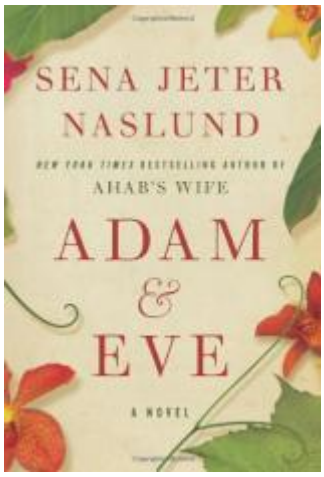
Adam & Eve

by Sena Jeter Naslund



About the Book

By decoding light from space, Lucy Bergmann's astrophysicist husband discovers the existence of extraterrestrial life; their friend, anthropologist Pierre Saad, unearths from the sands of Egypt an ancient alternative version of the Book of Genesis. To religious fanatics, these discoveries have the power to rock the foundations of their faith. Entrusted to deliver this revolutionary news to both the scientific and religious communities, Lucy becomes the target of Perpetuity, a secret society. When her small plane crashes, Lucy finds herself in a place called Eden with an American soldier named Adam, whose quest for both spiritual and carnal knowledge has driven him to madness.

Set against the searing debate between evolutionists and creationists, **Adam & Eve** is a thriller, a romance, an adventure, an idyll --- a tour de force from Sena Jeter Naslund, one of the most imaginative and inspired writers of our time.

Discussion Guide

1. What are the implications of Naslund's title Adam & Eve? Why did she use an ampersand instead of the word and? Why do you think she set the novel in the year 2020, "the year of clear vision"?

2. "What happened to Eden?" is a question central to the book. How would you answer it? What are your thoughts about the Genesis story? What truths does it hold for Lucy (the novel's heroine and "Eve" of the title)? What creation story does she believe in?

3. Why would the discovery of proof of extraterrestrial life be threatening to some people? How might it affect how we consider our identity, our ideas about being human?

4. Lucy holds the codex and the flash drive. What does each signify for humanity? How are they alike and how do they differ? How might they change the world? Why would someone want to murder to keep the contents of both the codex and the flash drive secret?

5. How does Lucy's background as an art therapist help her in dealing with Adam? Why does he insist on calling her Eve? How do Naslund's characters compare to the characters in the Biblical Genesis story? What propels Lucy and Adam to finally leave Eden? Should they have stayed?

6. Describe the Eden of Adam & Eve. If you could create your own paradise, what would it be like? In what way is this Eden a paradise for Lucy? What about Adam? What happens when a third person, Riley, appears in Eden? What about the feral boy?

7. Are religion and science truly as opposed as some people try to make them appear? How would the key characters answer this question? After they have come through their ordeal would Adam insist, as some people do, that science contradicts religion or that science merely contradicts certain ways of perceiving religion and of reading sacred books? How do you feel that religion and science relate to each other?

8. In **Adam & Eve**, Perpetuity is a group of "protectors of faith" comprised of literalist Jews, right-wing Christians, and Muslim extremists. Why do some religious people submit to the mindset of various extremists? What drives a zealotry that fosters man's inhumanity to man? Pierre Saad tells Lucy, "If the Jews, the Christians, the Muslims learn nothing new about their own origins --- the mutual origins of their religions --- we will have another world war. There will not be enough humanists or people of simple reason to stop them. Each faith will call it a Holy War, and the carnage, the bloodshed of the Medieval Crusades and the more recent European Holocaust will pale in comparison." Do you agree with Pierre's outlook? Are we headed for a "Holy War? How can we stop it? Why is so much bloodshed tied to religion?

9. When they get to France, Pierre shows Lucy and Adam the rare cave paintings that were the first human drawings ever discovered. What do the drawings signify? What is their role in Naslund's story? How do they relate to the codex and to the flash drive that Lucy carries?

10. Late in the novel Lucy remarks, "We must not repeat Cain and Abel billions of times. Sin was the joint failure of Adam and Eve to teach their sons the sacredness of life." Is she correct? Is violence --- not disobedience, or knowledge of good and evil, or lust ---"original sin?" What do you think of as original sin or as a universal root of human imperfection?

Author Bio

New York Times bestselling author Sena Jeter Naslund's most recent novel is THE FOUNTAIN OF ST. JAMES COURT; OR, PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS AN OLD WOMAN*;* she has published seven previous books of fiction.

Critical Praise

"Extraterrestrials, religion and violence in the name of God all come together in Adam & Eve. In a book unlike any other, Sena Jeter Naslund once again proves that she can master narratives of multiple styles and subjects, from futuristic to historical, science fiction to literary; Naslund is a master of contemporary fiction and a modern day treasure as an author of works of such distinction and specialization. It is difficult to think of another author whose works vary so drastically --- and yet maintain such a high level of mastery in each genre."

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