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	15
Made me a wife for the earth's new creature.	
"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
The past is past and I am come to mee.	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,	35
Glittering sons and radiant daughters.	
"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!	45
(Alas the hour!)	
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!	
(Sing Eden Bower!)	90
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;	
(Alas the hour!)	
In these coils that Tree will I grapple,	95
And stretch this crowned head forth by the apple.	
"Lo, Eve bends to the breath of Lilith!	
(Sing Eden Bower!)	
O how then shall my heart desire	
All her blood as food to its fire!	100
"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;	
(Alas the hour!)	110
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!)	

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,	As in the cool of the day in the garden	115
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(Alas the hour!)		
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In thy shape shall I glide back to thee,		
	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, (<i>Sing Eden Bower!</i>)	145
In what bliss past hearing or seeing	
Shall each one drink of the other's being!	
"With cries of 'Eve!' and 'Eden!' and 'Adam!'	
(Alas the hour!)	150
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, (<i>Alas the hour!</i>)	165
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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