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Genesis: Bad Weeds in Good Garden

BOOKS

In "Genesis", the author makes his hero come out swinging. From the outset we are assured that the gardener-hero of this interesting little prose-poem has a genuine touch at growing things. He plants vegetation and flowering greenery around an oasis which is itself surrounded by inhospitable desert. All seems to be very good until two intruders make the scene.

Respectively male and female, they are Adam and Eve. Adam is immediately the more likable of the pair. Eve is something of a spoilsport. But they make out well together, and seem on peaceful terms with the gardener. At least

everybody minds their own business.

That is, until the arrival of an individual whose character is in some question. It is a little embarrassing that the author persists in calling everyone by their first names. But this reader will be forced to follow this lead so I will call him Satan.

Satan is an athletic type, fond of twining himself around trees, or more specifically, the tree. The author is a bit presump-

ous at labelling his characters and at one point tells us that Satan is a serpent. In effect, he is established as a villain. He is not the kind of guy with whom you play stud poker. He is liable to have something up his sleeve.

As the book of Genesis covers an extended time range it is wise to inform the reader that this review will concern only its first three chapters. Eve likes nothing better than to go around munching fruit. We assume that the fruit is the type usually found in tropical gardens viz. mangoes or kumquats. But no, she goes off by herself and finds Satan hanging around the old apple tree. The tree is the Garden of Eden social

centre. Unlike Newton, Satan is not sitting underneath waiting for an apple to hit him on the head but is attempting to pull off a grafting job on one of the branches.

We now get a different slant on him. He appears as a cross between Horatio Alger and Johnny Appleseed. Not only is he a free-enterpriser but a mover as well. And although the author may mean him to be something else, he is a gentleman. He offers an apple to her. In fact he adds a new dimension to polishing the apple. It becomes not a proposal, but a proposition and his ace card is on the table. At times Eve just isn't too bright. She takes it. Some people are never satisfied.

Eve has a predilection for sharing things that wasn't evident when she was confined to kumquats and mangoes. She offers Adam a bite from the same apple (primitives are frequently unsanitary). Adam is nothing if not a sap. After analyzing Eve's good points, he wants to get on the good side of her and bites out a nice big hunk.

We are not informed if the apple was Delicious or Macintosh Red. When the gardener returns from pollinating orchids, or whatever gardeners do, it is like George Washington and the cherry tree all over again. And when Adam and Eve face up to the fact that it was they who have pilfered his produce, the gardener is understandably annoyed. He promptly kicks them both out of the garden. Just a case of two apples gone bad. No more balm-y times in the good old garden.

The ambitious opening lines of "Genesis" show considerable intent but the plot seems faintly trite. The reader will be disappointed, if not shook up, by the fact that Satan does not get his. He remains the ambiguous personality of the piece. The author does not tell us what happens to him, or where he goes. The reader is left to decide for himself, which is sometimes an unfortunate policy. There is still something likable about Satan and at times seems to have more on the ball than the three other characters.

The story has its ups and downs. In short, Adam and Eve live unhappily ever after. What begins as the Associated Sun Colonists, Nature Lovers, and Naive Nudists, Eden Chapt., turns into a short course in figleaf dressmaking. Despite this accent on the sensational the story is on the whole sober, if not sobering. The author may be self-conscious which is perhaps reflected in his anonymous status.

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