

- 1) 31. 01. 2026
- 2) 18. 05. 2026

CAIN: PART ONE

Inspired by Genesis 4:1-16

Written by

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EXT. SETTLEMENT - DAY

A desert orange sun scorches a vast horizon. The wind screams across the semi-arid savannah like a dying animal.

A cluster of mud-brick hovels stands as a meagre defiance against the elements.

ADAM (20s) wears rotting animal hides. He swings a heavy stone axe.

THWACK. He is building a wall. His labour is relentless, a brutal punishment against the vibrating midday heat.

EVE (20s) stands nearby in a small patch of shade, her belly clearly swollen.

And pinned raggedly to her coat are the withered remains of FIG LEAVES. A crumbling memento of Eden...

She grips a wooden post, knuckles whitening. The air shimmers. Her vision starts to blur...

She sways, the strength rapidly draining from her legs...

EVE

Adam...

Adam drops the axe. He rushes to her side, catching her before she collapses.

ADAM

Eve. What is it?

She clutches her stomach, wincing against a terrible ache.

EVE

He is so heavy. He pushes against the earth.

Adam gently guides her down, smoothing the sand to create a makeshift space for her to lie back.

He then sits beside her, comfortably supporting her weight against his muscular chest.

ADAM

Rest, woman. Rest.

He places a dust-caked hand over her womb.

ADAM

Our son is to be begotten of the Lord. Blessèd. He will not be a victim of this wilderness.

EVE

Cain...

ADAM

Yes. Cain. Our acquisition... What we lost, he will rebuild. He will take hold of this dirt, and he will make it obey. He will be a master of the soil. And a master of the Lord's command.

Eve looks up at the conviction in Adam's eyes. The desperate seed of human ambition taking root in their barren world.

Adam focuses past her, out at his half-finished wall. The work seems insurmountable. An entire kingdom of dust.

But he braces his jaw. It is the best land they have found, and they will bend it to their will.

EXT. SETTLEMENT - DUSK

The white heat fades into a purpling twilight. Eve lies back in Adam's arms. She cranes her head.

Her gaze drawn instinctively towards the West. Where through the gathering darkness, over the distant, lost horizon...

A blurred GLOW appears...

Then a sudden streak of lightning.

It is the transcendent, blinding arc of the CHERUBIM'S SWORD guarding the gates of eternity.

Its flash casts an epic shadow across the savannah, before plunging the world back into the long night.

ADAM

We cannot go back.

EVE

I know. But-

ADAM

But you cannot forget it.

EVE

How could I? The light... The perfection of it. Everything here is just...

Adam traces the hardened dirt beneath them. His voice roughens with an authoritative resolve.

ADAM

It will be ours again someday. Our own paradise forged.

EVE

But we are not God.

ADAM

But we can achieve the image of
Him, if we are not-

EVE

You do not know that. That was not
promised to us.

Adam looks out at the darkness. He thinks of their child.

ADAM

Not everything is promised.

EXT. SETTLEMENT - DAY

Time has passed. The settlement is a burgeoning assertion of
will. Thicker walls, now reinforced by timber frames.

Adam stands in his newly built workshop beneath a roof of
woven reeds. He exhales, full of prideful satisfaction.

He runs a calloused hand over the underside of a planed cedar
beam. A master craftsman enjoying his dominion over the wild.

INT. HOMESTEAD - NIGHT

The stifling heat of the day remains trapped within.
Firelight casts ancient shadows that dance on the walls.

Eve sits by the hearth. In a cradle of reeds lies the stocky
INFANT CAIN. His small fists clenched even in his sleep.

Adam enters. He gives a curt nod and goes straight to his
corner workstation, picking up a drawknife with horn handles.

He shaves a piece of timber. Scrape, Scrape. A rhythmic, but
grating, relentless scraping. Eve nerves are soon frayed.

EVE

You could stop.

ADAM

And let the dust claim us?

EVE

What difference would it make?

Adam grinds to a halt, hurt.

ADAM

What difference would it make?

Eve eyes the ground, ashamed of herself.

ADAM

That you live. That we do not
perish. I build for us to survive
the Lord's command.

EVE

I know. To survive.

ADAM

Would you rather disobey what is
the essence of your own flesh,
blood, and spirit?

Eve meets his stare.

EVE

Disobey God? No.

ADAM

Good. Never. He created us to
possess the earth.

EVE

I understand, Adam.

ADAM

If you want rest? Then sleep.

EVE

I shall try.

ADAM

But sleep come what may you will
not wake in Eden under a delightful
tree.

Cain WAILS. Doubtless awoken by Adam's raised voice. And it
is no timid wail, but the demanding cry of a monstrous baby.

Adam is first to react. He wipes the sawdust from his palms,
and approaches the cradle, scooping Cain up tight.

He holds him out towards the firelight.

ADAM

The prosperity we spoke of, and
that I now speak to thee.

EVE

Raised of the cursed earth.

ADAM

He may be from the Mother's womb,
yet here is human life.

EVE

A claim on the wilderness...

Cain continues to scream, fighting against his Father's grip. Adam stiffens, patience failing, and passes the boy to Eve.

~ She brings him to her breast. He quietens, his small hands gripping her flesh with startling, bruising force.

EVE

Oww.

ADAM

Look at him. He is the will to possess the earth.

EVE

Truly. Since he drinks the sorrows with my milk.

Adam bristles. He points a finger at the nursing child.

ADAM

He drinks in your strength.

EVE

Yet your might.

ADAM

The might to build, and stronger than I. He does not suffer the memory of the Garden.

EVE

But I see a victim... How can the fruit of sin ever know obedience?

Adam stares at her. The accusation hangs heavy, for it is the truth. He has only the reality of their labour to answer for.

He throws the drawknife onto the wooden table. CLATTER. Eve flinches, stares at the ground. Adam works.

A tear of grief and tiredness hits Eve's hand. She brushes it away, steeling herself against the memory of paradise.

EVE

You think I do not know the price?
My back is marked by the sun. The wind mocks me. Every minute of this life is a world-ache!

Adam turns to her. The frustration drains from him, leaving only the shared tragedy of their sun-beaten exile.

He glances down at his own blistered, bleeding toes. At his hardened hands. At the exhaustion etched into Eve's face.

He crosses the room. He kneels beside her in the dirt.

ADAM

Then live this life with me. Do not
condemn it, Eve. Do not bring
further shame upon us.

He reaches out. His calloused hand gently touches her cheek.
The despair between them shifts into a hunger for connection.

For a remembrance whence they were one flesh, before the
fall. And Eve submits into his touch and closes her eyes.

Adam's embrace, though driven by the terror of this life, is
fiercely protective, and a fleeting comfort.

EXT. SETTLEMENT - NIGHT

The settlement sits as a tiny, defiant speck in the huge and
indifferent void of the semi-arid savannah.

A distant wolf howls.

Within the mud walls, the guttural murmurs of lovemaking leak
out under the wind that whistles across the roof.

INT. HOMESTEAD - NIGHT

Locked in the tension of procreation, Adam and Eve seek
solace in the dark. The seed of the second son is sown.

EXT. SAVANNAH - DAY

Years have passed. In the distance, the settlement is no
huddle of mud but a rudimentary, fortified compound.

Wooden palisades and smoking kilns mark industrious
silhouettes against the bleached sky.

And in the brush, an early morning hunt is on.

10 yards away, half-hidden in the scrub, rests a very still
DESERT HARE. It blends into the rock and dried grass.

Then its huge ears twitch, scanning the wind. Close to where
Adam crouches low, beside his eldest son, Cain.

THE BOY IS 12, built like a young bull, radiating a restless,
aggressive energy. Adam leans in, at a whisper.

ADAM

It hears the ground. Step light.

Cain nods, and weaponises a sharp stone. His knuckles are raw
with fresh scars. A child who fights the wilderness daily.

He moves forwards. He needs to be quiet, but try as he might, he is heel-footed.

His intensity betrays him and he steps on a patch of roots.

SNAP. And the hare BOLTS, a flash of grey fur.

Cain roars and hurls the stone with terrifying force. It smashes into the dust just inches behind the fleeing animal.

That vanishes into a deep burrow beneath a thorny shrub. Where Cain rushes the hole, drops to his knees in a fury.

And begins digging frantically. He tears at the sharp roots and packed dirt with his bare, bloodied hands.

CAIN

I'll get it! I'll dig it out!

Adam stands. He shakes his head at this useless display.

ADAM

It's gone, Cain.

Cain ignores him. He attacks the soil, ripping up handfuls.

CAIN

I can reach it!

A few yards away, ABEL (10), the slender second son, remains crouched in the tall grass. Unhurried, he has not moved.

He holds out a hand, palm open to the sun. He makes a soft, clicking sound with his tongue.

Adam turns from Cain's destruction to watch his younger son.

From beneath the cool of a nearby rock, a scaled LIZARD crawls out and climbs onto the strap of Abel's sandal.

Abel smiles, a quiet radiance in his eyes, at the calmness of this creature. He looks up at his father.

ABEL

It likes the shade.

Adam looks back and forth. Cain, sweating, angry, tearing. And Abel, a vessel to whom the wild things willingly come.

A profound pang strikes Adam. Perhaps a pride, perhaps a terror, perhaps a sickness at the contrast between his boys.

ADAM

Enough. Leave the dirt alone.

Cain looks over his shoulder and stops at Adam's command. Then he sees Abel, the lizard resting on his brother's foot.

Cain wipes and smears his filthy hands on his tunic. He glares at the puny reptile with sheer contempt.

CAIN

It's just a lizard. There's no meat on it.

Adam turns his back and heads towards the compound.

ADAM

Come.

Cain stomps deliberately past his brother. His presence frightens the lizard and it instantly skitters away in panic.

EXT. SETTLEMENT - DAY

The compound is alive with industry. The lethal THWACK of axes echoes from the perimeter.

Adam stands with his sons near a pile of felled timber. He points to the massive logs whilst looking at Cain.

ADAM

The west wall needs reinforcing. Gather the timber. Haul it to the boundary.

Cain nods. He welcomes the hard work. Abel studies the sheer size of the logs, then his brother's scarred hands.

ABEL

Father. I can help him bearing the weight of the wood.

Adam rests a strong hand on Abel's shoulder. He sees into the boy's bright eyes, a spirit entirely unsuited for the job.

ADAM

Your place is with the flock. Go, guide them to the higher pasture.

Abel bows his head obediently.

ADAM

Your brother is more than competent to carry the burden of the wall. Let that dominion belong to him.

Cain's chest swells as his worth is proven.

EXT. COMPOUND EDGE - DAY

The brimful sun is a white-hot hammer. Cain heaves a 5-foot log onto his shoulder. His young muscles under great strain.

THUMP. The timber slips, crashing into the dust. Cain stares at the fallen log. He scowls, humiliated by his own limits.

With a furious grunt, he drops to one knee, wrapping his arms around the bark, and hoists it back onto his shoulder.

He staggers forwards a few paces before stopping to breathe.

Nearby, beneath the sparse shade of a solitary acacia tree, Abel sits. He uses a twig to trace patterns into the sand.

A white LAMB rests comfortably in his lap. Abel strokes its wool. Cain drops the timber and kicks it in his resentment.

CAIN

Abel! You sit and watch sheep. You do not build!

Abel turns. The shouting startles the lamb, which scrambles out of his lap. Cain marches over and blocks out the sun.

ABEL

They must be kept safe.

Cain sneers, his upper lip curling as he looms tall, leaning dominantly over his brother.

CAIN

(drawing a finger across his own throat)
Safe to be slaughtered.

ABEL

Safe to bring livelihood, that is pleasing to God.

CAIN

Unless God hates His creatures.

Cain grins. Abel stares at him, unnerved by the blasphemy.

CAIN

Are you a man? Or a little lamb?

Abel does not shrink away, ever calm of mind and tone.

ABEL

Are you an elder? Or an infant?

CAIN

We are not so different.

ABEL

No. You are strong. A man begotten by God. You are Cain.

Cain smirks. He likes the sound of his own name.

CAIN

Who are you then, little brother?

Abel looks past Cain, out towards the wonderful horizon where the wind sweeps unhindered across the plains.

ABEL

I am Abel. A vapour. The wind that carries the Spirit.

Cain chortles. He shakes his head, utterly dismissive of the poetic piety. Anything that cannot be handled is worthless.

He lingers for a moment. Then he hawks deep from his throat and spits a glob of phlegm onto the stars Abel drew.

He strides back to work, leaving the vapour to the wind.

EXT. SETTLEMENT - NIGHT

A spectacular, star-dense sky. The universe is terrifyingly vast, indifferent to the tiny huddle of humanity beneath it.

Adam, Eve, Cain, and Abel sit by a thriving fire. They eat roasted goat. They eat fast. Ravenous.

The crackle of fat in the flames, then a WOLF HOWLS. Close. Abel flinches, his eyes darting towards the dark perimeter.

CAIN

Just a wolf. Or did the Shepherd hear his Master?

EVE

Do not mock your brother.

CAIN

Abel has no fear. He believes God protects him from the vipers.

EVE

Enough, Cain!

Adam eats, not looking up from the bone in his hands.

ADAM

Fear keeps you alive.

CAIN

Strength keeps you alive. I built the outer wall today. It held.

Adam pauses, looks at his firstborn, a grim nod of approval.

ADAM

But the earth resists, and you must be harder than the earth.