

Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-82)

2 *Eden Bower*

It was Lilith the wife of Adam:

*(Sing Eden Bower!)*

Not a drop of her blood was human,  
But she was made like a soft sweet woman.

Lilith stood on the skirts of Eden;

5

*(Alas the hour!)*

She was the first that thence was driven;  
With her was hell and with Eve was heaven.

In the ear of the Snake said Lilith:—

*(Sing Eden Bower!)*

10

“To thee I come when the rest is over;  
A snake was I when thou wast my lover.

“I was the fairest snake in Eden.

*(Alas the hour!)*

By the earth’s will, new form and feature  
Made me a wife for the earth’s new creature.

15

“Take me thou as I come from Adam:

*(Sing Eden Bower!)*

Once again shall my love subdue thee;  
The past is past and I am come to thee.

20

“O but Adam was thrall to Lilith!

*(Alas the hour!)*

All the threads of my hair are golden,  
And there in a net his heart was holden.

“O and Lilith was queen of Adam!

25

*(Sing Eden Bower!)*

All the day and the night together  
My breath could shake his soul like a feather.

“What great joys had Adam and Lilith!—

*(Alas the hour!)*

30

Sweet close rings of the serpent’s twining,  
As heart in heart lay sighing and pining.

“What bright babes had Lilith and Adam!—

*(Sing Eden Bower!)*

Shapes that coiled in the woods and waters,  
Glittering sons and radiant daughters.

35

“O thou God, the Lord God of Eden!

*(Alas the hour!)*

Say, was this fair body for no man,  
That of Adam’s flesh thou mak’st him a woman?

40

“O thou Snake, the King-snake of Eden!

*(Sing Eden Bower!)*

God’s strong will our necks are under,  
But thou and I may cleave it in sunder.

“Help, sweet Snake, sweet lover of Lilith!

*(Alas the hour!)*

45

And let God learn how I loved and hated  
Man in the image of God created.

“Help me once against Eve and Adam!

*(Sing Eden Bower!)*

50

Help me once for this one endeavour,  
And then my love shall be thine for ever!

“Strong is God, the fell foe of Lilith:

*(Alas the hour!)*

Nought in heaven or earth may affright Him;

55



But join thou with me and we will smite Him.

“Strong is God, the great God of Eden:

*(Sing Eden Bower!)*

Over all He made He hath power;

But lend me thou thy shape for an hour!

60

“Lend thy shape for the love of Lilith!

*(Alas the hour!)*

Look, my mouth and my cheek are ruddy,

And thou art cold, and fire is my body.

“Lend thy shape for the hate of Adam!

65

*(Sing Eden Bower!)*

That he may wail my joy that forsook him,

And curse the day when the bride-sleep took him.

“Lend thy shape for the shame of Eden!

*(Alas the hour!)*

70

Is not the foe-God weak as the foeman

When love grows hate in the heart of a woman?

“Wouldst thou know the heart’s hope of Lilith?

*(Sing Eden Bower!)*

Then bring thou close thine head till it glisten

75

Along my breast, and lip me and listen.

“Am I sweet, O sweet Snake of Eden?

*(Alas the hour!)*

Then ope thine ear to my warm mouth’s cooing

And learn what deed remains for our doing.

80

“Thou didst hear when God said to Adam:—

*(Sing Eden Bower!)*

‘Of all this wealth I have made thee warden;

Thou’rt free to eat of the trees of the garden:

“Only of one tree eat not in Eden; 85  
*(Alas the hour!)*

All save one I give to thy freewill,—  
The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.’

“O my love, come nearer to Lilith! 90  
*(Sing Eden Bower!)*

In thy sweet folds bind me and bend me,  
And let me feel the shape thou shalt lend me

“In thy shape I’ll go back to Eden; 95  
*(Alas the hour!)*

In these coils that Tree will I grapple,  
And stretch this crowned head forth by the apple.

“Lo, Eve bends to the breath of Lilith! 100  
*(Sing Eden Bower!)*

O how then shall my heart desire  
All her blood as food to its fire!

“Lo, Eve bends to the words of Lilith!—  
*(Alas the hour!)*  
‘Nay, this Tree’s fruit,—why should ye hate it,  
Or Death be born the day that ye ate it?’

“Nay, but on that great day in Eden, 105  
*(Sing Eden Bower!)*

By the help that in this wise Tree is,  
God knows well ye shall be as He is.’

“Then Eve shall eat and give unto Adam; 110  
*(Alas the hour!)*

And then they both shall know they are naked,  
And their hearts ache as my heart hath achèd.

“Ay, let them hide ’mid the trees of Eden,  
*(Sing Eden Bower!)*



As in the cool of the day in the garden 115  
God shall walk without pity or pardon.

“Hear, thou Eve, the man’s heart in Adam!  
(*Alas the hour!*)  
Of his brave words hark to the bravest:—  
‘This the woman gave that thou gavest.’ 120

“Hear Eve speak, yea list to her, Lilith!  
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)  
Feast thine heart with words that shall sate it—  
‘This the serpent gave and I ate it.’

“O proud Eve, cling close to thine Adam, 125  
(*Alas the hour!*)  
Driven forth as the beasts of his naming  
By the sword that for ever is flaming.

“Know, thy path is known unto Lilith!  
(*Sing Eden Bower!*) 130  
While the blithe birds sang at thy wedding,  
There her tears grew thorns for thy treading.

“O my love, thou Love-snake of Eden!  
(*Alas the hour!*)  
O to-day and the day to come after! 135  
Loose me, love,—give breath to my laughter.

“O bright Snake, the Death-worm of Adam!  
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)  
Wreathe thy neck with my hair’s bright tether,  
And wear my gold and thy gold together! 140

“On that day on the skirts of Eden,  
(*Alas the hour!*)  
In thy shape shall I glide back to thee,  
And in my shape for an instant view thee.

“But when thou’rt thou and Lilith is Lilith, 145  
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)

In what bliss past hearing or seeing  
Shall each one drink of the other’s being!

“With cries of ‘Eve!’ and ‘Eden!’ and ‘Adam!’ 150  
(*Alas the hour!*)

How shall we mingle our love’s caresses,  
I in thy coils, and thou in my tresses!

“With those names, ye echoes of Eden,  
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)  
Fire shall cry from my heart that burneth,— 155  
‘Dust he is and to dust returneth!’

“Yet to-day, thou master of Lilith,—  
(*Alas the hour!*)  
Wrap me round in the form I’ll borrow  
And let me tell thee of sweet to-morrow. 160

“In the planted garden eastward in Eden,  
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)  
Where the river goes forth to water the garden,  
The springs shall dry and the soil shall harden.

“Yea, where the bride-sleep fell upon Adam, 165  
(*Alas the hour!*)  
None shall hear when the storm-wind whistles  
Through roses choked among thorns and thistles.

“Yea, beside the east-gate of Eden,  
(*Sing Eden Bower!*) 170  
Where God joined them and none might sever,  
The sword turns this way and that for ever.

“What of Adam cast out of Eden?



*(Alas the hour!)*

Lo! with care like a shadow shaken, 175  
 He tills the hard earth whence he was taken.

“What of Eve too, cast out of Eden?  
*(Sing Eden Bower!)*  
 Nay, but she, the bride of God’s giving,  
 Must yet be mother of all men living. 180

“Lo, God’s grace, by the grace of Lilith!  
*(Alas the hour!)*  
 To Eve’s womb, from our sweet to-morrow,  
 God shall greatly multiply sorrow.

“Fold me fast, O God-snake of Eden! 185  
*(Sing Eden Bower!)*  
 What more prize than love to impel thee?  
 Grip and lip my limbs as I tell thee!

“Lo! two babes for Eve and for Adam!  
*(Alas the hour!)* 190  
 Lo! sweet Snake, the travail and treasure,—  
 Two men-children born for their pleasure!

“The first is Cain and the second Abel:  
*(Sing Eden Bower!)*  
 The soul of one shall be made thy brother, 195  
 And thy tongue shall lap the blood of the other.”  
*(Alas the hour!)*

1869

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