

The Garden

Written by
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PRELUDE - EXT. DESERT

EDEM (V.O.)

In the beginning, the Great Spirit gave life to Am-Wasa, and blessed him with knowledge of the stone, of fire, and of the hunt. He was the first of our kind, a child from heaven... our great father.

FADE IN:

The dawn fades to morning light. The rising sun FLARES the lens. The Camera pans to find a GROVE OF TREES along a river.

We move forward at an easy pace. This is nature at its finest display. As we drift through the trees, the camera finds the river. It fills the whole screen: mesmerizing.

EDEM (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The Great Spirit led him to a place where the river would never empty of fish, and where the herds would always return. Am-Wasa named this place...

We tilt up from the river. Drought has stricken the land.

TITLE CARD: "THE GARDEN"

1 EXT. RIVER - AFTERNOON ~12,000 BCE AFRICA (DAY 1) 1

The LOW WATER in the river signifies drought to the MANY FISHERMEN standing on the bank. One is EDEM, 19, PRINCE OF THE AM-WASET TRIBE and leader of the fishermen.

He watches the river: amidst the SPARKLING GLARE he makes out DRIFTWOOD caught on the bank. It pools water before releasing it back to the stream's flow.

EDEM

The river is dying.

NASIM, 18, stands beside him. He looks to the WAXING MOON.

NASIM

Seven days to Inunba. Rain will come. The river will rise. Seven days we will know again the beautiful flavor of fish.

EDEM

The white moon did not bring rain
last year...

NASIM

Edem, your father says rain--

EDEM

I know what he says. Go.

They don't move. Edem turns around.

EDEM (CONT'D)

All of you. Go. Go. Go.

That did it: they raise spears and move out. Edem turns toward the river and eyes the DRIFTWOOD. He waits for them to disappear, then he steps into the river.

Nasim turns back and watches Edem from treeline's cover.

Edem stands over a bit of DRIFTWOOD, raises it out of the water, and watches how the water escapes. He replaces the branch, and water pools.

Then a SINGLE FISH swims by his feet. He smiles. There *is* fish. His eyes drift upward until they land on a pile of STONES. His idea begins to form.

Nasim shakes off Edem's behavior and leaves.

2

EXT. AM-WASET CAMP - SUNSET

2

Their HUTS form a circle around an open commons. The Am-Waset Tribe is currently around 30 with the hunters gone. Small children cry, and elders sit around communal FIRES where women put ROOTS AND GRASSES into WATERY SOUPS. Hunger and heat have them all exhausted.

A WOMAN hands a gourd of soup to an ELDER.

CHILDREN

Fish? Fish? Where are the fish?

ZOOM TO SETTING SUN: The Elder looks up to see CHILDREN swarm the arriving FISHERMEN. It's clear: there's no fish.

3

EXT. DESERT - WADI - AFTERNOON (DAY 2)

3

SHEMES, 19, muscular and with a scrappy beard, leads a HUNTING PARTY. He stops them all, listening.

HE HEARS A STRANGE CREATURE. The others heard it too. ZHRUDU, 21, appears next to him. Shemes looks over and together they move forward.

4 EXT. WADI - MOMENTS LATER 4

At last they see their prey. An EWE stands alone.

ZHRUDU
(whispers)
It's very small. What is it?

Shemes unslings his pouch and readies his STONE KNIFE.

SHEMES
Our gift.

Shemes points for Zhrudu to go left. Zhrudu takes out his own STONE KNIFE. They move out.

5 EXT. WADI - MOMENTS LATER 5

The ewe grazes ten yards from Shemes. But something is off: the beast is healthy, and a FLAX-ROPE LEASH is tied around its neck, attached to a nearby bush.

Shemes and Zhrudu stand, revealing themselves. After curious glances, they both slowly approach the ewe. It backs away, but cannot escape its leash. Shemes sheathes his knife, then turns sharply.

A woman, 19, stands fifteen yards away. She is AVENA.

To his surprise, she walks quickly towards him.

Zhrudu rushes to block her path. Avena blows past him.

AVENA
Jut hura.

Shemes places his hand on his knife. A few yards away she slows and extends her hand to reveal a FEW ROTTEN BERRIES. She motions they are for the ewe.

Zhrudu slowly approaches. Avena turns at the sound of his FOOTSTEPS. Trapped now, she turns back to Shemes. Still calm, she bends down and begins feeding the ewe.

AVENA (CONT'D)
Da yuda? Juni das kwazi na hura.

Shemes doesn't understand. He looks to Zhrudu, who is now within a few yards, his knife at hand.

ZHRUDU

She seems to be alone.

His VOICE makes her look. Her unease grows. She slowly stands. Shemes watches her intensely.

AVENA

Das kwazi.

She reaches to untie the leash. Shemes SNATCHES IT.

AVENA (CONT'D)

Das kwazi. Jut hura.

She tries to pull the leash, but Shemes is much stronger. He looks to Zhrudu.

SHEMES

The woman comes with the beast.

He SHOVES her off. Zhrudu pounces to subdue her while Shemes pulls the ewe away.

Avena fights hard, SCREAMING and HITTING. She's nearly too much to handle. So Zhrudu KNOCKS her cold with his fist.

6 EXT. CAMP - COUNCIL'S FIRE - NIGHT

6

Nasim sits with women and children near a FIRE. The other men, mostly Elders, sit with ELIHU, 40, CHIEF.

Nasim sees Edem appear out of the darkness. He walks up with his own GOURD. Elihu and others glance up. He goes straight to the SMOKING FIRE. He takes a deep breath, and wafts smoke under his clothes as though he were bathing. He kneels to grab his soup, then takes an open seat.

Nasim looks across the faces of those around; all appear starved and spiritless. He takes a bitter sip of soup.

ELIHU

We will endure. It is the will of the Spirits.

EDEM

Father, the river is our life. How can The Spirits will this?

ELIHU

Your brother returns soon. He will have The Spirit's offering for Inunba.

EDEM

All year Shemes returns with nothing. The herds do not come when rain is not here.

ELIHU

The Spirits give Shemes our blessings. Always.

Edem holds his tongue. Elihu stares at him across the fire. The SAGE CRACKLES loudly in the silence. Edem looks around the circle, then stands and leaves.

Nasim finishes his soup.

7 EXT. CAMP - OUTSIDE COUNCIL'S FIRE - MOMENTS LATER 7

Edem walks away. He spots JUSTRA, 8, a boy who has been eavesdropping in the dark.

EDEM

Justra, what are you doing?

JUSTRA

Edem, the river will dry?

Edem is unable to give the comforting look he'd like to, but Justra's confused look causes him to smile. He affectionately tussles the boy's hair.

EDEM

Come. Do not worry.

8 EXT. WADI - NIGHT 8

FIRE CRACKLES in the quiet night. The hunters have made SMALL CAMPFIRES around which many of them sleep.

Shemes sits alone. He admires the exotic beast, tied by its leash to a tree. A few yards away sits Avena, her wrists and ankles bound. She anxiously watches Shemes.

Zhrudu walks up with a GOURD full of soup; smiles.

ZHRUDU

This beast will be our sacrifice
for Inunba? The Spirits will be
pleased.

Shemes barely looks up. Zhrudu's eyes drift to Avena.

ZHRUDU (CONT'D)

And the outsider?

Shemes glances past the ewe to Avena. He doesn't respond.

ZHRUDU (CONT'D)

We should take the beast and leave
her to the night.

Shemes frowns, contemplating. Finally, he looks up at Zhrudu.

SHEMES

The Council will decide.

9 EXT. RIVER - EDEM'S DAM - DAY (DAY 3) 9

The STONE DAM is completed, functional. Inside the leveed
water: FISH SWIM! A spear breaks the water's surface.

Above the water, Edem pulls out the spear, A FISH ATTACHED.

10 EXT. CAMP - AFTERNOON 10

THE NEARLY FULL MOON hangs in the afternoon sky. Below in the
tall grass, Justra jumps along, chasing a bug. He catches it.

He regards the GRASSHOPPER only a brief moment before he pops
it in his mouth and CRUNCHES down on it.

CHILDREN (O.S.)

Edem! Look, Edem has something!

Justra looks to camp where other CHILDREN have spotted Edem
approaching. Justra looks. Edem carries a full HIDE.

The children swarm him. He stops and unwraps the HIDE...

JUSTRA & CHILDREN

FIIISH!

Edem LAUGHS at their reactions. Delighted, a young girl jumps
on Edem and they fall down. Justra stands by LAUGHING.

LONG SHADOWS fall over them. Edem looks up. The tribe is
arriving, astonished. Elihu makes his way through the crowd.

ELIHU

Edem, how did you do this?

11 EXT. RIVER - EDEM'S DAM - EVENING/SUNSET

11

The TRIBE stands on the bank, staring at the dam. Elihu, although old, stumbles into the river.

Edem watches. Elihu looks at the design, then...

He pulls out a STONE from the top of the dam. He grabs another -- WATER spills over. Edem quickly runs up.

EDEM

Father, stop! Stop!

Elihu pulls out another stone, which collapses the structure. WATER POURS OUT quickly. Caught in the current, FISH swim free. Edem desperately goes for them, but SLIPS AND FALLS, landing on his face.

He sits up. BLOOD slides down his wet forehead.

Dazed, he looks back at his father, then to the broken dam. On the bank, the tribe is embarrassed for him.

He slowly rises, and walks to the dam. He picks up one of the extracted stones. Elihu grabs his arm.

ELIHU

Edem, this is not the way.

Edem tries to brush him off, but Elihu is strong and turns him around. He grabs the stone.

Edem pulls for it, but Elihu holds tight. Edem's face twists in rage. He tears the stone away and RAISES it over his head.

Elihu stumbles back. Edem keeps approaching. Elihu is terrified.

But Edem sees, and restrains himself.

He CRIES OUT IN FRUSTRATION, and SMASHES the stone in the gap. He looks as wrecked as his dam. Elihu walks up.

ELIHU (CONT'D)

The river brings life to all, my son. To hold it back is not our choice.

Edem will not look up, and does not see Elihu's sorrow. Finally, the chief lowers his eyes and walks away. He steps onto the bank.

EDEM

Seven years we watch the river dry.
Seven years we wait for the
Spirits. But They do not come. They
are gone, father! How long must we
starve for you?

The tribe parts for Elihu, revealing the HIDE OF FISH.

ELIHU

These fish are cursed. All of you,
go. Pray to the Spirits. Pray They
will forgive us all.

The tribe departs. Elihu turns to see Edem. Finally, he bows his head and joins the flow of his people.

Through the passing bodies Edem sees Justra standing still with a broken heart.

Shame and sadness overcome him. He is left alone in the river as Justra is shuffled off.

He discovers his reflection in the water below him. He stares at himself.

12

EXT. CAMP - TWILIGHT

12

Avena and the EWE sit around a FIRE with Shemes and other HUNTERS. Everyone looks up. The TRIBE returns from the river.

The tribe quickens their pace as the news of the hunters' return reverberates with all. Then the CHILDREN AND WOMEN overtake the front, rushing to their fathers and husbands; eagerly they fall into strong arms.

Shemes is welcomed by Elihu.

ELIHU

Shemes...

SHEMES

Father, it is good to see you.

They embrace. But then, the tribe falls SILENT. All eyes go to Avena, standing nervously by her ewe. Elihu looks to Shemes for an explanation.

- 13 EXT. CAMP - EDEM'S HUT / COUNCIL'S FIRE - NIGHT 13
- Edem walks into camp and sees a LARGE GROUP of men and elders gathered around a FIRE. He notices Shemes right away, and stops a few feet from his hut.
- Then the group quiets itself and looks to Edem. Edem meets Shemes' gaze. Then he sees Elihu amongst the Elders. He turns and goes into his hut.
- Shemes looks questioningly to Elihu.
- 14 INT. EDEM'S HUT - NIGHT 14
- Edem sits alone in his simple hut. He wraps up CARVED FIGURINES and SCULPTING TOOLS in a HIDE and packs it in his POUCH.
- O.C. SCREAMING AND YELLING
- He slings his pouch over his shoulder as he grabs his SPEAR and exits.
- 15 EXT. CAMP COMMONS - NIGHT 15
- Avena is torn away from her ewe by two men. The ewe bucks in terror as Zhrudu and another man subdue it.
- Avena fights hard. She breaks free and tackles one of the men. More men rush in to the fray.
- AVENA
Na, na na!
- Shemes stands over the spectacle like a proud parent. Elihu and many ELDERS stand next to him.
- From the back of the crowd, Edem watches as the strange woman SLAPS Zhrudu across the face, then is torn from the beast. Three men now restrain her.
- AVENA (CONT'D)
(screams)
Na!
- Young Justra, bravely steps forward to the men holding her and tries to help her escape. One of the men roughly shoves the boy aside. Justra hits the dirt.
- The ewe bucks in terror. Zhrudu and the men struggle to keep it still.

Shemes gets the approval from Elihu and the Elders, steps forward and takes out his STONE KNIFE. He approaches the ewe.

The Tribe's ROAR surges.

Avena SCREAMS LOUDER, struggles harder.

Shemes bends down, ready to slaughter--

EDEM (O.S.)
STOP YOUR KNIVES!

The quieted crowd opens for Edem as he walks up. The wild woman still grapples with her captors.

EDEM (CONT'D)
Let her go.

They don't, but look to Shemes and the Elders.

EDEM (CONT'D)
Let her go!

Edem steps up to the captors, forcing her release. She's confused, but regards Edem as her savior.

SHEMES
Brother, you do not know what you
are doing--

EDEM
Shemes, who is this woman? Why does
she fight for this beast?

Shemes hesitates, and looks to Elihu behind him.

EDEM (CONT'D)
Zhrudu, let it go.

ZHRUDU
Its our sacrifice...

EDEM
Did you hunt this beast? Why is it
alive?

Zhrudu and Shemes exchange glances, but don't respond. Edem turns back to Avena, realizing what has happened.

EDEM (CONT'D)
The beast belongs to her.

The answer's clear on Shemes' face.

ELIHU

Edem, the council has agreed. The
beast will be offered to the
Spirits.

Edem stands firm.

EDEM

The beast belongs to her. It is not
yours to offer. Now you defy the
way of the Spirits.

The tribe is quiet. Elihu doesn't flinch.

SHEMES

It is the Spirits who blessed us,
brother. They give us the beast.

The TRIBE REACTS, agreeing.

NASIM

Edem, the herds are gone. The beast
is all we have.

His eyes train fiercely on Elihu; he speaks for all to hear.

EDEM

Why do you still seek an offering
for the Spirits? They do not listen
to you.

Elihu's eyes fall away. A small victory for Edem, who now
turns to Zhrudu and the ewe.

EDEM (CONT'D)

Zhrudu...

Still he won't let it go. Edem approaches, SPEAR RAISED.
Zhrudu quickly backs off. The ewe dashes free and Avena
catches it. She looks gratefully to Edem.

He turns, still holding the spear. Shemes remains calm.

SHEMES

The beast was hunted on our land.
The beast belongs to us.

EDEM

I know why you do this. You are
afraid... it does not need to be
this way.

The brothers lock eyes, then Edem begins to back away, now
knowing it's time to leave.

Edem goes to Avena. She rises, leash in hand. They turn to the tribe, who wait for Edem to hand the beast over. But finally he turns, and guides Avena and the ewe away.

The tribe REACTS starting to pursue them, but Shemes raises his hand for the tribe to stop. He calls after Edem:

SHEMES

Brother! You will stop the rains
from coming.

Edem stops and turns. He looks to Elihu. It's as if they exchange a silent, psychic goodbye. Then Edem continues on into the night.

Shemes starts to run after him, but Elihu physically restrains him. Shemes finally lets himself be stopped.

ELIHU

Shemes, no. Let him go.

16

EXT. RIVER - EDEM'S DAM - NIGHT

16

Edem sits near the ewe, fascinated. It drinks from the bank. Equally fascinating is the strange woman standing in the water washing her face; the FULL MOON reflected on the water. She's beautiful.

Avena takes in her gorgeous surroundings and notices the broken dam. She approaches and lifts one of the STONES in the water and places it in the dam's wide opening.

Edem rises, stunned. She lifts another stone, then sees Edem.

Edem lets the moment go by, and so she turns and places the second stone. She picks up a third. Edem runs down the bank.

EDEM

You know what this is?

She tilts her head, not comprehending. Edem gestures to the dam.

EDEM (CONT'D)

This. You have seen this before?

She slowly nods.

AVENA

Ber-yud.

She smiles and SMACKS the stone, naming it.

AVENA (CONT'D)

Taka. Taka...

EDEM

Taka...

She nods, then walks it over to the dam.

AVENA

Taka, ber-yud.

Edem cautiously asks for the stone. She looks into his eyes, then hands it to him. He rolls it over in his hand. He turns to look at the ewe. Then he studies her closely.

EDEM

What more do you know?

THUNDER IN THE DISTANCE. It causes them both to look.

FADE TO BLACK.