

The Diaries of Adam & Eve

Mark Twain

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If Adam could get Eve to stop talking for just one minute, he could appreciate her beauty and fall in love with her. So opens this curious set of intertwined diaries of Earth's first two human inhabitants as "translated" with humor, compassion and understanding by Twain.

Written on and off in Twain's last years, the fascinating "Extracts from Adam's Diary" and "Eve's Diary" are combined here as a powerful and tender narrative exploring what it might have been like to be the first person(s) on the planet. Twain captures the silliness of the biblical concept with ease and broadens the story with the pair's dialogue and opinion something left out by the writers of the Old Testament.

Eve and Adam couldn't be more different. Adam is a lazy lunkhead who's perfectly happy to live and not question anything. Eve, however, is scientific and considers herself "an experiment" placed on Earth by an unknown force. She pursues Adam with vigor, following him around the garden and thwarting his attempts to escape from her. "This new creature (Eve)," Adam relates, "is a good deal in the way. It is always hanging around and following me. I don't like this. I'm not used to company. I wish it would stay with the rest of the animals."

She is trouble from the beginning. Eve enthusiastically involves herself in the lives of all the animals, including a talking snake she eagerly befriends. "She talks to it and it talks back. I can finally get some rest," Adam says, relieved. While Adam is away exploring one afternoon, he sees a field of peaceful animals suddenly turn on each other in battles to the death. He knows immediately what Eve has done back in the garden.

Eve contemplates her actions many years later, after the two have established a home and have had children. Their son Abel has died, which has left great a void for Eve, bringing her mind back to the day she sinned. She reflects, "We could not know it was wrong to disobey the command, for the words were strange to us and we did not understand them. We did not know right from wrong?how should we know? To punish us because we did not do as we were told—ah, how can that be justified?"

The diaries are accompanied by biographical narration from celebrated newsman Walter Cronkite, who parallels Adam's expressions of love for Eve to Twain's love for his wife, Olivia Langdon. For Adam and Twain the company of both women was an inspiration and a security, just like being in Eden. (September, 1999)

BRANDON M. STICKNEY (January / February 2000)

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