

# The Great Apple Rip-Off



— Arthur Hoppe

**H**I, THERE, LORD. This is your faithful servant, Adam, speaking. Again. It's about The Great Apple Rip-Off a couple of years ago.

Now I know that when it first came up I referred to it as a "third-rate burglary." And perhaps I was being a bit hasty. But as I immediately assured you, there was "no involvement whatever" by anybody here in Eden — at least not to the best of my knowledge at that point in time.

I guess it was the fact that Eve and I started wearing fig leaves about then that gave rise to all that irresponsible talk about a "cover-up." (You know how women are about keeping up with fashions).

There were some unsubstantiated rumors based on hearsay and unidentified sources that my snake, CREEP, and my loyal helpmate, Eve, were in on The Great Apple Rip-Off and had even persuaded me to take a bit or two.

I was naturally outraged and after two months I was able to announce that a full investigation had completely cleared everyone here in Eden of any complicity whatsoever. Again.

★ ★ ★

**W**ELL, as you know, eight months later, I learned to my horror of "major new developments" in the case. And I was forced to accept the resignations of the snake and Eve, two of the finest public servants I have ever known.

But at the time, I nobly accepted "full responsibility" for the rip-off and promised personally to find out who did it "fully, fairly and impartially, no matter who is involved." By George, I was going to get to the bottom of this, come what

may.

And four weeks later I was able to publicly disclose for the first time that somebody in Eden — not me — was responsible! But, of course, whoever it was did it for the security of Eden.

And as I kept saying, "Let others wallow in The Great Apple Rip-Off; a year of The Great Apple Rip-off is enough!" So was a year-and-a-half, for that matter. But I had to keep telling you there'd be no more bombshells and that "I am not a crook."

So I kept thinking about it. And — would you believe it? — a couple of months ago I suddenly remembered that I, myself, right after the rip-off had actually had a couple of nibbles of that very apple! (Apple always was my favorite).

★ ★ ★

**W**ELL, I suppose I should have mentioned this when I remembered it. This was a serious act of omission for which I take full responsibility and I deeply regret it.

And there'll be no more bombshells, I sure can promise you that. Again.

Now whatever mistakes I made in handling The Great Apple Rip-Off, Lord, the basic truth remains that I insisted on a full investigation to discover the guilty. And I have.

I am firmly convinced that the record, in its entirety, does not justify the extreme step of my expulsion from Eden and I trust this perspective will prevail to any fair-minded . . .

Excuse me a minute, Lord, there seems to be an angel heading this way with a flaming sword . . .