

The Vague Appearance
Jayen
Upbeat
V.3, n. 4, 1970

It was Friday evening when Satan visited me. Before I knew it, he was just there! The first thing that ran through my mind was: “how strange, I’ve just come from the Matins Service, commemorating Christ’s Burial and His descent into Hades, and Satan has come to visit me.”

I sat there in amazement as he moved to the table where he finally sat. I asked him: “Why can’t I see you clearly? You look kind-of-blurred.” I can operate more efficiently this way,” answered Satan. *“It is much more difficult to avoid me if you can’t see me so clearly, because I go here and there, and I appear in many different forms.”*

Suddenly he asked me: *“Come sit, and play poker with me. Tonight I need your company because I’m so disgusted in my works.”* I walked slowly to the table and I sat directly across from him. He was dealing the second hand before I began to think clearly. “Why are you disgusted?” He answered: *“Oh, it happens every year around this time. You see, it’s Easter that haunts me. It always reminds me of my greatest defeat.”*

I was confused and asked him what he meant. It was then that he began his long story. “You see, it has always been my special joy to take man away from God. I must appear in many different roles in my attempts. That’s why I must remain vague in my appearance. I guess you’ve heard of some of the things that I’ve accomplished. Of course, maybe you never realized that I was behind some of these things.”

“Go on, Satan, tell me about some of them,” I asked out of curiosity.

“Well I can’t tell you everything that I’ve done, because I’ve been at work throughout history. But I’ve won some victories of which I’m very proud. For example, take the time in the very beginning of the world, when I took the appearance of “pride.” I always make myself easy to grab, and when that woman, her name was Eve, showed me that she was willing to ‘play by my rules’ instead of God’s, I really was winning the battle. Because of the pride that I made available to her and her mate, Adam, they turned their back on God. Ha! Ha! They separated themselves from God, Ha, Ha, and men are still suffering today from that sin.” By this time, he was laughing so hysterically that, even through the blurred image, I could see his eyes getting bloodshot.

When he finally stopped laughing, I asked him to continue. It seemed to me that he somehow wished I didn’t ask that question.

The smile completely left his face. He paused for a minute. “Yes, I guess that was my greatest victory with man. I still use ‘pride’ the most. It is a good starting point for all my other work.” He got up suddenly and told me that he wanted to leave now.

I don't know what happened to me, but I quickly responded, "No! There must be more. What's the matter – you ashamed to tell me more?"

He couldn't resist the challenge. He sat down slowly. With a very sober face he continued. "Well, I really don't have time to tell you about some of them. Let's see, Aha! There was a time that I tried to use 'jealousy'. Ha, Ha! That was great! It was used on the son of Jacob. They were so jealous of his eleventh son, Joseph, that they sold him into slavery. Ha, Ha, that as a great victory – brothers hating."

Suddenly, a straight face appeared again. "Only trouble was that by the time he was thirty years old, he was chosen by the Pharaoh to rule Egypt, I guess I was pretty angry when I saw that God helped him to be such a great leader. But don't think that stopped me! I still tempted man with 'jealousy,' even today. He was smiling again. I guess the thought of being able to use this form of himself on man amused him.

I pushed him. "Tell me more."

He looked strangely at me. "Don't think it's been easy!" It looked like he had a tear in his eye. "There was that Job. He lived in the land of Uz. He was real tough. I tried everything with Him. I was sure I could win! This time I used 'human suffering.' Everything was taken from him: his property, his family, his dignity. Sores were inflicted all over his body. You'd think a man in such a condition would renounce his God.

Until today I can't understand why he didn't. After all, how could a good God make a world like this where there is so much suffering. Even his three friends were confused by it. But I couldn't break him. Do you know that, despite it all, that man fell to his knees and said, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes!" With that, Satan was at such an emotional state of anger, that I was afraid to ask more.

It was silent now. I was afraid to ask him about some of the others that ran through my mind, like Moses, or Elijah, or Isaiah. We just sat there.

Finally I asked him to deal the third hand. He just sat there, playing with those cards. I couldn't bear it – "but why are you disgusted now? Isn't that all over with? Isn't that all in the past?"

"Yes, *those* incidents are all in history. But it is another incident that haunts me. An incident that is a continuing incident, even though it happened in history. You know what I mean – the *Christ* incident. You see, when it seemed like I had man finally separated from each other and God through all my disguises, your God, Himself, came into this world. And when He did, He reunited man with God, just like it was before Adam and Eve. He really stripped me bare – I tried all my faces: pride, jealousy, suffering – none of it worked. Then He really did it! You see, the one thing I finally had over all men, the thing that they couldn't escape... was *death*." He was bitterly weeping. In a full rage he cried, "And even that He ruined. He changed death into life. He and his Cross! He took all the sins that men committed, all the sins that separated them from

their God, even death, and changed them all around. He took them all with Him to this Cross!

His voice was cracking with anger. I was almost afraid to go on, but I did. “Do you mean that you have *no* power at all today?”

“Of course, I still have some power. Men can still choose my way. But it is this Church business – this Easter business. You Christians hurt me the most through these means because you live in their way – you continue your Christ’s existence through the Church and you continue your life eternal through Easter. That’s why I’m so disgusted at this time of year!”

He was in such a rage by this time that he threw down the deck of cards and left by the back door. My eyes were heavy when my mother woke me from my sleep. Our living room sofa is so very comfortable....Was it all a dream? I really cannot say. All I know is that now I understand why the Church must continue, why Christ comes and why Easter is really *The Feast of Feasts*. I turned off the lights and headed for my room. But in the dim light that the fireplace allowed, something caught my eye on the table. a deck of cards.