

Abashed I Stood

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Crystal Radio Press

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First published in 2006 by Crystal Radio Press, Lower Hutt, New Zealand.
This edition published in 2007.

ISBN 978-0-473-12939-2

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The Myth of She

IN THE BEGINNING, as we all know the story to proceed, was the Word, and the Word was God. As He formed the void into un-void, placing Creation in its space and formulating the laws of its system, God knew that there must be more than the simple amusements of simple nature. Thus, God devised the ultimate creature: the final peak of creation: Man. And, as He crafted Man carefully from clay, God's creation was not yet perfect. Man required a mate, as all creatures have been given. No single species of any interest had yet been made that lived out a solitary or monastic existence. Certainly, there was the hydra, that tiny aquatic life that multiplies by destroying itself (sadly, not the entirely more interesting mythical beast), and the bacterium whose asexual multiplication is endless, and all their kind. But these lives were of no interest, for without Interaction and its inevitable progeny, Strife, there was nothing to hold them dear to Him. Yet, despite this, God breathed life into Man, lying alone in the green vales of Eden.

And yet, as God watched His finest work sleep, thus far unaware of its own existence, God knew the solution. Descending, perhaps upon a golden cloud, or in the guise of another man or a swan, or perhaps sending only one (or many) of His angels, God took His smoothest saw, crafted of the stuff of Heaven, and sliced, delicately, through Man's body, separating it in a single stroke into two bodies. God, no doubt pleased by this cunning, returned to Heaven and waited for Man and Woman (as he had decided their names should be) to wake. Such genius! By defining the two humans as one part of the other He had ensured an eternity of hunger for them. They could not, by any means fair or foul, exist separately. There would be love and lust, arguments, commiserations,

compassion; and all from their source as a single body.

But wait! your spokesman cries, speaking for all readers, This is not the tale we know! Already you have mutated it, changed the course of known theological history! Blasphemer! Heretic!

I look to each of you, and I know that this is not the myth you are familiar with. No, wait, some few of you know this story. Let me tell you this story, let me tell you: The Tale of Creation Before Creation. Of God's first anthropomorphic experiment.

Now, watch as Man and Woman, clothed in flesh alone (no fig leaves yet), awake with their eyes towards each other. The first flickers of morning-lidded eyes, together, a yawning realisation that they are indeed alive and without care in this innocent age. As if mirrors, they move upright, eyes equally towards each other and towards the landscape, absorbing the details of their world. God watches, in fits of delight as they move to each other, embracing as they realise their perfect union of soul. And, thus, Man and Woman are born into Creation.

You are as I am, Man says to Woman, or perhaps Woman to Man. They trace each others' details with their hands, a roaming of touch that is too innocent for sex or thoughts of lust (recall that these two are yet but moments born).

Leap forward in time, if you will, to their education. They are visited regularly by one of God's angels—say Michael (though angels in those times did not bear such elegant names)—who teaches them of the world, their sovereignty over all things, and their debt to God for his beneficence. And they understand: they are without doubt that God is right, and that Michael is God's voice to them. Who would doubt that celestial visage, clad in the robes of Heaven, pinioned like a bird, speaking in a tongue they cannot themselves use (for only the purest of entities, those that reign and worship in Heaven, are capable of speaking its sibilant phrases), could be other than the work of an almighty power with only good in His eye?

Michael, the angel, teaches Man and Woman the names of the beasts, birds and fishes, of the trees and shrubs, grasses: all living things. Perhaps he tells them even of *Campylobacter*, or *Bacillus anthracis*. Such is the divine knowledge borne by the angel that he could, should he so choose or be so instructed, deliver to Man and Woman. He teaches them of the ways that God is great, and most

holy. He brings them to all the corners of their domain and tells them of their boundaries. Boundaries, as yet, mean little to them. Finally he, shining in his robes of platinum and hovering over their heads upon his wings, tells them their names:

You, he says without moving his lips and pointing to Man, shall be Adam.

Man, now Adam, repeats his name, finally able to speak of himself with some identity.

And you, the angel continues and indicating Woman, shall be Lilith.

Lilith, looking to herself, and then to Adam, speaks her own name. It is a potent sound and pleases her, so she cries it to God, who is listening, and the walls of the vaulted sky itself shake with the force of her name.

It is an auspicious day for Adam and Lilith, they at last have names with which to whisper to each other when it is only God that might be watching. They draw closer each night until now, with names to be named by, they whisper to each other and touch, for the first time, in sex. It is, as with all virgins, short and clumsy. Adam's hand is too rough, and Lilith is not entirely sure that her own movements are adequate. But there, at the tip of their all-too-brief ecstasy, is the first human orgasm. Adam's seed, spilt quickly into Lilith, is the proof of God's plan. In this fleshy union the two have become reunited into the form that God first made them.

You were inside me, moving. Lilith's voice is hushed with awe at their first act of sex.

Yes, he replies. Adam is quietly impressed with himself: it has been a problem from the very beginning.

Adam and Lilith, always hand in hand now, spend their days in worship of God, listening to Michael, or merely wandering about their realm. God has not yet placed *that* Tree in the Garden: there is no danger to paradise. No, the first problems come from God's own plan. To suggest God was incapable of seeing the processes and results of His decisions? What would you, reader, make of this world if you knew that God's infinite wisdom was, by some curious detail of theology, not so infinite? Is it possible that God lacks the omniscience that theological philosophers dictate makes up one third part—in association with omnipotence and omnibenevolence—of divinity?

God's greatest achievement, until this cruel date, had been the composition of Man and Woman as one part of the other: a single flesh divorced from birth. Indeed, modern medicine now tells us that until the unborn child is a certain age, every child is female. From this alone we see that God's plan for humanity is mapped out in our flesh. It is perhaps ironic that this single work of deiform genius was the undoing of itself. Here we begin to see that God's greatest works, paradoxically, are their own nemesis. God unmakes his own makings *by making*—this much is known now, and it is terrible knowledge to clutch within your grey brain-mush. This is equilibrium. Across the globe, in a thousand guises, there are myths and principles of equilibrium; man knows this and, yet, fails to make allowance. Ask any of a million extinct species of their opinion of man's intellect, all answers are the same: daft.

And so, there in the pastures of Eden, still paradise before Eve's experiment with snakes and fruit, Lilith and Adam began to quarrel. There was no lack of love, nor of resources to ferment this dissatisfaction, merely a sexual incompatibility.

Lilith: You are always struggling to lie on top of me.

Adam: Of course! It is only right that Man should be above Woman. Did not God first name us Man, before amputating you from my side? Woman was an afterthought.

Lilith: But we are both made of the same stuff, we were born together at the same instant. I demand the right of above!

And so the argument, for days or months or years perhaps, grew thorn-like between them. The brambles of an absurd dysfunction nesting in the fertile rockiness there. God would not intercede. He had, after all, designed Man and Woman for this. There *should* be strife and arguments, all for his amusement. The argument is especially absurd today as men across the globe, myself included, delight in the vision of a woman seated above us in sex: riding the liquid passions in ecstasy; rippling as we do into the orgasm God designed.

During this spat, if the word is not too frivolous, there was no sex. Rather, there was, but it came only as an attempt at reconciliation, each intending to allow the other some leeway in the act. But, inevitably, both were too stubborn to finally allow it, and it ended before Adam's spurt. Perhaps a thousand times Adam's semen went undelighted, perhaps spilt on the ground, as Onan did

and was punished for, as he relieved himself of the tension of his nature. Lilith, no doubt, indulged herself the same.

Finally, at last, in the conclusion of all this fruitless performance, Lilith left. I enjoy the image of this, imagining Lilith's words prefiguring the Raven's: Nevermore. And she leaves, walking naked from Eden and into the remaining world unprotected. God, of course, saw this but did not act, nor sent word to Adam to reconcile, nor word to Lilith to return. No orders came from the sky in a voice that quiets the thunders and darkens the sky with its vehemence.

Adam, at first, enjoys his solitude. He is able, without thought of sex, to compose himself as he wishes, without the care of Woman to distract him. To this day there are men for whom the solitude from women—and, indeed, people in general—is a relief and, on occasion, I have myself enjoyed that same aloneness.

Finally, tiring of this state, Adam called up to Heaven, seeking God's ear. God! Lord Father! Regent of All! Maker of Universes! Beholder of the Gates of Creation! Woman has left me, will you not do something? Give me a new, subservient woman.

Hearing this, as he had heard all things, God sent three of his most fearsome angels, whose faces shone with zealous rage. These angels were Snvi, Snsvi, and Smnglof—there are no more elegant names for them, having been lost to myth and legend, but you may, I suppose give them more pronounceable names; let them be Paul, Simon and Stephen. These three, coming down from Heaven with the sound and vision of lightning coupled with thunder, came to Adam to ask whence Lilith went. To the west, he stuttered, fearing what their rage might wreak upon Lilith, as their fingers twitched eagerly at their swords. The angels, hearing this, stared into the western distance, and uttered the Ineffable Name. Such a sound is dangerous to man, and to Adam it was no different: he fell to the ground, clutching his bleeding ears, and slept.

The angels, transported by that Word to the west, found Lilith swimming in stagnant waters. They swooped above her, the beating of their wings slicing through the air and causing it to crack and split. The hellish scream of this passage of feathers terrified Lilith, and so she dived down beneath the surface of that mud-backed mirror. A blade, flashing, penetrated the water beside her, and a perfect hand took hold of her hair, pulling her upwards.

You must return, one or all of the angels said, the alternative you do not want.

Go back to him and to Him? I am not that weak. Lilith's voice spat with rage as she grappled with the fingers in her hair.

You know our names, you know our job here. You must return, there is no weakness in it, only humility: a virtue.

Your virtue is no virtue to me, it is futility you bring with your bargaining voices. What is the bargain that He sent you with? Lilith saw to the centre of the matter, her dark eyes looking into the eyes of the angel that held her.

If you do not return, we shall slay one hundred of your children every day. The swords were raised, angelic fists bone-knuckled behind the hilts. He knows you have been consorting with Sammael, the Fallen, whose name is the name of the kingdom of Hells. (And they were right: Lilith, having fled Eden was confronted by Sammael, the fallen angel himself. His guise was beautiful, and his words spoken with silk lips. He had told Lilith everything that she wanted to hear, and she had agreed to be his queen in the palaces of obsidian and marble that lay in the depths of what we might call Hell. Her fate, she thought, had been sealed.)

You would slay one hundred children every day? Lilith spat at the angels. Angels are the hands of God, and your God chooses to murder?

It is the condition we were instructed to bring. Shall you return?

To return under this condition would bring happiness to no one; to leave is the death of my children. I have conditions for you. Her nails tried to tear at the alabaster flesh of the angel's hand in her hair. If you slay my children, I shall slay Man's children. Their children shall be mine until they are old enough to know what I am. This is my condition, and it rests upon your heads, angels.

The angels considered this, staring blankly at her, then agreed that she was not returning. They told her they would come to her children every day, that they would be slain, and that there could be *no redemption for the Queen of Sammael*. The angel's hand released her.

The serpent would be proud of this moment. Lilith, hearing of her imminent injustice vows an eternity of further injustices. Injustice unshared is an embarrassment to humanity: who could

look upon a single beggar suffering his poverty in solitude upon the streets of some great city like New York? No one, so the beggars pile up, in clusters, sharing in the torment of their own embarrassment. Lilith's spreading of dishonour and murder is her own way of lightening the load upon civilisation. Not that many would know it. But the angels know this, Lilith knows this, and God knows this. The five of them (or possibly more, should God be established, not as a singularity, but as a system of divinities) share this knowledge and guard it. The fear of what might happen if it is released to the popular masses is unbearable. Even this record of the injustice is inadequate to measure the horror of what has been unleashed in this: the bargain between God and his first creations.

Lilith's pledge is not a slight against God, as much as she wishes it were, it is solely an attack upon Adam and his arrogance. It is not God that suffers (it is commonly assumed that such slain children go straight to Heaven, innocent) but the sons and daughters of Adam's line. Speaking of which, as Adam lies concussed on the fresh and scented grasses of Eden, God is already devising his new mate. With the same blade that severed Lilith and Adam, God's finest and most noble creation, He opens Adam's caged chest and removes a single rib. We know this story well, told as it is to children across the globe. I have little doubt that today even children raised in places with no concept of what it is to be of the Judaeo-Christian-Muslim theology are told this coming segment of the story.

Taking this rib, and some further clay from the earth beneath Adam, He fashions a likeness of Lilith. She is not a perfect match: He changes her hair's colour, length, curls and fragrance; alters the spacing of her eyes, the size of her breasts; other details. But these changes are only slight, barely enough to distinguish the two first women. Breathing life into clay for the last time, God recedes to Heaven, withdrawing the tentacles of His direct influence forever. From this moment forth it is only angels that shall interact with Man or, indeed, any part of Creation. The universe is their domain, their problem, and their delight. God merely pulls the strings of this vast pageantry.

Adam, waking slightly deafened with ringing ears, looks upon Eve (as he is later told her name is) and sees in her few of the marks of Lilith. He sees less as she wakes and, finally, sees none

of Lilith's traits. His wariness is assuaged, and he becomes fonder of Eve than he could ever have been of Lilith. But there is never again the passion that he felt towards his own twin, Lilith. Nor would there be between any two people.

Many writers have stated that true love comes only once or twice a century. I say that this is wrong, true love has come only once, and only between Adam and Lilith. Their separation and failure to reconcile only widens the gulf between what we might call love, and what God, Adam and Lilith know to be love. This is the crime of love: it is essentially destructive, for love demands more of the partner than mere humans are capable. Tragic, yes.

Myth and fable tell us little more of Lilith until we encounter the story of Nebuchadnezzar's dying child in the *Alphabet of Ben Sira*. Nebuchadnezzar, the king, sees his child dying daily before his eyes and, having exhausted all the mystics of Babylon, calls upon the Jewish community to send forth a healer. Only Ben Sira comes to the palace gates. Ben Sira, knowing Lilith's nature and her pledge, carves for the king an amulet bearing the name of God, and the images and names of the three angels. He carves them carefully, evoking every detail through the etched bronze. Here, the toes and toenails are crisp; here the angels' hair is wrought from the metal. This is the greatest artefact he shall ever craft. He places the amulet above the child's bed, and the child recovers, almost instantly: like magic.

How did this work? The king is impressed, though slow to show it. He threatens Ben Sira with death if he does not explain the working of this arcane device. And so Ben Sira tells him much the same story that I have narrated to you, but for one detail. Since the time of Lilith and the Bargain, Man has come to recognise her face and her works. Some voice has explained the story. Perhaps one of the angels fearing for the deaths of so many children, has broken the unspoken rules and let the secret out. However it came to pass, the story is known, and the amulet is simply a direct extension of the myth. Lilith, having known the deaths of her children every day for (perhaps) thousands of years, feels only terror at the sight of the three angels. Amusingly, by this point Snvi (Paul), Snsvi (Simon) and Smnglof (Stephen) have become known as the angels of medicine. Yet, as we know, each day they bring death to one hundred children.



I have raised many more questions than I can answer, I have used ‘perhaps’ and ‘possibly’ too much. There are many vagaries here. The tense swings through time like a pendulum, alternating present and past, mentioning the future (in plurality of tense, also), and denying you the opportunity to comprehend this. I am not certain I have done justice to this story.

To further complicate, I must remind you that God made Man in His own image; but that image was of Adam and Lilith, entwined fleshily as one form. I, thus, hasten to add that ‘He’, ‘Him’, ‘His’ and any other direct references to God could be replaced by ‘She’, ‘Her’, and ‘Hers’ respectively. Equally, God could be referred to in the plural (as many theologians would, no doubt, prefer). I apologise for these complications. Of course, excuses are merely that.

Why have I told you this? What purpose is this myth (as surely it must be)? What purpose could there be in introducing my story through the bargain that brings death? There are many morals to be taken from the fable, many truths about mankind held within it. But this is not why. I did not put pen to paper, fingers to keyboard or lips to ear to bring you a simple moral lesson. There could be only one reason for this, do you not see? An introduction into the netherworlds of human history is not a terribly inventive introduction to a story. I know this. You, if you have read much, also know this. If I simply wished to tell you this story I might have made a palimpsest of it; transporting Lilith, Adam, God, the four angels, and Eden itself into a modern context. Such a story might be of greater value than my own direct, uninspired telling.

So this is to be a philosophical treatise? No, I must deny this. Theology, perhaps? Certainly, there is much theology to be found in my story, and even now you see its beginnings, but no. Some pseudo-intellectual postmodern wank-fest of a book? Do I desire to be taken for more than I am? To confuse under the guise of genius? This might be true, but it is not the purpose of the myth of Lilith and the Bargain in this instance. No, I must tell you on my own terms.

I tell you because I am the hundred-and-first. I am the sole survivor of the day of my birth. I tell you this myth because Lilith,

the Night Hag, Bride of Sammael, Queen of the Palaces of Hell, is my mother.