

As the books tell us. The second river,
 Named Gihon, runs around Ethiopia,
 That broad realm. The third great river 220
 Is called the Tigris—it runs swiftly,
 Full-flowing around the Assyrian nation,
 As does the fourth great river there,
 Which many men now name the Euphrates.

* * *

Genesis B

[Then God firmly warned Adam and Eve:] 225
 “Enjoy the fruits of every other tree
 Except this one—leave this fruit alone.
 Its taste is doom. Obey this command
 And you will need nothing else in paradise—
 All your worldly wants will be fulfilled.” 230
 Then they bowed their heads to heaven’s King
 And held his words carefully in their hearts,
 Thanking him for both his care and counsel,
 His truth and teaching. Then creation’s King,
 The resolute Ruler, let them live 235
 In that perfect land and rose, returning
 Homeward into heaven. His handiwork remained,
 A miracle of his making, two together
 On that sacred ground. They knew no care,
 Felt no loss, made no moan, suffered no sorrow, 240
 Never understood what grief might be gathered
 If they ceased to obey the word of God.
 Their undaunted desire was to fulfill forever
 The Lord’s loving will. They were dear to him
 As long as they carefully kept his commandments, 245
 Trusting in his teaching, living by his laws.

The Lord had shaped through his hand-strength
 And spirit-power ten orders of angels,
 All of whom he trusted to serve him well
 And work his will. He gave them the gifts 250
 Of intelligence and insight, an embodied glory.

One angel he made so mighty in his mind
 That he was created to be second-in-command
 Of that illustrious company after his Ruler
 In heaven's realm. This angel was brilliant— 255
 His life and limbs were enthralled with light.
 He was a blazing beauty, a dazzling delight
 To all around him, like one of the stars.
 He should have celebrated God's gifts,
 Cherishing his brightness, his gown of glory, 260
 His power and place in the angelic host—
 Then he might have been sub-ruler of heaven,
 A prince of power in the sweep of creation.
 But he began to meditate on his own beauty,
 His majesty and might, and to stir up strife 265
 Against the real Ruler of heaven's kingdom,
 Who created all life from his holy throne.
 He was dear to our Lord, but couldn't easily hide
 His hatred and hostility, his envy and ill will.
 He sought to find words to express his enmity, 270
 Trying to discover his own devious voice.
 He began to boast that he would never obey
 A ruling master, never stoop to serving God.
 He began to celebrate his own special light,
 Blessing his beauty, bearing his luster 275
 Like creation's delight. He had his own servants,
 Angelic soldiers, a faithful following
 Of brazen fighters, who seemed to him greater
 Than the troops of the Lord. The angel of insolence
 Brooded on power. Before heaven's throng 280
 He wanted his own throne. He embraced envy
 And his own exaltation. He thought he could build
 A stronger seat of power to the north and west,
 A higher throne in heaven. His radiance was a rush.
 He determined never to be God's disciple, 285
 His servile minion, and said to his troops:
 "Why should I slave for a lord and master?
 There's no need to serve this holy tyrant.
 I can muster up miracles with my own hands.
 I have plenty of power to build a throne. 290

This fealty is false—this service, revolting.
 I can gather enough grace to be a god
 And command an army of warrior-angels,
 Fierce troops who will not fail me in battle.
 They have boldly chosen me as their champion. 295
 I can shape a strategy and slay my enemy.
 My company is devoted—they will never desert.
 Their hearts are loyal—their faith holds true.
 I can attack my master and rule this realm.
 Why should I serve and flatter this god? 300
 There's no good for me in this groveling.
 Why should I bow and scrape before him?
 Why should I act the role of the inferior?
 I won't obey this arrogant lord any longer."

When the Ruler of everything heard this ranting 305
 And saw his angel puffed up with pride,
 Foolishly reviling his Leader and Lord,
 He decided to reward this rebel for his strife.
 He would pay his commander for his brash conceit
 With defeat and darkness, punishment and pain, 310
 A grim gift of torment. So each one suffers
 Who embraces evil, strives against God,
 The Guardian of glory. Then the Ruler of heaven
 In his infinite power and eternal wisdom
 Raised up his hands in righteous anger 315
 And threw down the throng of revolting angels
 Who rebelled with the traitor, trusting his lies.
 They envied heaven and ended in hell,
 Forfeiting God's favor in their fierce pride.
 Their false commander committed a crime 320
 So foul he was hurled into hell's abyss,
 Where he soon discovered endless agony.
 That proud angel turned perverse devil—
 In his sin he slew his own best self.
 He was bound forever with a horde of demons 325
 In a pit of pain. They were harsh companions.
 The rebel angels were expelled from heaven—
 The fierce ones suffered an endless fall

For three long days and nights, ending at last
 In hell's abyss where God transformed 330
 The devious traitors into tortured devils,
 Their holy radiance into flaming flesh.
 They refused to revere his words and works,
 So he turned their triumph into dark defeat,
 An agony of existence under the earth. 335
 They balked in heaven and were blistered in hell,
 Where they spend each restless night in flames,
 An ever-ready, relentless fire. At dawn, cold comes,
 An eastern wind of almost ice. They're caught
 Between the twin torments of frost and fire, 340
 The stabbing heat, the piercing cold.
 Hell holds them both in bitter balance.
 Their world was turned upside down
 When God transformed their precious paradise
 Into a noxious nightmare, a world of woe. 345
 The faithful angels kept their place
 In the heights of heaven, a holy kingdom—
 They held God's favor. The other angels
 Fell from grace, now fiends of fury
 In the house of flames. For their strife they suffer 350
 Singe and smoke, ice and fire, unending torment,
 Because they denied their duty to their Lord.
 They dreamed of rebellion and raised a ruckus.
 They desired a kingdom and deserved damnation,
 Betrayed by a giddy delight in their leader's pride. 355
 They warmed to power and fell into fire,
 A candling darkness, a lightless flame.
 A terrible truth dawned on them too late—
 They traded God's glory for hell's grim fate.

Then the proud and presumptuous prince of darkness, 360
 Who was once the most radiant angel of light,
 Brightest in heaven, beloved by his Master,
 Who cherished him till his arrogant rebellion
 Led to God's righteous wrath and the fiend's fall,
 Gathered his troops. The Creator had cast him 365
 Like a living corpse down on a death-bed

Of terror and torment, calling him Satan
 And securing his charge as commander of hell,
 That black abyss of unending agony,
 Where he would suffer and never again contend 370
 With almighty God. Then Satan spoke,
 Choking on sorrow, sick at his charge
 Of ruling over hell. He had once held
 A high place in heaven, an angel of brightness,
 Until he was seduced by his own inflamed, 375
 Overbearing pride. He refused to respect
 His Creator's commandments because his heart
 Harbored envy and ambition, hatred and guile.
 Finally he found his voice and spoke:
 "Now we're constrained in this endless abyss, 380
 Unable to fly freely as we once did
 In ethereal heaven. God granted us bliss
 But restrained our longing, robbing us blind
 Of our rightful rule, stealing our thunder,
 Casting us down in this scorching pit, 385
 And creating a paradise from our lost place
 In heaven for mankind to prosper and thrive.
 My bitterest bone to pick with God
 Is that Adam, who was shaped out of earth,
 Will sit on my throne, surviving in bliss, 390
 While we suffer torment, exile and agony,
 In the flaming hollows of unholy hell.
 If only I could use these devilish hands
 To break my bonds and escape the flames
 For a cold winter's hour, I could lead my troop— 395
 But these iron chains constrain my freedom,
 Bite at my body, menace my mind.
 I'm a realmless ruler, a heavenless hellion.
 The ravenous fire rages above and below.
 I've never seen such a hostile landscape. 400
 These flames are unchecked, unlike my arms
 Which are bound in chains. My strength is shackled.
 The hell-gates are locked and so are my limbs.
 I am bolted in iron forged in the fire.
 That grim God holds me bound by the neck. 405

Now I can see that he was a spy—
 He monitored my mind, perceived my purpose,
 Figuring before that I would surely fall
 And would eagerly bring evil to Adam
 If my bonds were broken, my hands freed. 410
 Now truly we suffer the torments of hell—
 Both fierce flames and the black abyss.
 God has swept us into a fiery haze
 Of blazing bodies and blind unseeing.
 What sin can he charge us with in heaven? 415
 What harm did we ever accomplish there?
 What weapons wield, what wounds inflict?
 Why are we banished from brightness and bliss?
 Where is our due process in this punishment?
 Can we not claim recompense for this wrong, 420
 Vengeance for this violation? An eye for an eye,
 A tooth for a tooth? Let's undo God's plan.
 We know he has marked out middle-earth,
 Where he has made mankind in his own image.
 He hopes to resettle our place in heaven 425
 With these pure souls. This is our chance
 To spoil his plan, avenging ourselves
 On his precious Adam and all of his heirs.
 In that new world we'll frustrate his will.
 Now I no longer aspire to the holy light 430
 Or hope for heaven where the Lord intends
 To enjoy eternity with his host of angels.
 We'll never succeed in weakening God's will,
 So let's just subvert it with the children of men.
 Let's teach them untruths, seduce them to sin, 435
 Lead them to lie. Let's worm our way
 Into this world and undo God's work.
 In his wrath he will inflict terrible vengeance
 Upon mankind, pitch them from paradise,
 As he heaved us from heaven. Together in hell 440
 We'll all be in exile, angels and men.
 We'll make them our slaves, put them in chains,
 Torture and torment them. Those human sinners
 Will share our pain, and God will regret
 That he ever made man. It's a devious plan 445

And a devil's delight. Let's begin the campaign!
 If I ever gave any of you precious treasures,
 Gems or gold, when we held our thrones
 In the realm of heaven, then now is the time
 To repay my gifts if you desire to do it 450
 And can summon the strength to flee this dungeon,
 Break through the gates, wing your way upward
 On your feathery cloaks, and soar through the skies
 To the new world where Adam and Eve
 Have been created in the kingdom of middle-earth, 455
 Richly rewarded with the pleasures of paradise
 While we remain painfully homeless in hell.
 They are precious to the Lord. We are only outcasts.
 They have stolen our birthright of heavenly bliss.
 This thievery endlessly eats at my heart— 460
 They will own our place in heaven forever.
 If someone could seduce them to sin against God,
 Renouncing their promise, rejecting his law,
 Then they will become loathsome to the Lord.
 If they break his commandment, he will turn cruel, 465
 Fueled by their unfaith in his wrath and rage.
 Then they will trade paradise for this torturous place
 Of punishing pain. Think about this,
 My exiled thanes. How can we betray them?
 I can sleep in my shackles with a grim satisfaction 470
 If I know that the Lord's bliss is lost to them.
 Whoever seduces Adam and Eve will thrive
 In this fallen throng, reaping whatever reward
 Is possible to find in this haven of fire.
 That angel will serve as my second-in-command, 475
 Sit next to me here on this throne in hell,
 If he can come back reporting that all's not well
 In heaven and earth, that these two humans
 Have rejected God's law, perverted his purpose
 In their words and works and were seduced into sin, 480
 Desiring in their deeds some forbidden fruit.”

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Then one of the demons, an enemy of God,
 Broke out his battle-gear, eager for the assault,
 Proudly embracing that evil purpose.

He put on his head a helmet of invisibility 485
 With secret clasps to conceal himself.
 He carried within him a hoard of words,
 Devious and dark, unprincipled and perverse.
 He wound his way upward on unbright wings,
 Stealing secretly through the gates of hell. 490
 His mind was menacing, his spirit strong.
 He beat back the blazing hell-flames
 On both sides of his body with fiendish skill.
 He intended to approach Adam and Eve,
 Concealing his purpose—to coax and seduce them 495
 Into breaking their Father's commandment,
 Engaging in sin, afflicted with guilt,
 Suffering shame, hateful to God.
 Then he flew onward with fiendish cunning
 Until he found the newly created kingdom 500
 And discovered Adam, God's handiwork,
 Skillfully shaped, together with Eve,
 His beloved wife, the most beautiful woman.
 They served God's will, fulfilling his purpose
 As his designated disciples doing good works. 505
 Two trees stood nearby, filled with fruit.
 God had planted them there in paradise
 With his own hands so that man might choose
 Between good and evil, weal and woe.
 Those trees offered fruits that were not alike! 510
 One tree was beautiful, abounding in bliss,
 Sacred and sweet—that was the tree of life.
 Whoever tasted the fruit of that tree
 Would live forever in the fullness of glory,
 In that eternal paradise with the favor of God. 515
 Age would not wither him or illness undo him.
 He would wake each morning, his hope assured
 Of fulfilling God's promise and attaining a home
 With the angelic hosts in heaven on high.
 The other tree, dangerous and dark, 520
 Offered undoing—that was the tree of death.
 Its treacherous fruit was bitter and blasted—
 Its taste was lethal. Whoever ate that fruit

Would know both good and evil,
 Their ways in this world, their home in the heart, 525
 Their eternal ends, their certain divergence
 Into bliss and bale. That one is doomed
 To live in labor, suffer in sorrow,
 Withered by age, defeated by death.
 He might enjoy his life a little while 530
 Until he descends into flaming darkness
 To enter the service of the savage fiends,
 Where he will live forever in peril and pain.
 The devil's disciple, Satan's surrogate,
 Knew all this and exulted in his heart. 535
 He meant to tempt that happy couple
 Into breaking God's clear commandment.
 He was the evil enemy of God and man.
 Then the devious fiend muscled his way
 Into the skin of a venomous serpent, 540
 Took the shape of a snake, slithering treachery,
 Twisting his body about the tree of death
 With cold cunning. He plucked the fruit
 And wormed his way back to God's handiwork,
 Where he smiled slyly, saying to Adam: 545
 "My dear Adam, do you live in longing
 For anything from God? He sent me here
 To discover your needs, fulfill your dreams,
 Offer you anything your heart desires.
 Not long ago I sat by his side, basking in bliss. 550
 He made clear my mission to minister to you
 And teach you the truth of this divine tree.
 He commands you to taste this fair fruit
 That he knows you crave. Its gifts are legion:
 Your strength will surge, your mind magnify, 555
 Your spirit exult, your body grow beautiful.
 You will taste the truth and discover the wonders
 Revealed to you. You will want no wealth
 When you have gained the grace and glory
 This fruit contains. You have worked God's will, 560
 Accomplished his ends. You are perfect and precious
 To your loving Lord. I have heard him speak

Of your way of life, proudly praising
 Your words and works. Now he wants you to hear
 His messenger's commands and carry them out 565
 In this lovely country. This earth is endless,
 Vital and green under God's heaven.
 The Lord himself hesitates to travel
 Such a long, hard road down from heaven,
 So he sent me here as his faithful servant 570
 To speak with you now about his mission,
 Teaching you the truth of this enabling tree
 By my wise words and cunning thought.
 Carry out his command. Take this fruit!
 Bite it! Taste it! Your mind will expand, 575
 Your heart enlarge, your form grow fair.
 This is God's gift from his home in heaven."
 Adam answered the serpent where he stood,
 Exercising faithfully his own free will,
 Alive to the effect of his making a choice: 580
 "When I listened to the solemn voice of the Lord,
 He gave me this land with commandments to keep
 And offered me Eve as my beauty-bright wife.
 He warned me not to be betrayed or bedeviled,
 Risking ruin for this dangerous fruit, 585
 Saying that whoever chooses evil in his heart
 Will inhabit hell, a dark house of pain.
 It's difficult to know what your purpose is.
 Are you an angelic messenger from heaven
 Or some devious liar with a hellish plan? 590
 Your so-called mission doesn't make much sense.
 Your tongue is twisted, your words are bewildering.
 I remember what our Lord and Savior said
 When I saw him last: he ordered me plainly
 To honor his word and keep his commands. 595
 You don't look much like an angel from heaven,
 Nor do you offer any token of God's favor,
 So I'm sorry to say I can't swallow your scheme.
 You should go away. I trust the power and truth
 Of the Master who made me with his own hands, 600
 Created me from clay, who raised up this woman

Out of my rib. He is able to bestow his favors
From highest heaven without sending a subordinate.”

Then the angry demon turned to Eve,
Beautifully formed, threatening harm to her 605
And all the children of earth to come,
Saying, “I know that God will be enraged
With both of you for being so stubborn,
When I fly home to heaven on the long road
And tell him you’ve rejected the righteous command 610
That he offered from the east. He will rise up in rage,
Forced to follow his own messenger here
Into Eden. I can’t predict what God will do,
But I know he will become a menace to you
Unless you accept this offer, a willing woman, 615
Obey these words and reach for a remedy,
Following his command without hesitation,
Escaping the pain of his punishing wrath.
If you listen to me, I’ll show you the way.
Eat this fruit, taste its sweetness, 620
Savor its power to open your eyes,
So that you can see beyond yourself,
Beyond this world to the throne of God
And curry favor with your own Creator.
You will also be able to lord it over Adam, 625
Control his desire, determine his will,
If that’s what you want and he trusts your words.
Just tell your husband you have in your heart
Fulfilled God’s purpose. He’ll believe in you
And give up his stubborn opposition and strife. 630
We can counsel him together, coax him carefully
To renounce his resistance, lest you should both
Prove loathsome to your Lord. Lean to the law,
O brightest and best of women—listen to me.
If you perform God’s purpose, I will come to your aid 635
In concealing Adam’s insults, his rebellious replies,
His arrogant, wounding words to God’s servant.
He thinks me malicious, calls me a liar,
Believes I have some secret, malevolent scheme,

And says unashamedly that I am no angel. 640
 But I have served a long life in heaven
 With my angelic thanes, loyal to the Lord.
 I know them well. I'm not just some devil."
 So the enemy of God urged Eve on,
 The deceitful serpent, coaxing her toward evil 645
 With his tempting lies until his devious words
 Grew hot in her heart, surging up in her mind.
 She began to surrender. Her will was weaker,
 Her nature more yielding, her promises more pliant
 Under God's shaping plan, so she was swept along 650
 By the devil's desires, his pernicious plot.
 She took from the fiend the fatal fruit
 From the tree of death against God's word.
 No worse deed was ever conceived.
 It's a great wonder that eternal God, 655
 The Prince of peace, would endure such enmity,
 And suffer his servants to be led astray
 By that subtle demon who seduced Eve,
 Marking mankind for endless suffering.
 Then Eve ate the fruit, swallowing sin, 660
 Tasting death, against the will
 And word of the Lord. Through the gift
 Of that fiend, God's foe, who beguiled her
 With winsome words, betrayed her with lies,
 Eve's eyes were empowered. She seemed to see 665
 The brightness and beauty of heaven and earth,
 The power and glory of God's creation,
 Not through her own human eyes and mind,
 But through the demon's grafted gaze
 And his blazing vision, a devious dream. 670
 Then the fiend we have forsworn spoke—
 His counsel was cunning, his word-gift no good:
 "Darling Eve, now that you've drunk this nectar,
 Tasting the fruit, trusting my words,
 You can see for yourself that your form is fairer, 675
 Your beauty brighter, your goodness more gracious.
 Now the light before and within you

Beams from your body, blazes from your eyes.
 The world rejoices in your waking radiance.
 Use this for a purpose—tell Adam your tale. 680
 Explain how you acquired such subtle vision
 After hearing and heeding my wise counsel.
 Offer him this promise: if he yearns for the light
 That he sees in your eyes and will obey me now,
 Then I will hold him blameless for his blasphemies, 685
 Even though he deserves no redeeming pardon
 For his hateful words. I will also offer him
 A small portion of what I gave to you,
 The gift of God's vision, the eyes of light."
 So now the children of Eve know sin 690
 When they fall as all of mankind must,
 Though they may find through their suffering
 And amending their ways their Maker's mercy
 And be restored to their Lord again.
 So Eve came to Adam, carrying dark fruit 695
 And the demon's words—breathtaking, beautiful—
 The fairest woman in this new world,
 Because she was shaped by the hand of God,
 Even though she was seduced and snared
 By the devil's deceit into a web of sin. 700
 So both were unblessed, losing God's favor,
 Forfeiting heaven for many seasons.
 We mourn this loss. Woe to the one
 Who doesn't hear or heed this lesson,
 Who still has a chance to make a choice. 705
 Eve carried a sumptuous secret in her hands
 And a tempting truth hidden in her heart—
 The delicious fruit of the tree of death,
 Which God had forbidden his children to eat.
 That unblessed apple was the source and sign 710
 Of more sin to come. God set the terms:
 His servants did not have to suffer death—
 They could rise to the richness of heaven's hold
 If they refused the bait of that bitter fruit.
 God's enemy seduced Adam and Eve 715

And all of mankind. The woman's mind
 Was more malleable to him, her heart
 More hospitable to his concealed cunning.
 She was led to believe that the deceitful devil
 Was a divine messenger sent from God. 720
 His tongue seemed truthful, his words wise,
 His sign spectacular. She sidled up
 To her lord and master, saying to Adam:
 "Adam, my lord, this fruit is so sweet—
 It's a taste of bliss and a pleasure to eat. 725
 It will warm your heart and open your eyes
 To the world's brightness. God's beautiful angel
 Is everything he claims. By his radiant robes
 I can see that he's our Maker's messenger,
 Keeping his counsel, bearing us delicious, 730
 Invisible truths from the King of heaven.
 He's better a friend than an adamant foe.
 If you have spoken to him harshly today,
 He will forgive you for your heart's bitter hatred,
 If we promise to serve him and work his will. 735
 What will we gain by quarreling with an angel?
 It bedevils our chances for peace in paradise.
 He can plead our case with almighty God.
 With my unveiled eyes, I can see the Lord
 Who shaped this world, surrounded by splendor, 740
 Gathered in glory in the south-east of heaven,
 Encircled by angels in feathered cloaks.
 Who could offer such an insightful vision,
 If not God? Who could offer such harmonies
 To my human hearing? The Shaper's songs 745
 And the angels' wings are expanding my sight.
 This is no scheme. My mind is a miracle—
 Since I ate the apple, my eyes are enlightened.
 Here, take this fruit I hold in my hands.
 I offer it openly. Share my vision. 750
 Taste this greatness. I believe it's brought
 From the hand of God by his own command
 Through this mighty messenger. His words are wise.

He tells nothing but the truth. Take a bite!
 Nothing else on earth is equal to this. 755
 As the angel says, it's a gift from God."

Eve incessantly urged Adam all day long
 With words thick and fast to taste the fruit.
 This lure was aimed at expanding love
 Or sharing blame. That bite would turn bitter 760
 As they betrayed their Lord. The evil angel
 Encouraged them both to seize the moment
 And sate their desires with a taste of sweetness,
 The drink of death. To ease his envy,
 He meant to draw mankind into mortal error, 765
 To lead both Adam and Eve astray,
 Snared in sin and bound for slaughter.
 That twisted trickster, that hideous hell-hound,
 Knew that they would discover God's wrath
 And destroy their deed to a home in heaven. 770
 That fiend offered Eve his subtle lies,
 Bending her back to his own way of being.
 He delighted in deceiving the loveliest of women
 Into forfeiting God's favor. Seduced to sin,
 She sold her will and spoke his words, 775
 Betraying her heart and God's handiwork.
 His beautiful bride urged Adam on
 To share the fruit, till his spirit softened,
 And trusting her undaunted loyalty and love,
 He took the fruit. He ate the apple 780
 And lost himself. She little knew
 That mankind would suffer sin endlessly
 After taking a taste of that bitter fruit.
 She thought she would gain God's favor
 In obeying his messenger's winsome words. 785
 She talked her way into Adam's trust,
 Until her husband followed his heart
 And wound his will to her own desires.
 His act was an invitation out of Eden.
 What he took from Eve was death and damnation, 790

A savage sleep and a demon-dream,
 The devil's deceit and a home in hell,
 Though in name and nature, it seemed just fruit.
 That apple was endless agony and exile,
 Suffering on earth and torment in hell. 795
 With a shared bite of that unholy fruit,
 They marked themselves and all mankind
 With bitter death. They murdered the future.
 The cruel messenger cavorted around them,
 Skipping in sin, exulting in evil, 800
 Offering thanks to his lord, Satan, saying:
 "Now I have fully worked your will,
 Fulfilling your desire since the day we fell.
 At last I've led Adam and Eve astray.
 They've broken their bond, forsaken their Lord, 805
 Abandoned his word, his trust and teaching,
 Trading bliss for bale, rejoicing for wrath.
 Now they will find a hard path to heaven
 And a broad road to hell. Your envy is ended,
 Your heart's pain has perished. Ignominy is over. 810
 You don't have to grieve that your given place
 In heaven is handed over to usurping mankind,
 While you lie locked in hell's hot torment
 With a host of fiends who followed you down,
 Enthralled with your pride. God flew into a rage 815
 When we refused to bow down before him
 And beg for his blessing. But it was not our want
 To render him homage. We counted the cost
 And found it too great. Better freedom in hell
 Than servitude in heaven. God drove us down 820
 In his unchecked anger, his fiendish fury,
 Hurling bold angels into the fiery abyss,
 The blaze and burn of mind and bone,
 So he could restore the thrones of heaven,
 Handing our place to that muddle of mankind. 825
 We've marred his grace and emptied his thrones
 By misleading man. It's a devil's delight!
 We've caused God double trouble—
 The children of men have lost their hope

Of heaven, sinners bound for hell-fire, 830
 Bypassing bliss—and we've perverted God's purpose,
 Making the Lord lament his precious loss.
 Our Maker will mourn that he ever made man.
 Whatever we suffer is salved in Adam,
 Eased with Eve, as they will know pain, 835
 Passion, and perdition instead of paradise.
 The damnation of man has healed our hearts
 Since we have taken vengeance with victory
 In our endless conflict with our cruel Creator.
 We've endured enough. Now I'm headed home 840
 To greet you, my lord, the great Satan,
 Shackled in black hell in a clutch of fire."
 The meanest of messengers, that fierce fiend,
 Once more flew down to the doors of hell
 To be greeted by flames where his master lay, 845
 Chafing at his bonds, chained to the blaze.
 Then Adam and Eve began grieving.
 They sorrowed and spoke sharp words of woe,
 Discovering the fear that came with the fruit,
 The darkness of mind that death portended. 850
 They dreaded the righteous wrath of God,
 Realizing that they had defied his command.
 The woman wailed, lamenting her loss,
 Reproaching herself, repenting her choice,
 When she saw the radiance dim and disappear, 855
 The once bright sign from the false angel,
 The faithless demon who led them on
 With his devious counsel into dark calamity,
 Sin and shame, humiliation and hell.
 Sorrow smoked and seethed in their hearts. 860
 Sometimes the married pair prayed together,
 Calling on their Creator to punish them properly
 For breaking his command. Suddenly they saw
 The blunt truth that their bodies were bare.
 They needed no house and knew no toil 865
 In that precious land. They could have lived well,
 If only they had learned to obey God's command.
 Bound for misery, they heaped blame

On one another. Adam spoke up:
 “O Eve, you have by your egregious sin 870
 Marked us forever bound for death.
 Can you see our destiny, the dark abyss,
 The fierce flames of ruinous hell?
 Can you hear it raging? Heaven’s kingdom
 Is unlike that unholy fire. Here is the best land 875
 We might have held, rejoicing forever
 In this radiant land, God’s gift to us,
 If you had not listened to that inveterate liar
 Who tempted us to turn against our Lord,
 Following that monster instead of our Master. 880
 Now we sorrow in sin and fear our fate
 Because God warned us to guard religiously
 Against betrayal, a breach of trust,
 And the resulting torment, a terrible loss.
 Now hunger and thirst gnaw at my heart. 885
 Care and discomfort have entered Eden.
 How will we survive when the savage wind
 Blows from west or east, south or north?
 Storm-clouds will come, hail from heaven—
 Frost will follow us, snow stalk us, 890
 An evil cold come creeping over us.
 Sometimes the savage sun will blast
 Our frail bodies, scorching our skin
 As we walk naked, exposed to the elements.
 We’ve no free food, no sweet sustenance, 895
 No shield from the storm, no safe shelter
 From God’s righteous wrath, his punishing rage.
 How can we survive? Now I sorely regret
 Requesting God to make me a helpmate,
 Raising you up out of my own rib bone, 900
 For you have led me astray into hateful sin,
 My heart’s shame, and my Lord’s loathing.
 I regret that I ever laid eyes on you.”

Then Eve replied, the loveliest of women,
 Fairest of wives—still the handiwork of God, 905
 Even though ruined by the devious devil—
 Lamenting her loss of the Lord’s trust:

“You are right to reproach me with hard words,
 My lord and husband, yet the gall in your mind
 Cannot be greater than the grief in my heart.” 910
 Then Adam was downcast and answered Eve:
 “If I knew God’s will, perceived his punishment,
 You would see no hesitation in my heart,
 No doubt in my mind. If God commanded me
 To endure the ocean, sail blindly away 915
 On the dangerous waves, I would never flinch,
 But rush to a ship, risk sinking down
 To the sea-bottom and entering the abyss
 To accomplish his will. Now grace is gone,
 Bliss is abandoned. I have lost my precious 920
 Service to the Lord. There’s no joy in paradise.
 We can’t stand here naked forever,
 Baring our bodies for anyone to see.
 We failed God. Let’s head for the forest,
 Seeking a hideout in the wild wood.” 925
 So the two sad sinners turned away
 From their happy home, walking in woe
 Into the green forest where they sat in sorrow,
 Apart from paradise, awaiting their punishment,
 Afraid of the pain that promised to come 930
 Because they had broken their Lord’s command,
 Losing the gifts bestowed by God.
 Then Adam and Eve were sorely ashamed
 Of their bare bodies, covering themselves
 With torn ferns and fallen leaves. 935
 They owned nothing to wear in shame—
 They had no clothes. They bowed down together,
 Prostrated in prayer, begging each morning
 That God might come, that their almighty Father
 Would not forget them, but finding them in the wild, 940
 Would show them how to survive in the world,
 Living in the light after their loss of paradise.

Genesis A (continued)

Then almighty God, the glorious Prince,
 Came into paradise in the middle of the day