I was sad to see tears streaking down his stony face. That caused me to cry too, and there we sat, both of us etched in awe and broken up with grief.

So I headed again this time for the Maroon Bells to do some hiking and some heavy drinking, maybe even, if I got lucky and kept my distance from antique virgins, a little whoring around in Aspen. The latter two diversions I had some

experience with, and though not exactly an ace at these two pastimes, I was nevertheless proficient enough to my satisfaction. As for the hiking, however, I was a pathetic goober, and there on one of the trails I almost met the Maker I did not believe in.

It was as perfect a day at the Bells as I had any reason to hope for: soft sunshine like the sheen on a new wedding ring before it gets tarnished; a tumble of wildflowers coloring the meadows like a rainbow put in a blender; a breeze like a good lay's breathing after the climax gusts have gentled. I had checked the weather forecast before setting out: the weather man all but took an oath on his knee that the day would continue brilliant and hot through evening, so on his word, I wore my cargo shorts, a cotton tee, tennis shoes, and a generous slather of sunscreen. I then set out on a nearly 7-mile round trip adventure on a well-marked trail along a creek with high banks threading through alpine meadows, aspen forests, and low rocky outcroppings.

I met up with only one or two hikers during that Tuesday morning. I was fine with that: I had the whole glorious world to myself in a silence made even sweeter by the melodic runs of dark-eyed juncos and lark buntings, their soft pipings countered by hoarse protests against my presence by Stellar jays apparently wishing to wield the world strictly on their own terms.

Around noon, however, a grim shadow blew up behind me on the trail, and I glanced up to see a dark cloud broiling above the Bells. It looked at first to be but a stationary hover over the peaks as if caught up and bound tight by mountaintop crags. Within fifteen minutes a gray mist stood up sudden-like, seeming to rise from the earth itself, blurring out the aspen grove I walked through into a haunted woods scene directly out of an old out-of-focus black and white horror movie. Then it commenced to rain, an immediate fusillade of shrapnel that shredded the aspen leaves under which I cowered. Hail followed, clattering marble-sized pellets down before they ricocheted back up from the earth in a macabre white dance. Constant lightning branched through the looming sky like extended roots of upended trees. Thunder shuddered through the thick air in deafening blasts.

I was soon drenched to the bone in icy water, shivering against the trunk of a large aspen. I thought to wait out what I hoped was only a sudden mountain squall, soon spent, but forty-five minutes of shivering and shaking so violently as to jar my bones apart, causing me to gasp for breath, persuaded me that I had better move on.

Once out of the aspens, I located the meadow path along the creek now churning almost up to its high banks. Across the creek and over another meadow was a highway a mile, maybe a mile and a half or so away. I could just make out

occasional car lights blurry in the far distance. At this point, my teeth were tap dancing out of my mouth, making me fear for my tongue; and my entire body was a convulsive upheaval. I stopped on the path for a moment, confused as to which way I needed to proceed. I remembered earlier passing several logs spanning the now-roaring creek which might allow me to ford. Once over, I could try to cross the meadow in hopes of reaching the highway and maybe flagging down a car. It crossed my mind that if I did not succeed at this, I was a dead man.

Then I grew so confused and panicky that I could not remember which way I had come or which way I needed to head. And I could not recall where I had seen the log bridge. Quaking with cold and a sapping exhaustion, I thought to rest for a spell to try to draw myself together again. As I was stumbling down onto a rock, I spied a man standing in a swirl of rain and mist, seeming alternately to materialize through it, then to dissolve. I called out to him. Without answering, he turned away from me abruptly as if annoyed and headed down the path. I pulled myself up to follow him. By then, I began to lose my breath, necessitating frequent pauses to pant.

“I’ll be alright now,” I whimpered. “He won’t just leave me out here. He knows the path. He knows where we need to go.”

The faster I tried to hobble after him, the farther he eluded me until, just around a bend, the man stopped, then swirled out of solid form. When I got to the place where he had dissolved, I looked across the logs spanning the creek to see him emerge briefly on the other side, then again melt into the mist.

Slipping over sodden logs spanning just inches above the frothing creek, now running fast with branches and clotted mats of leaves, I saw in the far distance the highway, a charcoal band in all that gray, fixed in a world shifting and blurring in the mist and frigid rain. I stumbled, fell, stumbled forward across the meadow, my companion now forgotten in my exertion and determination to reach the highway. There I collapsed on the roadway, too muddled to realize the danger I was in—a dark mass prone in a highway lane, visibility near zero. Then I saw the man again, this time walking on what I recognized as the shoulder of the road. At one point he stopped and turned to glare at me as if impatient that I was not following him.

A car sped toward me, lights arcing through the zither of hail and rain. I surfaced out of my daze enough to scramble further onto the highway shoulder where I had seen the man walking. This for sure saved my life. The car skidded and swerved to a stop some way down from me, backed up, a side window rolled down, and a startled face

appeared. All I could do was mumble my distress. Words would not form correctly.

The two women in the car stared out at me for a time, turned to each other and seemed to confer, then both front doors opened, and strong hands hoisted me to my feet and into their car's back seat where a large wet mutt pounced on me, slobbering drool all over my face. But the dog was warm, its breath like a stinky balm. Seeing me quaking with cold, the women dialed the car heater to a rowdy blast of blessed warmth. They sped down the highway, casting anxious faces back at me. They turned into a ranger station.

I must have blacked out, waking to find myself in a back room. The ranger helped me out of my sodden clothes and wrapped me in a rough blanket, then posted me a ways back from a flaring gas space heater. He took my temperature: 93.4.

"If your temp. was any lower, I'd have had to call for an ambulance, a dicey challenge way out here on a day like this. Should'a called for one anyway."

"There is a man out there on the path!" I sobbed. "He needs help too. He won't make it."

The ranger concluded that I was out of my head, that hypothermia had deprived me of good sense. But I know what I saw out there. I hope he made it out okay like I was lucky enough to do, thanks to him.

To: Thomas Harrington, Ph.D.
Department of Psychology
Colorado State University

From: Hector Garcia, Park Ranger

Hi Tom:

The enclosed tape records the testimony of Fred Morrison, voluntarily given at 10:00 AM, August 27, 2018, a week after the events described herein. The recording was made here at the ranger station, to which Mr. Morrison returned at my request after hearing of his ordeal.

Morrison is a white male, 42 years of age, an itinerant locksmith. In my opinion, his recorded account seems a trustworthy testimony from a credible, intelligent, though a too garrulous witness, given, as you will hear, to overly personal revelations. Mr. Morrison is willing to participate in follow-up questioning. As far as I can determine, he has, up to the point of providing this report, no knowledge regarding the “third-man syndrome” (by that or any other name) describing reported situations where an unexplained “presence” provides guidance and support during a traumatic, life-threatening experience. Indeed, on the completion of his report, I asked Mr. Morrison if he had ever heard of this syndrome. All I could get out of him was his continued insistence that there was only a second man out there with him, not a third. Obviously he had never heard of the “third man” account offered by Sir Ernest

Shackleton after barely surviving his harrowing Antarctic expedition or read T. S. Eliot's poetic rendering of the phenomenon in his poem The Waste Land.

This account, you will find, is a bit unexpected for a "third-man" encounter in its visual rather than the more usual auditory or sensed manifestation. I hope you will find this a helpful addition to your data collection concerning this phenomenon you are currently researching.

Best, Hector

Hugh and His Parents

Early in my career at Earnest Enterprises, I engineered a transfer to corporate headquarters in San Francisco, a fortunate assignment as I was then on the verge of coming out as a gay man, first to myself at long last, then gradually to family and friends. I thought, correctly, that gay Baghdad-by-the-Bay was exactly the place to make my disclosures and then to live my gay life fully after these necessary initial stages to owning that life.

I located an affordable, albeit tiny, studio in an old Victorian in the Castro District, paint peeling on its ramshackle gingerbread exterior but adequately maintained in its inner rental offerings. I furnished it to its cramped walls at Ikea with a cheap single bed (now what was I thinking?), a flimsy steel-frame desk, and a tan canvas Captain's chair. A drabber initial apartment had probably never been occupied ever before by a self-respecting faggot new to gay heaven....

Because this was my first venture away from home in Kansas—I had recently graduated from a small liberal arts college several miles from my parents' house and had lived at home for my entire undergraduate career—my parents insisted on coming out to San Francisco within days of my moving here to make sure that I would adjust to big city life comfortably and, above all, safely, their distrust of large

cities in general and of the state of California in particular being uppermost in their concern for me.

Because I could not accommodate them in my tiny apartment, I reserved a room for them at Lick's Motor Lodge located across Market Street from the Castro District and two blocks up the hill. I selected this location as far enough away from the demonstrably gay life everywhere apparent on Castro streets. The Lodge looked comfortable and clean, a two-story structure with a balcony running along the second floor.

I viewed a room before booking my parents there for their stay. The room was spacious, though Spartan, its walls adorned with a few tasteful photographs of statues of scantily clad Greek gods set among what looked to be Italian Renaissance gardens. The queen-sized bed looked as if it might be sagging in the middle but seemed firm enough when I sat on it. So I booked a room at Lick's for my folks' four-day stay.

My parents' flight was on time. I picked them up at SFO by taking BART to the airport. My parents wanted to get a cab to the hotel, but, eager to show them my ease with big-city amenities like public transportation, I grabbed my mother's suitcase and led them to the station.

We jostled along through Colma and South San Francisco until the train went underground on entering the city. As we approached the Castro Street Station, ground zero for this

gay neighborhood, the train filled with men until my mother was the only woman in the car, which, looking around, she seemed surprised at. I wasn't. These were, after all, the homosexual denizens of the neighborhood I determined to claim as my own.

On checking my parents into Lick's Motor Lodge, the clerk at the front desk, a large man with a blue Mohawk, multiple piercings, and a tribal tattoo inching up over his collar on the right side of his neck, seemed a tad unsettled when he realized that I was not taking the room for myself, but, instead, for the stout middle-aged couple accompanying me. My mother was dressed in a lime-green pantsuit relieved by a blaring coral blouse with as many ruffles and folds in front as a ferocious labia. My father sported a plaid shirt in bold red, black, and neon-blue squares, buttoned up to his throat and tightened there by a bolo tie cinched with a bronze arrowhead. These outfits had been purchased years before on a trip to Des Moines to visit my aunt Eunice. En route, my parents had stopped off at a Sears Roebuck, the last time they had made any effort to refresh their wardrobes.

My parents approved of the room, though my mother expressed some surprise that the bedside dresser held no Gideon Bible but, instead, a small plastic case. On opening it, she discovered it held condoms and small packets of lubrication.

“So California,” my mother frowned.

I suggested that they rest after having gotten up early to make their pre-dawn flight to the West Coast. I arranged to come by for them at 6:30 to take them to dinner at a restaurant I had selected nearby.

When I arrived at their room that evening, my mother drew me inside the room and hurriedly shut the door. “This is an odd place, dear!” she intimated. “Did you notice that many of the rooms had towels draped over the balconies outside? Does this mean that there is no daily maid service and that we should do the same so as to dry the towels after taking our baths? Also, there seems to be a lot of goings-on on the balcony just outside our room, whisperings, low laughter, that sort of thing, and all the voices seem male. We even thought that there was a kind of rustling at our window screen on occasion. What do you make of this?” she asked.

“You stay here for a moment,” I said, “and I’ll go down to inquire at the front desk.”

There I described what my parents had noticed.

“Oh sweet Baby!” the pierced, tattooed, Mohawked clerk shrieked. “I just did not know WHAT to make of it when I saw your parents check in! I didn’t know whether to say anything at the time, but didn’t you know that The Lick is little more than a gay bathhouse? Oh, we do provide rooms

like a traditional hotel, but men generally check in here to get laid and so to spend their nights-in-delight during their visits to the city!”

“But how about the towels draped outside on the balcony railings?”

“Honey! That’s a sign that the gentleman resting inside is open to—entertaining! If the towel’s NOT outside, the gentleman is either still out at Moby Dick’s or The Elephant Walk or perhaps at some low dive on Polk Street, or he is already luxuriating in the arms of Mister This’ll Do!”

“Oh God,” I breathed.

“Obviously new to the city...” Dwayne, as his name tag indicated, blew a breath out through puffed cheeks. Then his face crumpled into an exaggerated anguish: “New to the city—AND not yet out to your parents?”

I nodded.

“Now, let’s all keep calm in this calamitous emergency shocking to us all! Let me try to gather my frayed wits together.... Ah, yes, here’s what I can do in the face of this catastrophe, you sweet little Gay innocent, you,” Dwayne purred, chucking me under the chin. “I’ll call over to our other property and see if they have a room for your folks. It’s a traditional hotel. They’ll have to take a cab there as it’s several miles from the Castro. How will that do, Hon?”

Mama's here to help her little gay bay-bay in any way she possibly can!"

My mind was racing. I decided during the brief time it took me to leave the hotel office and arrive at my parents' room that I would have to come out to them over dinner, explain my mistake in booking them at this hotel and the new arrangements I had made for them as to their lodging, and assure them that I would be okay as an out Gay man in this accepting city.

On our way to the restaurant, registering dread at each step which drew me closer to my disclosures, we encountered three leathersmen in billed biker caps, black-leather chaps, and leather motorcycle jackets festooned with an excess of zippers, snaps, flaps, and chains walking down Market Street together, obviously headed to the Eagle in the Castro.

"Oh, I'm so relieved to see that the cops are policing your neighborhood, Hugh, dear," my mother said. "And very sensible of them to be wearing heavy leather in this cold San Francisco fog." But as they passed us on the sidewalk, she looked behind her: "Oh my God," she whispered, "they have no seats to their britches! Their buttocks are hanging out open and bare to the night air!"

In passing, I heard one of these leathersmen describing his grandmother's recipe for carrot cake: "The secret is in the

pineapple. Gotta put more of it in than the shredded carrots. Never fails!”

I think I can say with some certainty that my parents did not much enjoy their dinner that night. They were caught off guard by my coming out to them and my explanation—with as much detail as I dared—of what my life would be like from then on in the city I would come to adopt as my home. On hearing this news, my mother sat silent, looking down at her lap, her dinner barely touched. For the first time in my life I saw my father swipe away a tear beginning to edge down one cheek.

When we returned to the Lick, Dwayne introduced us to a young man clearly waiting for us in the lobby at Dwayne’s urging.

“This is Woody,” Dwayne said. “I thought you might like a ride to the new hotel rather than take a cab. He’ll wait here for you and your parents as they pack their belongings.”

“I’ll wait here too,” I said, thinking my parents might like a moment or two alone to begin to process the evening’s revelations before moving to their new rooms.

Lessons continued for the remaining days of my parents’ stay in the City: “Yes, Mom, they are ‘mannish,’ they do wear too much makeup, their false eyelashes are in bad taste and their breasts look like traffic cones, their hair is too ratted up, their clothes are tacky, but no, Dad, they are

not prostitutes. They are drag queens.... Why do they dress like that? I'll have to talk with you about 'camp' sometime. No, not about tents and all..."

"No, Mom, of course they are not real nuns. They are men who profess vocations as Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, a philanthropic organization here in the City. I guess it is difficult for you to understand, Dad." My Dad went on to tell me that the last time he had ever seen anything like these men-nuns was in a Fellini movie he had been forced to see years ago on a blind date gone bad, after which he felt as if he needed to go to Confession. I did not venture to tell my parents that two Sisters from the Castro convent shared a one-bedroom apartment in my house: Sister Iona Doublewide and Sister Wilma Holehurt. "I just hope you don't feel any special vocation in that direction," my mother said. "What would your cousin, Sister Mary Thomas say? Or Monsignor Bernard!"

That first evening, Woody drove us to the hotel Dwayne sent us to. He was cute and funny and did what he could to lighten my parents' post-disclosure gloom. Within the year, Woody and I were living together in an apartment we rented in Noe Valley. That Christmas I brought him home to Kansas with me for the holidays. When preparing my senile grandmother for Woody's arrival, my parents told her in her room in the nursing home that I was gay and was bringing home a companion. "Is his friend a homosexual as well?"

my grandmother asked. “Well, yes,” my mother admitted. “Why,” my grandmother was reported to have exclaimed in wonderment, “isn’t that a coincidence that this other boy is one too!”

On our tenth anniversary, Woody and I checked into a room at the Lick for a sentimental celebration of our first meeting there. My parents sent us a gift certificate to Gump’s. In the lobby of the Lick during our anniversary stay, we noticed a photograph and a small plaque memorializing Dwayne, longtime clerk, who had died of AIDS three years before.

Samira

This is how Samira and I both endured the cruelty of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards crawling all over the streets of our Tehran like black rats, brandishing their guns and threatening with their cramped morality the citizens subjected to their whims within months of the 1979 overthrow of the Shah.

I was simply being thrifty by gathering up all of the Shah's old flags—the tricolor centered by the Pahlavi lion bearing a scimitar backed by a red sun. People had hastily thrown them into every garbage bin in the neighborhood after the ouster of the Shah. I tore these old flags up to stuff as caps to close the plastic coca-cola bottles I fill with gasoline to sell to the owners of the mopeds, motorcycles, and tuk-tuks I service in my small shop next door to my apartment building.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guards in their roving “morality squads” did not admire my frugality. When they snared me in their net, drawing their rifles against me, they accused me of desecrating the Iranian flag. I had been careful while tearing up the old flags to leave some identifying feature of the Shah's denounced flag on each fragment. After the five men in the guard unit pushed me around and roughed me up, I grabbed up some of the fragments to show them that the red and green bands were bare of the Kufic script of the

Tabir the 22 times it now appears on the new revolutionary flags. I was also careful to include in each torn flag fragment some identifiable detail of the Pahlavi lion so anyone investigating the cloth stoppers would be under no illusion that I was desecrating the new flag of the Islamic Republic.

None of my protestations mattered: the Revolutionary Guards all glared red eyes at me, flared by a fierce zeal favoring the inflexible Ayatollah who had so easily converted them to cruelty. I bore the blows about my face and head before being thrown into the back of their white Toyota van which sped me and several other men off to a prison with no word to my family as to my whereabouts. I was forced to plead my innocence again and again before shifting accusers. I was roused from my cell at all hours of the day and night, expecting lashes at the least, fearing arbitrary execution. The one meal given me each day was a gray gruel bubbling with grease and bits of what, from the wool still on some of the bones, I took to be goat. I slept on concrete, wet from the overflowing toilet buckets, sharing the cell with eighteen other men, many of whom wept through the night. Some were taken out and summarily shot, pleading for a trial the Ayatollah had told the Guards was not necessary if they ascertained clear criminality in those they arrested.

I do not think I will ever forget the desperate cries and shrieks of innocence, the pleading and bargaining of these doomed men tortured into accusing others, their screams as the gunfire echoed through the prison's corridors.

After three days, I was released—no explanation given. A Revolutionary Guard with a wispy beard, acne, and a cracking voice—he could not have been much older than sixteen—yelled my name, yanked me by my shirt collar through a narrow opening of the cell door, and prodded me down a long hall, his club periodically punching me in the back. He unlocked a door to the rear of the prison and kicked me through it, his boot bruising the small of my back and the right hip I landed on in the middle of what seemed to be a parking lot, its asphalt buckling up in sharp ridges.

Blinded in the sudden sunlight, I lay on the scalding asphalt sobbing and heaving until someone—I would never know who—lifted me up with a hand under my arm and led me stumbling out to a street away from the prison. I limped toward the sound of traffic in the distance, recognized the road, and staggered the six miles across the city to my apartment, passing burnt-out movie theaters, closed bookstores, shuttered concert halls and libraries and Western department stores, their mannequins, stripped of their garments, still gesticulating ghost-like in their windows, their plate glass shattered into spidery webs glinting in the sun.

Everywhere I saw bands of Islamic Revolutionary Guards—thugs, goons, the dregs of society suddenly empowered, sanctioned to do what they perceived as the will of their despotic Ayatollah who scowled down on the city from giant billboards erected on every street corner to declare this Iman's absolute triumph in all spheres—civic, personal, religious, and cultural.

People I passed on the haunted streets averted their eyes and cowered away from me, though I assume I was no longer an unusual sight in this sad city.

I collapsed on the sidewalk in front of my building, unable to mount the three flights of stairs to my apartment. When my neighbor Fayyad happened to look out of the window of his first-floor apartment, he rushed out, looking in both directions to assure himself that I was not being followed, and half-carried me inside and up the stairs to my door.

There Nurul, my wife Samira's mother, met me weeping. My two young daughters, Naila and Azra, clung to Nurul's knees, both wailing for their mother. Samira had herself failed to return from the market the day before. Nurul was frantic, not knowing if or when either I or Samira would return.

I did not know where to look for Samira or who to ask about her. While Nurul stayed with my children, I went to the houses of several of Samira's friends. They knew nothing of her whereabouts. When I arrived at the apartment of

Samira's friend Amina, I learned from her husband Arkan that Amina too was missing. Arkan would join me in a search.

We questioned several groups of Revolutionary Guards we met swarming the streets. They snarled that they knew nothing of the two women, but if they were missing, they had to have broken Sharia law in some serious way and deserved their fate.

Later that same day, after I had returned home following my desperate but fruitless search, Amina knocked timidly at my door. On my opening it, she slipped inside to tell me that Samira had been arrested by the Guards as she was returning from the market on the afternoon of the day before. It had been raining. The wind had been fierce. Samira's veil had been blown onto the back of her neck, exposing her hair. When she, laden with her produce bags, had tried to replace her veil, she had bumped one of her bags into the backside of a Revolutionary Guard patrolling the neighboring streets. On observing that her golden hair had escaped her veil, the guard had concluded she was a prostitute.

This was Amina's account:

I was arrested with Samira. The Guard claimed that I had daubed my lips a shameless, brazen red with lipstick. We were both thrown into the back of their white Toyota van.

On arriving at a detention center, one of the female guards rubbed my bare lips on a rough tissue with such brutal force that my lower lip nicked a tooth and bled. Then one of the male Guards laid rough hands all over my body to make sure, he said, that I was not wearing whore jewelry over a mini-skirt. But I knew what he was up to.

Samira was thrown into the same room with me. The Guards—three men and one woman—demanded that she remove her veil, an order she refused to obey, insisting loudly that she be respected as “non-mahram,” that no man had any right to see, certainly not to touch her hair except male members of her immediate family. One of the male Guards snatched her veil off from behind; another pulled off the band which held her blonde hair knotted up under her veil and flished his hands through her loosened hair.

“See?” shouted the Guard, “She is a prostitute! She dyes her hair yellow like an American whore.”

Samira protested loudly, parsing her hair frantically in a number of places to show her scalp as proof that there was no dye, that her blonde hair was as Allah had provided. This violation was done to her under a large picture of the Ayatollah declaring in huge letters: “Sisters, mind your veils! Brothers, mind your hands and eyes!”

Finally, as Samira fumbled to replace her veil, a female Revolutionary Guard, one of those called “bats” because

of their full black robes and chadors, intervened: “Brothers,” she shouted, “She is right. You know not to touch a woman who does not belong to you!”

She then took Samira and me into a small room and searched our market bags. She allowed Samira to replace her veil and to straighten her robe. She let us out at a back door. When Samira asked for the return of our market bags, the Guard hissed her lies: “You’ve bought haram from the black markets. The bags are confiscated. Just go!”

“Samira is waiting outside,” Amina told me. “She is ashamed to come before you because she has been violated and defiled by those Guards. She asks your forgiveness before coming into your apartment.”

I bolted for the door and flew down the stairs. As I ran to her, Samira fell to her knees and prostrated herself.

“Can you forgive this?” she cried.

I gathered her in my arms and carried her, both of us weeping, into our apartment and to our bedroom where I kissed her face, her hands, her hair. When Samira emerged from the bedroom after a short while, she had bathed, washed her hair, and changed into fresh clothes. Her return to us was like Eid al’Fitr when the moon returns after Ramadan, like the arrival of spring after a cruel winter. She smelled of rosewater. Her hair, streaming around her, shone in a dazzle in the sunlight dancing through the silk

trees, blooming violet at the window. Her muslin gown, vernal green with silver embroidery at the open neck, was printed with peonies in white and lavender, bringing life again to our small, drab apartment.

Here—not on those bleak Tehran streets, infested with morality goon squads and “bats” and everywhere scowled over by bitter, bearded old men in turbans—was the Garden of Allah, the true flowering of Islam!

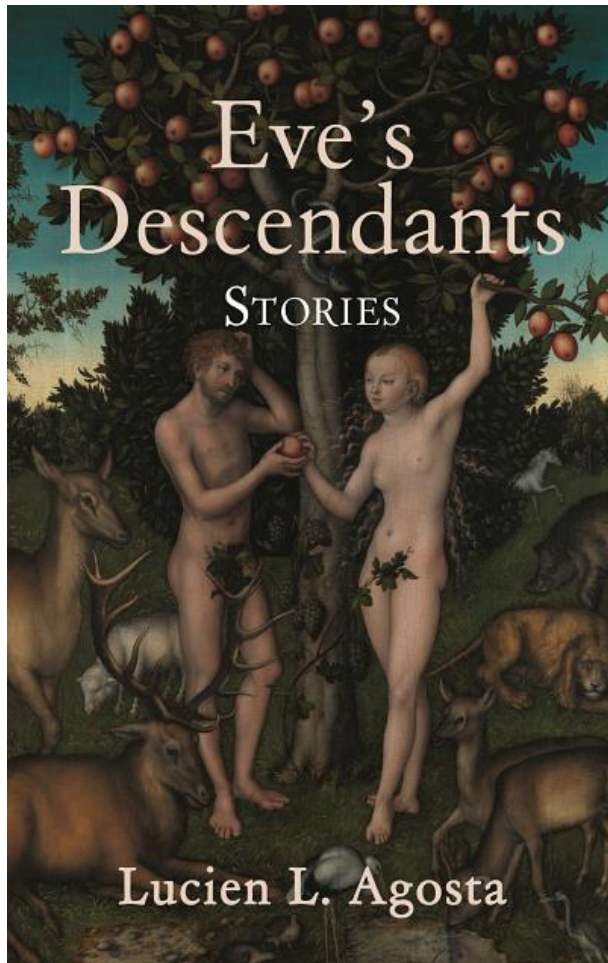
ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Lucien L. Agosta, Emeritus Professor of English Literature at California State University, Sacramento, earned his Ph.D. at the University of Texas, Austin, in 1977. In addition to publishing numerous articles in his field, he is the author of four books: *HOWARD PYLE* (G. K. Hall, 1987); *E. B. WHITE: THE CHILDREN'S BOOKS* (Simon and Schuster Macmillan, 1995); *LOSING TIME: AIDS LESSONS IN LOVE AND LOSS* (BookLocker Press, 2019); and *INVENTING THE TRUTH: MEMORY AND ITS TRICKS—A GAY LIFE* (BookLocker Press, 2022). He appears on the DVD for the 2006 film version of *CHARLOTTE'S WEB* under the segment "What Makes a Classic." He received the outstanding teaching award at California State University, Sacramento,

Lucien L. Agosta

for the 1999-2000 academic year. He is married to Bud Sydenstricker and now resides in Palm Springs, CA.



EVE'S DESCENDANTS offers 61 short stories exploring the experiences of some of Eve's numerous progeny, the lives they construct, and what it means to be human in the world our primeval mother left for all of us to wander through.

Eve's Descendants: Stories

By Lucien L. Agosta

Order the book from the publisher Booklocker.com

<https://booklocker.com/books/15006.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**