

## Fruit of Knowledge

It was the first Sabbath. Down the open glades of Eden a breeze stirred softly. Nothing else in sight moved except a small winged head that fluttered, yawning, across the glade and vanished among leaves that drew back to receive it. The air quivered behind it like a wake left in water of incomparable clarity. From far away and far above a faint drift of singing echoed, "Hosannah . . . - hosannah . . . - hosannah-" The seraphim were singing about the Throne.

A pool at the edge of the glade gave back light and color like a great, dim jewel. It gave back reflections, too. The woman who bent over it had just discovered that. She was leaning above the water until her cloudy dark hair almost dipped into the surface. There was a curious shadow all about her, like a thin garment which did not quite conceal how lovely she was, and though no breeze stirred just now, that shadow garment moved uneasily upon her and her hair lifted a little as if upon a breeze that did not blow.

She was so quiet that a passing cherub-head paused above the water to look, too, hanging like a hummingbird motionless over its own reflection in the pool.

"Pretty!" approved the cherub in a small, piping voice. "New here, aren't you?"

The woman looked up with a slow smile, putting back the veil of her hair.

"Yes, I am," she answered softly. Her voice did not sound quite sure of itself. She had never spoken aloud before until this moment.

"You'll like the Garden," said the cherub in a slightly patronizing tone, giving his rainbow wings a shake. "Anything I can do for you? I'm not busy just now. Be glad to show you around."

"Thank you," smiled the woman, her voice sounding a little more confident.

"I'll find my way."

The cherub shrugged his colored wings. "Just as you say. By the way, I suppose they warned you about the Tree?"

The woman glanced up at him rather quickly, her shadowy eyes narrowing.

"The Tree? Is there danger?"

"Oh, no. You mustn't touch it, that's all. It's the one in the middle of the Garden, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil-you can't miss it. I saw the Man looking at it yesterday for quite a while. That reminds me, have you met the Man?"

The woman bent her head so that the hair swung forward to veil her face. From behind it, in a voice that sounded as if she might be smiling, she said:

"He's waiting for me now."

"Oh?" said the cherub, impressed. "Well, you'll find him over by the orange grove east of the Tree. He's resting. It's the Day of Rest, you know." The cherub tilted an intimate eyebrow heavenward and added: "He's resting, too. Hear the singing? He made the Man only yesterday, right out of this very earth you're standing on. We were all watching. It was wonderful- Afterward, He called the man Adam, and then Adam named the animals- By the way, what's your name?"

The woman smiled down at her own veiled reflection in the water. After a moment- "Lilith," she said.

The cherub stared, his eyes widening into two blue circles of surprise. He was speechless for an instant. Then he pursed his pink mouth to whistle softly.

"Why," he stammered, "you . . . you're the Queen of Air and Darkness!"

Smiling up at him from the corners of her eyes, the woman nodded. The cherub stared at her big-eyed for a moment longer, too overcome for speech. Then, suddenly, he beat his rainbow pinions together and darted off through the trees without another word, the translucent air rippling in a lazy, half-visible wake behind him. Lilith looked after him with a shadowy smile on her face. He was going to warn Adam. The smile deepened. Let him.

Lilith turned for one last glance into the mirror of the pool at the strange new shape she had just put on. It was the newest thing in creation-not even God knew about it. And rather surprisingly, she thought she was going to like it. She did not feel nearly as stifled and heavy as she had expected to feel, and there was something distinctly pleasant in the softness of the breeze pouring caressingly about her body, the fragrance of springtime sweet in her nostrils, the grass under her bare feet. The Garden was beautiful with a beauty she had not realized until she saw it through human eyes. Everything she saw through them, indeed, was curiously different now. Here in this flesh all her faculties seemed refocused, as if she, who had always seen with such crystal clarity, now looked through rainbows at everything she saw. But it was a pleasant refocusing. She wished she had longer to enjoy her tenancy in this five-sensed flesh she shared with Adam.

But she had very little time. She glanced up toward the bright, unchanging glory above the trees as if she could pierce the floor of heaven and see God resting on the unimaginable splendor of the Throne while the seraphim chanted in long, shining rows about him. At any moment he might stir and lean forward over Eden, looking down. Lilith instinctively shrugged her shadowy garment closer about her. If he did not look too closely, he might not pierce that shadow. But if he did- A little thrill of excitement, like forked lightning, went through the strange new flesh she wore. She liked danger.

She bent over the pool for one last look at herself, and the pool was a great, dim eye looking back at her, almost sentient, almost aware of her. This was a living Garden. The translucent air quivered with a rhythmic pulsing through the trees; the ground was resilient under her feet; vines drew back to let her pass beneath them. Lilith, turning away through the swimming air after the cherub, puzzled a little as she walked through the parting trees. The relation was very close between flesh and earth-perhaps her body was so responsive to the beauty of the Garden because it aped so closely flesh that had been a part of the Garden yesterday. And if even she felt that kinship, what must Adam feel, who was himself earth only yesterday?

The Garden was like a vast, half-sentient entity all around her, pulsing subtly with the pulse of the lucent air. Had God drawn from this immense and throbbing fecundity all the life which peopled Eden? Was Adam merely an extension of it, a focus and intensification of the same life which pulsed through the Garden? Creation was too new; she could only guess.

She thought, too, of the Tree of Knowledge as she walked smoothly through the trees. That Tree, tempting and forbidden. Why? Was God testing Man somehow? Was Man then, not quite finished, after all? Was there any flaw in Eden? Suddenly she knew that there must be. Her very presence here was proof of it, for she, above all others, had no right to intrude into this magical closed sphere which was God's greatest work. Yet here she walked through the heart of it, and not even God knew, yet- Lilith slanted a smile up through the leaves toward the choruses of

the seraphim whose singing swelled and sank and swelled again, unutterably sweet high above the trees. The animals watched her pass with wide, bewildered eyes, somehow not quite at ease, although no such thing as fear had yet stirred through the Garden. Lilith glanced at them curiously as she passed. They were pretty things. She liked Eden.

Presently a swooning fragrance came drifting to her through the trees, almost too sweet to enjoy, and she heard a small voice piping excitedly: "Lilith . . . Air and Darkness- He won't like it! Michael ought to know-"

Lilith smiled and stepped clear of the trees into the full, soft glow of Eden's sun. It did not touch the shadow that dimly veiled the pale contours of this newest shape in Eden. Once or twice that intangible breeze lifted her hair in a great, dim cloud about her, though no leaves moved. She stood quiet, staring across the glade, and as she stared she felt the first small tremor of

distrust in this new flesh she wore.

For on a grassy bank in the sunlight, under the blossoming orange trees, lay Adam. And the trees and the flowers of Eden had seemed beautiful to the eyes of this body Lilith wore, and the breezes and the perfumes had delighted it-but here was flawless perfection newly shaped out of the warm red earth of Eden into the image of its Maker, and the sight of him frightened Lilith because it pleased her so. She did not trust a beauty that brought her to a standstill under the trees, not quite certain why she had stopped.

He sprawled in long-limbed magnificence on the grass, laughing up at the cherub with his curly yellow head thrown back. Every line of him and every motion had a splendid male beauty as perfect as Omnipotence could make it. Though he wore no clothing he was no more naked than she, for there was a curious glow all about him, a garment of subtle glory that clothed him as if with an all-enveloping halo.

The cherub danced excitedly up and down in the air above him, shrilling: "She shouldn't be here! You know she shouldn't! She's evil, that's what she is! God won't like it! She-" Then above Adam's head he caught Lilith's eye, gulped a time or two, piped one last admonishing, "Better watch out!" and fluttered away among the leaves, looking back over one wing as he flew. Adam's gaze followed the cherub's. The laughter faded from his face and he got up slowly, the long, smooth muscles sliding beautifully under his garment of subtle glory as he moved. He was utter perfection in everything he did, flawless, new-made at the hands of God. He came toward her slowly, a shining wonder on his face.

Lilith stared at him distrustfully. The other glories of the Garden had pleased her abstractly, in a way that left her mistress of herself. But here was something she did not understand at all. The eternal Lilith looked out, bewildered, through the eyes of a body that found something strange and wonderful in Adam. She laid a hand on the upper part of that body which rose and fell with her breathing, and felt something beating strongly beneath the smooth, curved surface of the stuff called flesh.

Adam came toward her slowly. They met in the middle of the glade, and for a long moment neither spoke. Then Adam said in a marveling voice, resonant and deep:

"You. . . you're just as I knew you'd be- I knew you'd be somewhere, if I could only find you. 'Where were you hiding?'"

With an effort Lilith mastered this odd, swimming warmth in her which she did not understand. After all, he was nothing but a certain limited awareness housed in newly shaped flesh, and it made no real difference at all what shape that flesh wore. Her business was too dangerous for her to linger here admiring him because by some accident he was pleasing to the eyes of her newly acquired body. She made her voice like honey in her throat and looked up at him under her lashes, crooning:

"I wasn't here at all, until you thought of me."

"Until I-" Adam's golden brows met.

"God made you in His image," said Lilith, fluttering the lashes. "There's so much of God in you still-didn't you know you could create, too, if you desired strongly enough?"

She remembered that deep need of his pulsing out and out in great, demanding waves from the Garden, and how it had seemed a call addressed to her alone. She had delighted as she yielded to it, deliberately subordinating her will to the will of the unseen caller in the Garden. She had let it draw her down out of the swimming void, let it mold flesh around her in the shape it chose, until all her being was incased in the strange, soft, yielding substance which was proving so treacherously responsive to the things she was encountering in Eden.

Adam shook his curly head uncomprehendingly. "You weren't here. I couldn't find you," he repeated, as if he had not heard her. "I watched all day among the animals, and they were all in twos but Man. I knew you must be somewhere. I knew just how you'd look. I

thought I'd call you Eve when I found you-Eve, the Mother of All Living. Do you like it?"

"It's a good name," murmured Lilith, coming nearer to him, "but not for me. I'm Lilith, who came out of the dark because you needed me." She smiled a heady smile at him, and the shadowy garment drew thin across her shoulders as she lifted her arms. Adam seemed a little uncertain about what to do with his own arms as she clasped her hands behind his neck and tiptoed a little, lifting her face.

"Lilith?" he echoed in a bemused voice. "I like the sound. What does it mean?" "Never mind," she crooned in her sweetest voice. "I came because you wanted me." And then, in a murmur: "Bend your head, Adam. I want to show you something-"

It was the first kiss in Eden. 'When it was over, Lilith opened her eyes and looked up at Adam aghast, so deeply moved by the pleasantness of that kiss that she could scarcely remember the purpose that had prompted it. Adam blinked dizzily down at her. He had found what to do with his arms. He stammered, still in that bemused voice:

"Thank God, you did come! I wish He could have sent you sooner. We-" Lilith recovered herself enough to murmur gently: "Don't you understand, dear? God didn't send me. It was you, yourself, waiting and wanting me, that let me take shape out of. . . never mind. . . and come to you in the body you pictured for me, because I knew what wonderful things we could accomplish here in Eden, together. You're God's own image, and you have greater powers than you know, Adam." The tremendous idea that had come to her in the ether when she first heard his soundless call glowed in her voice. "There's no limit to what we could do here, together! Greater things than even God ever dreamed-" "You're so pretty," interrupted Adam, smiling down at her with his disarming, empty smile. "I'm so glad you came-"

Lilith let the rest of her eagerness run out in a long sigh. It was no use trying to talk to him now. He was too new. Powerful with a godlike power, yes, but unaware of it-unaware even of himself as an individual being. He had not tasted the Fruit of Knowledge and his innocence was as flawless as his beauty. Nothing was in his mind, or could be, that God had not put there at his shaping from the warm earth of Eden.

And perhaps it was best, after all. Adam was too close to godhood to see eye to eye with her in all she might want to do. If he never tasted knowledge, then he would ask no questions-and so he must never touch the Tree.

The Tree- It reminded her that Eden was still a testing ground, not a finished creation. She thought she knew now what the flaw in man had been which made it possible for Lilith, of all the creatures of ether, to stand here at the very focus of all the power and beauty and innocence in Eden. Lilith, who was evil incarnate and knew it very well. God had made Adam incomplete, and not, perhaps, realized the flaw. And out of Adam's need Adam himself had created woman- who was not complete either. Lilith realized it suddenly, and began to understand the depth of her reaction to this magnificent creature who still held her in his arms.

There was an idea somewhere back of all this which was immensely important, but her mind would not pursue it. Her mind kept sliding off the question to dwell cloudily on the Man upon whose shoulder she was leaning. What curious stuff this flesh was! While she wore it, not even the absorbing question of God's purpose, not even her own peril here, could quite obliterate the knowledge of Adam's presence, his arm about her. Values had changed in a frightening way, and the most frightening thing of all was that she did not care. She laid her head back on his shoulder and inhaled the honeyed perfume of the orange blossoms, futilely reminding herself that she was dangerously wasting time. At any moment God might look down and see her, and there was so much to be done before that happened. She must master this delicious fogging of the senses whenever Adam's arm tightened about her. The Garden must be

fortified, and she must begin now.

Sighing, she laced her fingers through Adam's and crooned in the softest voice:

"I want to see the Garden. Won't you show it to me?"

His voice was warm as he answered:

"I want to! I hoped you'd ask me that. It's such a wonderful place."

A cherub fluttered across the valley as they strolled eastward, and paused on beating wings to frown down at them.

"Wait till He looks down," he piped. "Just wait, that's all!" Adam laughed, and the cherub clucked disapprovingly and fluttered off, shaking his head.

Lilith, leaning on Adam's shoulder, laughed, too. She was glad that he could not understand the cherub's warnings, deaf in the perfection of his innocence. So long as she could prevent it he would never taste that Fruit. The knowledge of evil was not in him and it must never

be. For she was herself, as she realized well, the essence of abstract evil as opposed to abstract good-balancing it, making it possible. Her part was as necessary as God's in the scheme of creation, for light cannot exist without dark, nor positive without negative, nor good without evil.

Yet she did not feel in the least evil just now. There was no antagonism at all between her negation and the strong positive innocence of the man beside her.

"Look," said Adam, sweeping a long-armed gesture. A low hillside lay before them, starry with flowers except for a scar in its side where the raw, bare earth of Eden showed through. The scar was already healing over with a faint mist of green. "That's where I was made," said Adam softly. "Right out of that hillside. Does it seem rather

rather wonderful to you, Lilith?"

"If it does to you," she crooned, and meant it. "Why?"

"The animals don't seem to understand. I hoped you would. It's as if the . . . the whole Garden were part of me. If there are other men, do you suppose they'll love the earth like this, Lilith, for its own sake? Do you think they'll have this same feeling about the place where they were born? Will one certain hill or valley be almost one flesh with theirs, so that they'd sicken away from it and fight and die if they had to, to keep it-as I think I would? Do you feel it, too?"

The air went pulsing past them, sweet with the music of the seraphim, while Lilith looked out over the valley that had brought Adam to birth. She was trying hard, but she could not quite grasp that passionate identification with the earth of Eden which beat like blood through Adam's veins.

"Eden is you," she murmured. "I can understand that. You mustn't ever leave it."

"Leave it?" laughed Adam. "Where else is there? Eden belongs to us forever-and you belong to me."

Lilith let herself relax delightfully against his shoulder, knowing suddenly that she loved this irresponsible, dangerous flesh even while she distrusted it. And- Something was wrong. The sudden awareness of it chilled her and she glanced uneasily about, but it was several minutes before her fleshbound senses located the wrongness. Then she put her head back and stared up through the trees with puckered brows.

"What is it?" Adam smiled down at her. "Angels? They go over quite often, you know."

Lilith did not answer. She was listening hard. Until now all Eden had echoed faintly and sweetly with the chanting of seraphim about the Throne. But now the sounds that sifted down through the bright, translucent air were not carols of praise. There was trouble in heaven. She could hear faraway shouts in great, ringing, golden voices from infinitely high above, the clash and hiss of flaming swords, and now and again a crash as if part of the very walls of heaven had crumbled inward under some unimaginable onslaught.

It was hard to believe-but there was war in heaven.

A wave of relief went delightfully through Lilith. Good-let them fight. She smiled to herself and snuggled closer to Adam's side. The trouble, whatever it might be, would keep God's attention distracted a while longer from what went on in Eden, and she was devoutly grateful for that. She needed this respite. She had awhile longer, then, to accustom herself to the vagaries of this strange body, and to the strange reaction Adam was causing, before the war was over in heaven and war began in Eden between Lilith and God.

A shudder of terror and anticipation went over her again as she thought of that. She was not sure God could destroy her if He would, for she was a creature of the darkness beyond His light and her existence was necessary to the structure he was rearing in heaven and upon earth. Without the existence of such as Lilith, the balance of creation might tip over. No, God would not-perhaps could not-destroy her, but He could punish very terribly.

This flesh, for instance. It was so soft, so perishable. She was aware of a definite cleavage between the mind and the body that housed it. Perhaps God had been wise in choosing this fragile container instead of some imperishable substance into which to pour all the innocence, the power that was Adam. It was dangerous to trust such power in an independent body-as Lilith meant to prove to God if her plan went well. But it was no part of that plan-now-to have an angered God destroy His fleshly image.

She must think of some way to prevent it. Presently she would waken out of this warm, delightful fog that persisted so long as Adam's arm was about her, but there was no hurry yet. Not while war raged in heaven. She had never known a mood like this before, when cloudy emotions moved like smoke through her mind and nothing in creation had real significance except this magnificent male upon whose shoulder she leaned.

Then Adam looked down at her and smiled, and all the noises of war above blanked out as if they had never been. The Garden, half sentient, stirred uneasily from grass roots to treetops in response to those ringing battle shouts from above; but the Man and the woman did not even hear.

Time was nothing. Imperceptibly it passed, and presently a soft green twilight deepened over Eden. Adam and Lilith paused after a while on a mossy bank above a stream that tinkled over stones. Sitting with her head on Adam's shoulder and listening to the sound of the water, Lilith remembered how lightly life was rooted in this flesh of theirs.

"Adam," she murmured, "awhile ago you mentioned dying. Do you know about death?"

"Death?" said Adam comfortably. "I don't remember. I think I never heard of it."

"I hope," she said, "that you never will. It would mean leaving, Eden, you know."

His arm went rigid around her. "I couldn't! I wouldn't!"

"You're not immortal, dear. It could happen, unless-"

"Unless what? Tell me!"

"If there were a Tree of Life," she said slowly, measuring her words, "a Tree whose fruit would give you immortality as the fruit of that other Tree would give you knowledge, then I think not even God could drive you out of Eden."

"A Tree of Life-" he echoed softly. "What would it be like?"

Lilith closed her eyes. "A dark Tree, I think," she answered, almost in a whisper. "Dark limbs, dark leaves-pale, shining fruit hanging among them like lanterns. Can't you see it?"

Adam was silent. She glanced up at him. His eyes were shut and a look of intense longing was on his face in the twilight. There was silence about them for a long while. Presently she felt the tenseness of his body slacken beside her. He breathed out in a long sigh.

"I think there is a Tree of Life," he said. "I think it's in the center of the Garden near the other Tree. I'm sure it's there. The fruit are pale, just as you thought. They send out a light like moonlight in the dark. Tomorrow we'll

taste them."

And Lilith relaxed against his shoulder with a sigh of her own. Tomorrow he would be immortal, like herself. She listened anxiously, and still heard the faraway battle cries of the seraphim echoing through the sky. War in heaven and peace on earth- Through the deepening twilight of Eden no sound came except the music of the water and, somewhere off through the trees, a crooning lullaby in a tiny, piping voice as some cherub sang himself to sleep. Somewhere nearer other small voices squabbled drowsily a while, then fell silent. The most delightful lassitude was stealing over Lilith's body. She turned her cheek against Adam's shoulder and felt that cloudy fogging of the senses which she was coming to know so well- close like water above her head.

And the evening and the morning were the eighth day.

Lilith woke first. Birds were singing gloriously, and as she lay there on Adam's shoulder a cherub flashed across the stream on dazzling wings, caroling at the top of his piping voice. He did not see them. The pleasant delirium of a spring morning filled the whole wakening Garden, and Lilith sat up with a smile. Adam scarcely stirred. Lilith looked down at him with a glow of tenderness that alarmed her. She was coming to identify herself with Adam, as Adam was one with the Garden-this flesh was a treacherous thing.

Suddenly, blindingly, she knew that. Terror of what it was doing to the entity which was Lilith rolled over her in a great wave, and without thinking, almost without realizing what she did, she sprang up and out of the flesh that was betraying her. Up, up through the crystal morning she sprang, impalpable as the air around her. Up and up until the Adam that flesh had valued too highly was invisible, and the very treetops that hid him were a feathery green blur and she could see the walls that closed the Garden in, the rivers running out of it like four great blades of silver in the morning sun.

Beside the sleeping Adam nothing was left but the faintest blur of a woman shape, wrapped in shadow that made it almost invisible against the moss. The eye could scarcely have made it out there under the trees.

Lilith swam delightfully through the bright, still emptiness of the early morning. From here she could hear quite clearly the strong hosannahs of the seraphim pouring out in mighty golden choruses over the jasper walls. Whatever trouble had raged in heaven yesterday, today it was resolved. She scarcely troubled her mind about it.

She was free-free of the flesh and the terrifying weakness that had gone with it. She could see clearly now, no longer deluded by the distortions of value that had made life in that flesh so confusing. Her thoughts were not colored by it any more. Adam was nothing but a superb vessel now, brimmed with the power of God. Her perspective had been too warped down there in Eden to realize how little that magnificent body of his mattered in comparison to the power inherent in it.

She let the cold, clear ether bathe her of illusions while the timeless time of the void swam motionless around her. She had been in greater danger than she knew; it had taken this morning dip in the luminous heights to cleanse her mind of Adam. Refreshed, fortified against that perilous weakness, she could return now and take up her mission again. And she must do it quickly, before God noticed her. Or was he watching already?

She swooped luxuriantly in a long, airy curve and plummeted toward Eden. Adam still slept timelessly upon the moss. Lilith dropped closer, shrugging herself together in anticipation of entering and filling out into life the body she had thrown off. And then-then a shock like the shock of lightning jolted her in midair until the Garden reeled beneath her. For where she had left only the faint, ephemeral husk of a woman beside Adam, a woman of firm, pale flesh lay now, asleep on the Man's shoulder. Golden hair spilled in a long skein across the moss, and the woman's head moved a little to the rhythm of Adam's breathing.

Lilith recovered herself and hovered nearer, incandescent with such jealousy and rage as she had never dreamed could touch her. The woman was clothed in a softly glowing halo as Adam was clothed. But it was Lilith's own shape she wore beneath that halo.

A sick dismay shook Lilith bodilessly in the air. God had been watching, then-waiting, perhaps, to strike. He had been here-it might have been no longer than a moment ago. She knew it by the very silence of the place. Everything was still hushed and awed by the recent Presence. God had passed by, and God had seen that tenantless garment of flesh she had cast off to swim in the ether, and God had known her whole scheme in one flash of His all-seeing eye.

He had taken the flesh she had worn, then, and used it for His own purposes-her precious, responsive flesh that had glowed at the touch of Adam's hand belonged now to another woman, slept in her place on Adam's shoulder. Lilith shook with intolerable emotion at the thought of it. She would not-Adam was waking. Lilith hovered closer, watching jealously as he yawned, blinked, smiled, turned his curly head to look down at the woman beside him. Then he sat up so abruptly that the golden creature at his side cried out in a sweet, high voice and opened eyes bluer than a cherub's to stare at him reproachfully. Lilith, hating her, still saw that she had beauty of a sort comparable to Adam's, exquisite, brimming with the glorious emptiness of utter innocence. There was a roundness and an appealing softness to her that was new in Eden, but the shape she wore was Lilith's and none other.

Adam stared down at her in amazement.

"L-Lilith-" he stammered. "Who are you? Where's Lilith? I-"

"Who is Lilith?" demanded the golden girl in a soft, hurt voice, sitting up and pushing the glowing hair back with both hands in a lovely, smooth gesture.

"I don't know. I can't remember-" She let the words die and stared about the Garden with a blue gaze luminous with wonder. Then the eyes came back to Adam and she smiled very sweetly.

Adam had put a hand to his side, a pucker of the first pain in Eden drawing his golden brows together. For no reason at all he was remembering the scarred bank from which the earth that shaped him had been taken. He opened his mouth to speak.

And then out of the glow of the morning a vast, bodiless Voice spoke quietly.

"I have taken a rib from your side, Man," said the Voice. The whole glade trembled at the sound; the brook ceased its tinkling, the leaves stood still upon the trees. Not a bird sang. Filling the whole morning, the whole Garden, the Voice went on: "Out of the flesh of your flesh I have made a helpmate and a wife for you. Forsaking all others, cleave unto her. Forsaking all others-" The Voice ceased not suddenly, but by echoing degrees that made the leaves shiver upon the trees in rhythm to Its fading syllables, "Forsaking all others. . . all others. . . all others-"

And then it was as if a light ceased to glow in the Garden which, until it went out, no one had perceived. The air dimmed a little, and thickened and dulled, so that one blinked in the aftermath when the presence of God was withdrawn.

The woman drew closer to Adam's side, putting out uncertain hands to him, frightened by the quiet, tremendous Voice and the silence of the Garden. Adam dropped an arm automatically about her, stilling her fright against his shoulder. He bent his head as the Voice ceased to echo through the shaken air.

"Yes, Lord," he said obediently. There was an instant more of silence everywhere. Then timidly the brook sent a tentative ripple of sound into the air, a bird piped once, a breeze began to blow. God had withdrawn.

Bodiless, trembling with emotions she had no name for, Lilith watched the Man and the woman alone on the moss bank she had shared last night with Adam. He looked down at the frightened girl huddling against him.

"I suppose you're Eve," he said, a certain gentleness in his voice that made Lilith writhe.



"If you say so," murmured the girl, glancing up at him under a flutter of lashes. Liith hated him. Over her fair head Adam looked out across the quiet glade.

"Lilith?" he said. "Lilith-"

A warm rush of answer focused all Lilith's being into one responding cry.

"Yes, Adam. . . yes! I'm here!"

He might have heard her bodiless reply, it was so passionate an answer to his call, but at that instant Eve said with childish petulance:

"Who is this Lilith, Adam? Why do you keep calling her? Won't I do?"

Adam looked down uncertainly. While he hesitated, Eve deliberately snuggled against him with a warm little wriggle that was Lilith's alone. By that, if by no other sign, Lilith knew it was her very flesh God had taken to mold this pale girl from Adam's rib, using the same pattern which Adam had designed for Lilith. Eve wore it now, and in that shape knew, without learning them, all the subtle tricks that Lilith's age-old wisdom had evolved during the brief while she dwelt in the body. Lilith's lost flesh, Lilith's delightful use of it, Liith's Adam-all were Eve's now.

Fury and wild despair and an intolerable ache that made the world turn black around her blinded Lilith to the two beneath the tree. She could not bear to watch them any longer. With a soundless wail of despair she turned and flung herself up again into the limitless heights above Eden.

But this time the ether was no anodyne for her grief. It had been no true anodyne before, she knew now. For a disease was upon her that had its seed, perhaps, in the flesh she wore briefly-but too long. God had made Adam incomplete, and Adam to assuage his need had flung out a net to trap some unwary creature for his own. Shame burned in her. The Queen of Air and Darkness, like some mindless elemental, had fallen into his trap; he had used her as she had meant to use him. She was a part of him, trapped in the flesh that was incomplete without him, and her need for him was so deep that she could not escape, even though that body was no longer hers. The roots of her disease had been in the flesh, but the virulence had spread into the very essence of the being which was Lilith and no bath in the deeps of space could cleanse her now. In the flesh or out of it, on earth or in ether, an insatiable need was upon her that could never be slaked. And a dreadful suspicion was taking shape in her mind. Adam in his innocence could never have planned this. Had God known, all along? Had it been no error, after all, that Adam was created incomplete? And was this a punishment designed by God for tampering with his plan? Suddenly she thought that it must be. There would be no awe-inspiring struggle between light and dark such as she had half expected when God recognized her presence. There would be no struggle at all. She was vanquished, judged and punished all at a blow. No glory was in it, only this unbearable longing, a spiritual hunger more insatiable than any hunger the flesh could feel for the man she would never have again. She clove the airy heights above Eden for what might have been a thousand years, or a moment, had time existed in the void, knowing only that Adam was lost to her forever.

Forever? She writhed around in mid-ether, checking the wild, aimless upward flight. Forever? Adam still looked out across the Garden and called her name, even while he held that pale usurper in his arms. Perhaps God had not realized the strength of the strange unity between the man and the first woman in Eden. Perhaps God had not thought that she would fight. Perhaps there was a chance left, after all- Downward through the luminous gulfs she plunged, down and down until Eden expanded like a bubble beneath her and the strong choruses of the seraphim were sweet again above the Garden. Adam and Eve were still beside the brook where she had left them. Eve on a rock was splashing her small feet and flashing blue-eyed glances over her shoulder that made Adam smile when he met them. Lilith hated her.

"Adam!" squealed Eve as the plunging Lilith came into hearing. "Look out-I'm

slipping! Catch me! Quick!" It was the same croon Lilith had put into the throat of the body she had lost. Remembering how roundly and softly it had come swelling up in her throat, she writhed with a vitriolic helplessness that made the Garden dance in waves like heat around her.

"Catch me!" cried Eve again in the most appealing voice in the world. Adam sprang to clasp her as she slid. She threw both pale arms about his neck and crowed with laughter so infectious that two passing cherubs paused in midair to rock with answering mirth and beat each other over the shoulders with their wings.

"Adam. . . Adam. . . Adam-" wailed Lilith voicelessly. It was a silent wail, but all her heartbreak and despair and intolerable longing went into it, and above Eve's golden head Adam looked up, the laughter dying on his face. "Adam!" cried Lilith again. And this time he heard. But he did not answer directly. Association with women was beginning to teach him tact. Instead he beckoned to the reeling cherubs. Rosy with mirth, they fluttered nearer. Eve looked up in big-eyed surprise as the plump little heads balanced on rainbow wings swooped laughing toward her and poised to await Adam's pleasure.

"These are a couple of our cherubs," said Adam. "Dan and Bethuel, from over toward the Tree. They have a nest there. Tell her about the Tree, will you, boys? Eve dear, I'll be getting you some fruit for breakfast. Wait for me here."

She obeyed with only a wistful glance after him as the cherubs burst into eager chatter, squabbling a little as they spoke.

"Well, there's this Tree in the middle of the Garden-"

"Tell her about the Fruit, Dan. You mustn't-"

"Yes, you mustn't touch-"

"No, that's not right, Dan. Michael says you can touch it, you just can't eat-"

"Don't interrupt me! Now it's like this. You see, there's a Tree-"

Adam went slowly off down to the brook. A lie had never yet been spoken in Eden. He was hunting fruit. But Lilith saw him searching the dappled spaces between the trees, too, a certain wistfulness on his face, and she came down with a rustle of invisibility through the leaves.

"Adam. . . Adam!"

"Lilith! Where are you?"

With a tremendous effort Lilith focused her whole being into an intensity so strong that although she remained bodiless, voiceless, intangible, yet the strength of her desire was enough to make Adam hear her dimly, see her remotely in a wavering outline against the leaves, in the shape he had created for her. She held it with difficulty, shimmering before his eyes.

"Lilith!" he cried, and reached her in two long strides, putting out his arms. She leaned into them. But the muscular, light-sheathed arms closed about her and through her and met in empty air.

She called his name miserably, quivering against him through all her bodiless body. But she could feel him no more than he could touch her, and the old ache she had known in mid-ether, came back with a rush. Even here in his arms, then, she was forbidden to touch

the Man. She could never be more than a wraith of the air to him, while Eve-while Eve, in her stolen body- "Adam!" cried Lilith again. "You were mine first! Can you hear

me? Adam, you could bring me back if you tried! You did it once- you could again. Try, try!"

He stared down at her dim face, the flowers on the hillside beyond visible through it.

"What's wrong, Lilith? I can hardly see you!"

"You wanted me once badly enough to bring me out of nowhere into the flesh," she cried desperately. "Adam, Adam-want me again!"

He stared down at her. "I do," he said, his voice unexpectedly shaken. And then, more strongly, "Come back, Lilith! What's happened to you? Come back!" Lilith closed her eyes, feeling reality pour marvelously along her bodiless limbs. Faintly now she could feel grass underfoot, Adam's chest against her anxious hands; his arms were around her and in his embrace she was taking shape out of nothingness, summoned into flesh again by the godhood in this image of God. And then- "Adam. . . Adam!" Eve's sweet, clear voice rang lightly among the leaves. "Adam, where are you? I want to go look at the Tree, Adam. Where are you, dear?" "Hurry!" urged Lilith desperately, beating her half-tangible hands against his chest. Adam's arms loosed a little about her. He glanced across his shoulder, his handsome, empty face clouded. He was remembering. "Forsaking all others-" he murmured, in a voice not entirely his own. Lilith shuddered a little against him, recognizing the timbre of that Voice which had spoken in the silence. "Forsaking all others-" God had said that. "Forsaking all others but Eve-" His arms dropped from about Lilith. "I. . . I'll. . . will you wait for me?" he said hesitantly, stepping back from her half-real shape, lovely and shadow-veiled under the shadow of the trees. "I'll be back-" "Adam!" called Eve again, nearer and very sweetly. "Adam, I'm lost! Adam! Adam, where are you?" "Coming," said Adam. He looked once more at Lilith, a long look. Then he turned and ran lightly off through trees that parted to receive him, the glow of his half-divinity shining upon the leaves as he passed. Lilith watched the beautiful, light-glowing figure as far as she could see it. Then she put her half-real hands to her face and her knees loosened beneath her and she doubled down in a heap upon the grass, her shadowy hair billowing out around her on a breeze that blew from nowhere, not touching the leaves. She was half-flesh now. She had tears. She found a certain relief in the discovery that she could weep.

The next sound she heard-it seemed a long while after-was a faint hiss. Cloaked in the tented shadow of her hair, she considered it a while, hiccupping now and then with receding sobs. Presently she looked up. Then she gasped and got to her feet with the effortless ease of the half-material. The serpent looked at her sidewise out of slanted eyes, grinning. In the green gloom under the trees he was so handsome that even she, who had seen Adam, was aware of a little thrill of admiration. In those days the serpent went upright like a man, nor was he exactly non-human in shape, but his beauty was as different from man's as day is from night. He was lithe and gorgeously scaled and by any standards a supremely handsome, supremely male creature. All about him in shadowy outline a radiance stood out that was vaguely an angel shape, winged, tremendous. It invested the serpent body with a glow that was not its own. Out of that celestial radiance the serpent said in a cool voice:

"The Queen of Air and Darkness! I didn't expect you here. What are you doing in that body?"

Lilith collected herself, hiccupped once more and stood up, the cloudy hair moving uneasily about her. She said with a grim composure:

"The same thing I suspect you're doing in that one, only you'll have to do better if you want to deceive anybody. What brings you to Eden-Lucifer?"

The serpent glanced down at himself and sent one or two long, sliding ripples gliding along his iridescent body. The angel shape that hung in the air about him gradually faded, and the beauty deepened as it focused itself more strongly in the flesh he wore. After a moment he glanced up.

"How's that-better? Oh, I came down for a purpose. I have- business with Adam." His cool voice took on a note of grimness. "You may have heard a little

trouble in heaven yesterday. That was me."

"Trouble?" echoed Lilith. She had almost forgotten the sounds of combat and the great battle cries of the seraphim in the depths of her own grief.

"It was a fine fight while it lasted," Lucifer grinned. "Blood running like water down the golden streets! I tell you, it was a relief to hear something beside 'hosannah' in heaven for a change! Well"-he shrugged-"they won. Too many of them were fools and stood by Jehovah. But we gave them a good fight, and we took part of the jasper walls with us when they hurled us over." He gave her a satisfied nod. "God won, but he'll think twice before He insults me again."

"Insults you?" echoed Lilith. "How?"

Lucifer drew himself up to a magnificent height. Radiance glowed along his scaled and gleaming body. "God made me of fire! Shall I bow down before this. . . - this lump of clay they call Adam? He may be good enough for the other angels to worship when God points a finger, but he isn't good enough for me!"

"Is that why you're here?"

"Isn't it reason enough? I have a quarrel with this Adam!"

"You couldn't touch him," said Lilith desperately. "He's God's image, and remember, you were no match for God."

Lucifer stretched his magnificent, gleaming height and glared down at her.

"The creature's made of clay. He must have a flaw somewhere. What is it? You know him."

Lilith looked up at him speechless, a great excitement beginning to swell so tremendously in her that her half-formed body could hardly contain it. There was a chance! God himself had put a weapon straight into her hands!

"Yes, there is a flaw," she said. "I'll tell you. . . if you'll give me a promise."

"All right, I give it," said Lucifer carelessly. "Tell me."

She hesitated, choosing her words. "Your feud isn't with Adam. He never asked you to worship him. God did that. Your quarrel is with God, not Adam. The Man himself you can't touch, but God had given him a. . . a wife," she choked when she said it. "I think there's a weakness in her, and through her you could spoil God's plan. But you must spare the Man-for me."

Lucifer whistled soundlessly, lifting his brows. "Oh-?"

"I saw him first," said Lilith defensively. "I want him."

The serpent looked at her narrowly. "Why? No. . . never mind. I won't quarrel with you. I may have an idea to suggest to you later, if a plan of mine works out. You and I together could make quite a thing of hell."

Lilith winced a little. She and Adam together had had great prospects, once, too. Perhaps they still had-if God were not listening.

"You promise not to touch him, then?"

"Yes, I won't hurt your precious clod. You're right-my quarrel's with God, not that animated lump of clay named Adam. What's the secret?"

"Eden," said Lilith slowly, "is a testing ground. There are flaws in it, there must be, or neither of us would be here. God planted a Tree in the middle of the Garden and forbade anyone to touch it. That's the test. . . I think I see it now. It's a test of obedience. God doesn't trust man-he made him too strong. The Tree is the knowledge of Good and Evil, and God doesn't dare let that knowledge exist in the Garden, because he controls Man only by Man's ignorance of his own power. If either of them eats, then God will have to destroy that one quickly. You tempt the woman to eat, Lucifer, and leave Adam and Eden to me!"

The serpent eyed her sidelong. He laughed.

"If either of them fails in this test you're talking about, then God will know neither can be trusted, won't he? He'll know their present form's imperfect, and he'll destroy them both and work out some other plan for the world."

Lilith drew a deep breath. Excitement was rising like a tide in her, and the wind from nowhere swirled the dark hair in a cloud about her shoulders.

"Let him try!" she cried exultantly. "I can save Adam. God made a mistake when he put such power in the Garden. He shouldn't have left it living, half-conscious of itself. He shouldn't have let Adam know how close he is to the earth he was taken from. Adam and the Garden are one flesh, and the power of God is in them both. God can't destroy one without the other, and together they are very strong- If they defied God together, and I helped them-

Lucifer looked at her, a trace of compassion on his handsome, reptilian face. "God defeated me," he reminded her. "Do you think He couldn't you?"

She gave him a proud glance. "I am the Queen of Air and Darkness. I have secrets of my own, and powers not even God can control. If I join them with Adam's, and the Gardens. . . . God made the Garden alive and powerful, and Adam is one flesh with it, each incomplete without the other as Man is without woman. Adam has Eve now-but when Eve's gone he'll remember Lilith. I'll see that he remembers! And I'll see that he understands his danger. With my help, perhaps he can avert it."

"If God destroys Eve," said Lucifer, "he'll destroy Adam, too. They're one pattern."

"But he may not destroy them at the same time. I'll gamble on that. I'd kill her myself if I could, but I can't touch anything in the Garden without its own consent. - - - No, I'll have to wait until Eve proves to God her unfitness to wear flesh, and while he punishes her I must seize that moment to rouse the Garden. It's almost aware of itself already. I think I could awaken it-through Adam, perhaps. Adam and Eden are almost one, as Adam and I will be again if we can get rid of Eve. None of us separately has the power to defy God, but Eden and Adam and I together might do it!" She tossed back her head and the wild dark hair swirled like a fog about her. "Eden is an entity of its own-I think I could close a shell of space around us, and there are places in my Darkness where we could hide even from God!"

Lucifer narrowed his eyes at her. "It might work," he nodded slowly. "You're mad-but it might work, with my help. The woman is beautiful, in her way-" He laughed. "And what a revenge on God!"

"The woman," mused Lilith, "is in my body, and I am evil. . . . I think enough evil remains there that Eve will find you-interesting. Good luck, Lucifer!"

In a hollow, velvety cup in the Garden's very center the two Trees stood. One at the edge of the clearing was a dark Tree, the leaves folded like a cloak about a pale glow from within where the Fruit of Life hung hidden. But in the center of the hollow the Tree of Knowledge flaunted its scarlet fruit that burned with a flame almost of their own among the green and glossy leaves. Here was the heart of the Garden. Out of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil the beat went pulsing that shook the air of Eden.

Eve set one small, bare foot upon the downward slope and looked back timidly over her shoulder. The serpent flicked a forked red tongue at her. His voice was cool and clear, and sweet as honey.

"Eva," he said softly. "Eva-"

She smiled and went on, he rippling after her with an unearthly beauty to his gait that is lost forever now. No one knows today how the serpent walked before the Fall. Of all human creatures only Eve knows that, and there were things Eve never told Adam.

They paused under the shadow of the tree. In long, slow rhythms the air went pulsing past them. Eve's fair hair stirred a little, so strong was the rhythm here. All the Fruit of the Tree pushed out among the leaves to see her, and the nearer branches bent caressingly toward this woman who was of the flesh of Adam.

The nearest branch stooped down enticingly. Eve reached for a scarlet apple that dipped into her hand. Almost of itself it snapped free of the twig that held it. Eve stared at the apple in her palm, and her hand began to shake. She drew back against the serpent, a little whimper of terror rising in her throat.

The serpent dropped a coiled embrace about the lovely, light-clothed pallor of her body and bent his handsome, slanted head to hers, whispering at her ear in a voice so cool and sweet that the terror faded from her face. She smiled a little, and her hand steadied.

She lifted the Fruit of Knowledge to her lips. There was a hush. all through the Garden as she hesitated for a long moment, the red fruit at her red mouth, her teeth denting the scarlet cheek of Knowledge. The last few timeless moments stood still while innocence yet reigned over Eden.

Then the serpent whispered again, urgently: "Eva-" he said.

Lilith stood shivering in Adam's arms.

"You were mine first," she was whispering fiercely. "You and I and the Garden-don't you remember? I was your wife before her, and you belong to me!" Adam could see his own arms through the ephemeral stuff of Lilith's body. He was shaken by the violence in her voice, but his mind was too fogged with the unthinking blank of innocence to understand very clearly. He tried hard. The rhythm that pulsed through Eden was curiously uneven now. Lilith knew what it meant, and excitement choked her. She cried more desperately:

"Adam . . . Adam! Don't let anything separate us, you and the Garden and I! You can hold us together if you try! I know you can! You-"

One great, annihilating throb shook through the air like thunder. The whole Garden reeled with it and every tree in Eden bowed as if before a tremendous wind. Adam looked up, aghast. But Lilith laughed a wild, excited laugh and cried, "This is it! Oh, hurry, Adam, hurry!"

She slipped through his arms that were still clasped about her and went fluttering effortlessly off through branches that did not impede her passage, Adam following half stunned with the stunned Garden.

All Eden was still reeling from the violence of what had just happened beneath the Tree.

Lilith watched the sky as she ran. Would a great bolt of lightning come ravaging down out of heaven to blast the woman out of being before they reached the Tree? "Wait, wait!" she panted voicelessly to God. "Give me a moment longer-" Would a bolt strike Adam, too, as he slipped through the parting trees beside her? "Hurry!" she gasped again.

Breathless, they paused at the edge of the hollow where the Tree stood. Looking down, they could see Eve just clear of the shadow of it, the fruit in her hand with one white bite flawing its scarlet cheek. She was staring about the Garden as if she had never seen it before. Where was God? Why had He not blasted her as she stood there?

Lilith in her first wild glance could not see the serpent except for a glitter of iridescence back in the shadow of the Tree. Even in her terrible excitement she smiled wryly. Lucifer was taking no chances with God.

But she had no time to waste now on Lucifer or on Eve. For some inexplicable reason God was staying His hand, and she must make the most of the respite. For when God was finished with Eve He would turn to Adam, and before that much had to be done. Adam was her business now, and the living Eden, and all eternity waited on what the next few moments held.

She stood out on the lip of the hollow and a great dark wind from nowhere swelled monstrosly about her, tossing out her hair until it was a cloud that shut her from sight. Out of the cloud her voice came rolling in tremendous rhythms paced to the rhythm at which Eden breathed-and Adam.

"Garden!" she called. "Eden-hear me! I am Lilith, the wife of Adam-"

She could feel a vast, dim awareness stirring around her. All through Eden the wakening motion ran, drawing closer, welling up deeply from the earth underfoot, monstrosly, wonderfully, a world coming alive at her call.

"Adam!" she cried. "Adam do you hear me? You and Eden are one flesh, and Eve has destroyed you both. She has just brought knowledge into Eden, where God dares not let it exist. Cod will destroy you all, because of Eve. . . unless you listen to me-"

She felt Adam's attention torn away from Eve and focusing upon herself in fear and wonder. She felt the Garden's wakening awareness draw around him with growing intensity, until it was as if the earth of Eden and the flesh of Man quickened into one, married by the same need for one another as the thought of parting and destruction shuddered through each.

Was this what God had planned as an ending for His divine scheme, as it was the beginning of Lilith's? She had no time to wonder, but the thought crossed her mind awesomely even as she wooed the Garden in a voice as sweet and coaxing as the voice she used to Adam.

And the whole great Garden shuddered ponderously around her, awareness thrilling down every tendril and branch and blade, pulsing up out of the very hill on which she stood. And all of it was Adam. The Garden heard and hung upon her words, and Adam heard, and they three together were all that existed. Success was in her hands. She could feel it. And then- "Adam. . . Adam!" screamed Eve beneath the Tree.

Lilith's sonorous voice paused in its invocation; the Garden hesitated around her.

"Adam!" cried Eve again, terror flattening all the sweetness out of her voice. And behind Lilith, in a drugged voice, Adam said: "Eve-?"

"God. . . God, destroy her now!"~ prayed Lilith soundlessly. And aloud, "Eve has no part in Eden! Don't listen to her, Adam! She'll destroy you and the Garden together!"

"Adam, Adam! Where are you?"

"Coming-" said Adam, still in that thick, drugged voice.

Lilith whirled in the mist of her cloudy hair. Where was God! Why had He stayed His hand? Now was the time to strike, if her hope were not to fail.

Now, now! Surely the lightning would come ravaging down from heaven if she could hold Adam a moment longer- "Adam, wait!" she cried desperately. "Adam, you know you love me! If you leave-"

Her voice faltered as he peered at her as blindly as if he had never seen her before. The haloed light was like fire all around him, and her words had been a drug to him as they had been to the Garden, until the earth that loved and listened to her had been one with his own earth-formed flesh; a moment ago there had been nothing in creation for Adam or for Eden but this one woman speaking out of the dark. But now- "Adam!" screamed Eve again in that flat, frightened voice.

"Don't listen!" cried Lilith frantically. "She doesn't belong here! You can't save her now! God will destroy her, and He'll destroy you, too, if you leave me! Stay here and let her die! You and I will be alone again, in the Garden. . . Adam, don't listen!"

"I. . . I have to listen," he stammered almost stupidly. "Get out of my way, Lilith. Don't you understand? She's my own flesh-I have to go."

Lilith stared at him dumbly. His own flesh! She had forgotten that. She had leaned too heavily on his oneness with the Garden-she had forgotten he was one with Eve, too. The prospect of defeat was suddenly like lead in her. If God would only strike now- She swayed forward in one last desperate effort to hold him back from Eve while the Garden stirred uneasily around them, frightened with Lilith's terror, torn with Adam's distress. She wavered between Adam and the valley as if her ephemeral body could hold him, but he went through her as if through a cloud and stumbled blindly downhill toward the terrified Eve beneath the Tree with the fruit in her hand and a dreadful knowledge on her face.

From here Lilith could see what Adam had not yet. She laughed suddenly, wildly, and cried:

"Look at her, Adam! Look!" And Adam blinked and looked.

Eve stood naked beneath the Tree. That burning beauty which had clothed her like a garment was gone with her divine innocence and she was no longer the

flawless goddess who had wakened on Adam's shoulder that morning. She stood shivering a little, looking forlorn and somehow pinched and thin, almost a caricature of the perfect beauty that had gone down the hill with the serpent an hour ago. But she did not know that. She looked up at Adam as he hesitated above her, and smiled uncertainly with a sort of leer in her smile.

"Oh, there you are," she said, and even her voice was harsher now. "Everything looked so. . . so queer, for a minute. Look." She held up the fruit. "It's good. Better than anything you ever gave me. Try it."

Lilith stared at her from the hilltop with a horror that for a moment blanked out her growing terror because of God's delay. Was knowledge, then, as ugly as this? Why had it destroyed Eve's beauty as if it were some evil thing? Perfect knowledge should have increased her strength and loveliness in the instant before God struck her down,

if- Suddenly Lilith understood. Perfect knowledge! But Eve had only tasted the fruit, and she had only a warped half-knowledge from that single taste. The beauty of her innocence was lost, but she had not yet gained the beauty of perfect knowledge. Was this why God delayed? So long as her knowledge was imperfect perhaps she was no menace to God's power in Eden. And yet she had disobeyed, she had proved herself unworthy of the trust of God- Then why did He

hesitate? 'Why had He not blasted her as she stood there with the apple at her lips? A panic was rising in Lilith's throat. Could it be that He was laughing, even now? Was He giving her the respite she had prayed for, and watching her fail in spite of it?

"Taste the apple," said Eve again, holding it out.

"Adam!" cried Lilith despairingly from the edge of the hill. "Adam, look at me! You loved me first-don't you remember? Look at me, Adam!"

And Adam turned to look. The wind, which had clouded her from sight in the darkness of her hair, had calmed. She stood now, luminous on the hilltop, the darkness parted like a river by the whiteness of her shoulders. And she was beautiful with a beauty that no mortal woman will ever wear again.

"I was first!" cried Lilith. "You loved me before her-come back to me now, before God strikes you both! Come back, Adam!"

He stared up at her miserably. He looked back at the flawed, shivering creature at his side, knowledge curiously horrible in her eyes. He stared at Eve, too, a long stare. And then he reached for the apple.

"Adam-no!" shrieked Lilith. "See what knowledge did to Eve! You'll be ugly and naked, like her! Don't taste it, Adam! You don't know what you're doing!" Over the poised red fruit he looked up at her. The light quivered gloriously all around him. He stood like a god beneath the Tree, radiant, perfect.

"Yes, I know," he said, in a clearer voice than she had ever heard him use before.

"God will destroy you!" wailed Lilith, and rolled her eyes up to look for the falling thunderbolt that might be hurtling downward even now.

"I know," said Adam again. And then, after a pause, "You don't understand, Lilith. Eve is my own flesh, closer than Eden-closer than you. Don't you remember what God said? Forsaking all others-"

"Eve!" screamed Lilith hopelessly. "Stop him! Your punishment's certain-are you going to drag him down, too?"

Eve looked up, knowledge dark in her blue eyes. She laughed a thin laugh and the last vestige of her beauty went with it.

"Leave him to you?" she sneered. "Oh no! He and I are one flesh- we'll go together. Taste the apple, Adam!"

He turned it obediently in his hand: his teeth crunched through scarlet skin into the sweet white flesh inside. There was a tremendous silence all through the Garden; nothing stirred in Eden while Adam chewed and swallowed the Fruit of Knowledge. And then turned to stare down into Eve's lifted eyes while awareness of himself as an individual, free-willed being dawned gradually across his awakening mind.

And then the burning glory that clothed him paled, shimmered, went out along



his limbs. He, too, was naked. The queer, pinched look of humanity shivered over that magnificent body, and he was no longer magnificent, no longer Adam.

Lilith had forgotten to look for God. Sickness of the heart was swelling terribly in her, and for a moment she no longer cared about God, or Eden, or the future. This was not Adam any more- It would never be Adam again- "Listen," said Eve in a small, intimate voice to Adam. "How quiet it is! WThy, it's the music. The seraphim aren't singing any more around the Throne!" Lilith glanced up apathetically. That meant, then, that God was coming- But even as she looked up a great golden chorus resounded serenely from high over Eden. Adam tipped his tarnished head to listen.

"You're right," he agreed. "They've stopped their song."

Lilith did not hear him. That dreadful sickness in her was swelling and changing, and she knew now what it was-hatred. Hatred of Adam and Eve and the thing they had done to her. Hatred of these naked caricatures, who had been the magnificent half-god she had loved and the shape she had put on to delight him. True, they might finish the eating of knowledge and grow perfect again, but it would be a perfection that shut her out. They were one flesh together, and even God had failed her now. Looking down, she loathed them both. Eve's very existence was an insult to the unflawed perfection which Lilith still wore, and Adam-Adam shivering beneath the Tree with a warped, imperfect knowledge leering in his eyes- A sob swelled in her throat. He had been flawless once-she would

never forget that. Almost she loved the memory still as it lingered about this shivering human creature beneath the Tree. So long as he was alive she knew now she would never be free of it; this weakness would torment her still for the flesh that had once been Adam. The prospect of an eternity of longing for him, who would never exist again, was suddenly unbearable to her.

She tipped her head back and looked up through the glory above Eden where golden voices chanted that neither Adam nor Eve would ever hear again.

"Jehovah!" she sobbed. "Jehovah! Come down and destroy us all! You were right-they are both too flawed to bring anything but misery to all who know them. God, come down and give us peace!"

Eve squealed in terror at Adam's side. "Listen!" she cried. "Adam, listen to her!"

Answering human terror dawned across the pinched features that had once been Adam's handsome, immortal face. "The Tree of Life!" he shouted. "No one can touch us if we eat that fruit!"

He whirled to scramble up the slope toward the dark Tree, and Lilith's heart ached to watch how heavily he moved. Yesterday's wonderful, easy ligheness was gone with his beauty, and his body was a burden to him now.

But he was not to reach the Tree of Life. For suddenly glory brightened unbearably over the Garden. A silence was in the sky, and the breeze ceased to blow through Eden.

"Adam," said a Voice in the great silence of the Garden, "hart thou eaten of the Tree?"

Adam glanced up the slope at Lilith, standing despairingly against the sky. He looked at Eve beside him, a clumsy caricature of the loveliness he had dreamed of. There was bitterness in his voice.

"The woman thou gayest me-" he began reproachful'y, and then hesitated, meeting Eve's eyes. The old godlike goodness was lost to him now, but he had not fallen low enough yet to let Eve know what he was thinking. He could not say, "The woman Thou gayest me has ruined us both-but I had a woman of my own before her and she never did me any harm." No, he could not hurt this flesh of his flesh so deeply, but he was human now and he could not let her go unrebuked. He went on sulkily, "-she gave me the apple, and I ate."

The Voice said awfully, "Eve-?"

Perhaps Eve was remembering that other voice, cool and sweet, murmuring,

"Eva-" in the cool, green dimness of the Garden, the voice that had whispered secrets she would never share with Adam. Perhaps if he had been beside her now-but he was not, and her resentment bubbled to her lips in speech.

"The serpent beguiled me," she told God sullenly, "and I ate."

There was silence for a moment in the Garden. Then the Voice said, "Lucifer-" with a sorrow in the sound that had not stirred for the man's plight, or the woman's. "Lucifer, my enemy, come forth from the Tree." There was a divine compassion in the Voice even as

It pronounced sentence. "Upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life-"

Out from beneath the shadow of the Tree a flat and shining length came pouring through the grass. This was the hour for the shedding of beauty: the serpent had lost the fire-bright splendor that had been his while Lucifer dwelt in his flesh, but traces lingered yet in the unearthly fluidness of his motion, in his shining iridescence. He lifted a wedged head toward Eve, flickered his tongue at her once and then dropped back into the grass. Its ripple above him marked his course away. Eve drew one long, sobbing breath for that green twilight hour in the Garden, that Adam would never guess, as she watched him ripple away.

"Adam, Eve," went on the Voice quietly, "the Garden is not for you." There was a passionless pity in It as the Garden stood still to listen. "I made your flesh too weak, because your godhood was too strong to trust. You are not to blame for that-the fault was Mine. But Adam. . . Eve. . . what power did I put in you, that the very elements of fire and darkness find kinship with you? What flaw is in you, that though you are the only two human things alive, yet you cannot keep faith with one another?"

Adam glanced miserably up toward Lilith standing motionless on the hill's edge, clothed in the flawless beauty he had dreamed for her and would never see again. Eve's eyes followed the serpent through the grass that was blurred for her because of the first tears of Eden. Neither of them answered.

"You are not fit yet to put forth your hand to the Tree of Life, and eat, and live forever," went on the Voice after a moment.

"Man . . . woman. . . you are not yet fit for perfect knowledge or immortality. You are not yet fit for trust. But for Lilith the tale would have spun itself out here in the walls of Eden, but now you must go beyond temptation and work your own salvation out in the sweat of your brow, in the lands beyond the Garden. Adam, I dare not trust you any longer in your kinship with the earth I shaped you from. Cursed is the ground for your sake. Adam-it shall be one with you no longer. But I promise this. . . in the end you shall return to it-" The Voice fell silent, and there was far from above the flash of a flaming sword over the gate of Eden.

In the silence Lilith laughed. It was a clear, ringing sound from the hill's edge: "Deal with me now," she said in an empty voice. "I have no desire to exist any longer in a world that has no Adam-destroy me, Jehovah."

The Voice said emotionlessly, "You are punished already, by the fruit of what you did."

"Punished enough!" wailed Lilith in sudden despair. "Make an end of it, Jehovah!"

"With man's end," said God quietly. "No sooner. You four among you have shattered a plan in Eden that you must shape anew before your travail ends. Let the four of you build a new plan with the elements of your being-Adam is Earth, Lucifer is Fire, Lilith is Air and Darkness, Eve the Mother of All Living, the fertile seas from which all living springs. Earth, Air, Fire and Water-you thought your plan was better than Mine. Work it out for yourselves!"

"What is our part to be, Lord?" asked Adam in a small, humbled voice.

"Earth and water," said the Voice. "The kingdom of earth for you and the woman and your children after you."

"I was Adam's wife before her," wailed Lilith jealously. "What of me. . . and mine?"

The Voice fell silent for a while. Then it said quietly: "Make your own

choice, Queen of Air and Darkness."

"Let my children and Adam's haunt hers to their graves, then!" decided Lilith instantly. "Mine are the disinherited-let them take vengeance! Let her and hers beware of my children who wail in the night, and know she deserves their wrath. Let them remind her always that Adam was mine before her!"

"So be it," said the Voice. And for an instant there was silence in Eden while the shadow of times to come brooded inscrutably in the mind of God. Lilith caught flashes of it in the glory so bright over Eden that every grass blade had a splendor which hurt the eyes. She saw man loving his birthplace upon earth with a deep-rooted love that made it as dear as his very flesh to him, so that dimly he might remember the hour when all earth was as close to him as his newly created body. She saw man cleaving to one woman as dear as the flesh of his flesh, yet remembering the unattainable and the lost-Lilith, perfect in Eden. She looked down from the hilltop and met Adam's eyes, and voicelessly between them a long farewell went flashing.

No one was watching Eve. She was blinking through tears, remembering a twilight hour and a fire-bright beauty that the dust had quenched a moment ago at God's command. And then . . . - then there was the faintest rustling in the air around her, and a cool, clear voice was murmuring:

"Eva-" against her cheek.

She stared. There was nothing. But-

"Eva," said the voice again. "Give me my vengeance too-upon the Man. Pretty Eva, do you hear me? Call your first child Kayn. . . Eva, will you do as I say? Call him Kayn the Spear of my vengeance, for he shall set murder loose among Adam's sons. Remember, Eva-"

And Eve echoed in a small, obedient whisper, "Cain. . . Cain."