

The Tale of Snake and Us

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Snake wasn't always a snake. Not at all. He was upright, once, and hovered over the earth as a flame. He was as beautiful as fire, as quick as fire, as silent as fire when flames are quiet. He hissed when he was angry. He had a quick temper because he was hot. He wiggled and flew skyward. He swayed gently like weeds in the sea when he sank slowly to earth.

Snake had a human face. He spoke snake-speech, quick and burning. Sometimes he said things that were almost not true. He found ears to whisper into. He found ears to tell tales. He found tongues that wagged too much. And Snake was not just one; he was many. If you met one, that was Snake. If you met another, that was Snake. Like a beehive with so many bees: it was just like that: there was one and many, and both were the same. But Snake was more than any liar that you and I met, way back so long ago.

Don't you remember? I do. I still see the scars. That's how. There was you, and me, and we were dreamy and wanted. We wanted. It was hanging from a tree. Of course the tree was not a real tree, like the ones we see now. That's silly. It was a tree than grew inside us. It had its roots in our head and the fruit hung below and we wanted. We wanted—you more than me.

That's how it was. You told me to reach down for the red fruit. I said no, but Snake said 'Yessss, go ahead, take it.' He knew the fruit, him and his flames. He knew we weren't ready, but he didn't tell us that. He didn't say we could eat the fruit and enjoy it rightly, one day. He's such a deceiver that way. Snake flamed in the tree and made it glow so beautifully. It looked so inviting.

"Take thissssss," said Snake. "Please yourself, and eat."

So you and I, we both reached down and plucked the fruit and the world shuddered. Then we were naked and needed each other, forever. Who would come and save us? Not Snake. Oh no, not him! He was slithering around without legs. He hissed poison. Too clever for himself he'd forgotten the law. Either that or he did it anyways, just for spite. His flame was extinguished along with our inner light. It was dark, and we'll all be alone, together, for a long, long time.