

# THE USURPER

by

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In a quiet garden stood the great apple tree; and it seemed as though it had always been there - producing its exquisite fruit in due season. And at the garden's gate was a sign which announced, "THE LORD OF THE GARDEN INVITES ALL TO ENTER AND PARTAKE FREELY THEREOF".

When the summer was yet tender, the usurper entered the garden and saw the ripe inviting fruit, nestling in the strong arms of the tree.

The usurper's mouth watered, his stomach gurgled, and he desired the fruit - all of the fruit!

The usurper approached the tree and plucked a bucketful of the ripe apples; and with a purposeful look on his face, the usurper took the bucket of fruit and left the garden.

The usurper then set up a table at the garden's gate, and he pasted a new sign, in bold letters, over the garden's sign.

The new sign read: "THE CHURCH OF THE LORD OF THE GARDEN". And below the bold letters the usurper had added: "The AUTHORISED MINISTER of the Church".

A man approached the garden gate, and as he was about to enter the Garden of the Lord, the minister asked, "And where do you think you're going?"

"I'm going into the Garden of the Lord to freely partake of the ripe fruit."

"No you're not," snapped the minister. "Can't you read the sign?"

"Yes... But what does it mean?"

"It means..." said the minister slowly and condescendingly, "that the Lord of the Garden has made me his Authorised Minister... Understand?"

"Not really..." said the man, looking perplexed.

"All right..." said the minister, "in simple terms it means that you now have to deal through me to obtain the Lord's rewards. You see, the Lord is a very powerful and righteous being and he can't be expected to deal with riff-raff like you."

"But... how did this happen? How is it that you were chosen?"

"It's very simple, my man, I received the divine call through the Spirit of the Garden."

"Oh..." said the man, "can I now have an apple please?"

"No... There are some rules to be observed first."

"What are they?"

"The Spirit of the Garden gave unto me the following ten rules that must be obeyed implicitly, otherwise... NO APPLE... NO NOTHING... Got it?"

"Yes... Ok... What are the rules?"

The Minister got onto the table, raised himself up to his full height, pulled a piece of paper from his pocket, and read with a supercilious voice, "I, the Lord of the Garden have declared unto my Authorised Minister that the Articles of Faith of My Church and Garden are as follows:

"ONE: All shall worship me, and me only. I am the one and only Lord, the Lord of the Garden.

"TWO: To allow this worship to be effected I have created my Church - 'THE CHURCH OF THE LORD OF THE GARDEN'.

"It is now mandatory that all who wish access to my garden shall first be members of My Church.

"The admission, worship, and instruction rituals of my church shall be conducted under the direction and discretion of my 'Authorised Minister'.

"The members are to receive the words of my Authorised Minister as though they are my own words.

"THREE: It is mandatory that all members are to attend the weekly worship and instruction meetings. This ensures that all members are instructed in the ways of the Lord.

"FOUR: To support the ministry and my Church, all members are to tithe ten percent (10%) of their gross incomes. These tithes are to be presented to my Authorised Minister on a monthly basis. Note that only cash is acceptable.

"FIVE: The members are to wear formal clothes and shoes, and are to act in a reverent and respectfully deferent manner when in my Church and when in the presence of my Authorised Minister.

"SIX: The members may not swear, over eat, drink alcohol, think impure thoughts, think at all, steal, covet, kill, or blaspheme.

"SEVEN: The members may not partake of sexual activity, except that which is approved by my Authorised Minister. All members must discuss their sex-life with him for approval.

"EIGHT: The members shall confess their sins to my Authorised Minister and seek his forgiveness. This should be carried out on a monthly basis.

"NINE: The members must pay, in cash, any transgression fines that my Authorised Minister imposes upon them.

"TEN: If a member does not follow these rules implicitly he shall be cast out of my Church and Garden... Forever."

The man looked up at the minister, and asked, "How do I know that you're telling me the truth?"

"You must have faith, my son," smiled down the minister.

"Ok... can I have an apple now?"

"No, of course not..." laughed the minister. "You must first prove yourself worthy. Come back with your Tithes and Offerings, and I will consider your application to join the Church. Then you can make confession and pay for your past sins. Following that, you will be worthy to receive a small piece of apple." He held up and rattled the bucket of apples.

"But... I want a whole apple," said the man.

"Oh, my son, that's not possible. That blessing is reserved only for those who have consecrated their lives to the building up of The Church of the Lord of The Garden... You, my friend, have a long way to go... So go!"

The man turned sadly away, and returned to his home.

The usurper had arrived, and was here to stay!!!

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