### The Death of Methuselah



tent Methuselah rested, an old man way past his nine hundredth year. He was barefoot, naked, with a sash of fig leaves around his loins. He half lay, half sat on a bed of deer, goat, and oxen skins. From time to time he reached with a shriveled hand and took a drink from a jug of water. His cheeks were sunken and he was toothless. In his youth Methuselah had the reputation of a strong man. But when you pass your nine hundredth birthday, you are not what you used to be. He was emaciated, and his skin had become dark brown, parched from the sun. He had lost all his hair, even his beard and on his chest. His body was covered with boils, knots, tumors. His bones jutted out, his nose was crooked, and his ribs looked like the hoops of a barrel.

Methuselah was neither awake nor asleep. He seemed to be in a swoon from the heat and murmured to himself the murmurings of extreme old age. Still, his mind

was clear. He knew quite well who he was—Methuselah, the son of Enoch, who had never died but was taken by God. His wife and many children had seen Enoch walking in the field, in the direction of the granary, when suddenly he vanished. Some said that the earth opened its mouth and swallowed him, but others maintained that the hand of God descended from heaven and brought him into the celestial heights, because Enoch was a just man who walked with the Almighty.

from his rib. years before God had put him to sleep and formed Eve of Lilith, with whom Adam lay one hundred and fifty was talk that she joined a camp of demons, the daughters their choosing. Naamah later disappeared, and there daughters of men were and cohabited with those of of the fallen angels who had seen how beautiful the she was not really Lamech's daughter but a child of one her and yearned to lie in her lap. There were rumors that many hundred years ago. Since then he had lusted after ments of copper and iron. Methuselah had met Naamah Zillah, the sister of Tubal-Cain, who forged all impleolder. She was supposedly the daughter of Lamech and Naamah, a female whom he once loved, might be even knew, he was the oldest man on earth. He had heard that hundred and sixty-ninth year. As far as Methuselah enly hosts. But when? He was already in his nine phim, aralim, cherubim, sacred beasts, and other heav-Himself, to his father Enoch, and to the angels, sera-God would stretch out His divine hand and take him to Methuselah hoped to pass away in the same manner.

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swarmed around him but he did not have the strength to shoo them away. into Dumah, the land of the shadows. Flies and gnats Methuselah thought. I will soon descend into Sheol, Well, I don't really belong to the living anymore, every plan devised by man's mind was nothing but evil. man. He saw how great man's wickedness was and how Abel. It became known that Yahweh regretted creating war and killed their own brothers, just as Cain killed in the rivers. Weapons were made, and men waged even forge gold and silver. They wove nets to catch fish Cain, could forge implements of copper and iron, and flailed their skin and made clothes and shoes with it. chased animals, killed them, roasted and ate their flesh, They learned to shoot bows and arrows and, like Tubaland sparsely inhabited. Many men took to hunting. They and of whom he had never heard. The earth was vast dren and great-grandchildren whom he had never met ready forgotten. Methuselah had hordes of grandchilflocks of sheep, donkeys, mules, horses, camels. His thuselah's sons that still lived, some wandered off with daughters had married men whose names he had alson gave birth to a son by the name of Noah. Of Mehe named Lamech in memory of Naamah's father. This sisters, sons and daughters. Methuselah had a son whom and wakefulness. He would open his eyes and see day. He could barely differentiate between dreaming images. He heard the voices of his dead brothers and death, Methuselah kept brooding over Naamah. He dreamed about her at night and sometimes during the he was napping, overcome by the heat, near to

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A wench entered the tent, barefoot and half naked. Methuselah did not know if she was one of his grand-children or one of his slaves. Even if she was a slave, she still came from his seed, because all his female slaves had become his concubines. Methuselah wanted to ask the girl her name, but his throat was full of phlegm and he could not speak. She brought him a wooden bowl full of stewed dates. He held the vessel with a trembling hand and drank its sweet juices. Suddenly it occurred to him that his son Lamech had begot a son by the name of Noah. And Noah, too, had some children. "Where are they? Why did they leave me alone? Who is going to bury me after I breathe my last?"

He looked up and Naamah stood before him, mothernaked. A reddish glow from the setting sun shone over her face, breasts, and belly. Her black hair hung down to her loins. Methuselah embraced her and they kissed. She said, "Methuselah, I came to you."

"I longed for you in all these centuries," he answered. And she said, "And I for you."

"Where have you been?" he asked.

"With my angel Ashiel, in a deep cave in the heart of the desert. I have eaten the food of heaven and drunk the wine of the gods. Demons served me and sang songs to me. They danced before me, braided my hair and Ashiel's beard. They fed me pomegranates, almond bread, dates, and honey. They played lyres for me and beat drums to please me. They lay with me and their semen filled my womb."

Naamah's words awakened lust in Methuselah and

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he became young and strong again. He asked, "Wasn't Ashiel jealous?"

"No, my lord. The fallen angels are all my slaves and maids. They wash my feet and drink the water."

"Why did you come to me after hundreds of years?" Methuselah asked.

who built his city where the waters will not reach." man and the animals. Blessed be my grandfather Cain, spring might take over His domain. I have learned that He is intending to bring a flood on the earth to drown thought of them. He is always in fear that Adam's off-All pleasures are forbidden by Him, even the mere ness from their mates. Yahweh's wrath is easily kindled. enjoy themselves and allow others their enjoyment. They are not faithful and they don't demand faithfulcopulated. Satan and his brother Asmodeus are gods of passion, and so is their spouse, the goddess Lilith. They and his wife, Lilith, with whom the father of all of us more He punishes them. We in Cain's city serve Satan serve Him. The stronger their devotion is to Him, the jealousy and revenge. He keeps tempting those who You should know that Yahweh is vicious, a God of had fallen there and he brought many angels with him. by a murderer. There I will take you, my beloved. Ashiel granddaughter of a murderer and I live in a city built mother, Zillah. I am the daughter of a murderer and the killed a man and a child and married Adah and my grandfather of Mehujael, Methusael, and Lamech, who She continued: "This son was the father of Irad and the Cain built and named after his son," Naamah answered. "To take you with me to the city which Grandfather

"How do you know all this?" Methuselah asked.

"We in Cain's city have many spies," was Naamah's ply.

"I am afraid of Yahweh and His vengeance," Methuselah said. "I have sinned a great deal in my nine hundred and sixty-nine years. I have lusted for you, Naamah, day and night."

"In Cain's city lechery is no sin," Naamah said. "The opposite: it is the highest virtue."

Methuselah wanted to say something more, but Naamah called out, "Come, fly with me to where my bed is made . . ."

Naamah spread out her arms and Methuselah soared with her. They flew in unison like two birds. All signs of illness and age had left him. He wanted to sing out and whistle in his elation. Methuselah had heard that Yahweh can work miracles only for those who served Him with all their hearts and with all their souls. But now a miracle was happening to him, the oldest of sinners.

Methuselah knew that the earth was immense and rich, yet now he could see it from on high—mountains, valleys, rivers, lakes, fields, forests, orchards, and plants of all kinds. While he, Methuselah, ate, slept and dreamed, the sons of Adam had built towns, villages, roads, bridges, houses, towers, sailboats. Naamah flew with him into Cain's city, which teemed with horsemen and pedestrians, as well as stores and workshops of all sorts. Methuselah saw many people of various races and colors: white, black, and brown. They had built temples

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to turn to dust and his soul was bound to return to its that in his late age, when Methuselah's body was about and defiled the world with light and life. How strange who trespassed Satan's frontier, broke all his barriers, selves natives and they considered Yahweh an intruder ness which preceded Creation. These forces called thempowers of evil were as old as tohu and vohu and the darkmah's mother, Zillah, had told her daughter that the life. For them right was wrong and wrong right. Naaand His Providence. They called life death and death powers waged war with Yahweh, rebelled against Him death, he was both afraid of it and curious. His mother lah asked himself. Although he was prepared to face down into an abyss. Is this Sheol or Dumah? Methuseopen gate into the belly of the earth. Many steps led had told him about the powers of the night. These moon was shining. In its light Methuselah could see an cried, danced, did somersaults. The insane shrieked burned in the darkness. People in the crowds laughed, which were unfamiliar to him. Night had fallen and fires with wild voices. In the desert behind the city a full vans to and from the deserts. Methuselah inhaled odors in cages calling to shepherds and to men leading cara-Naamah pointed out all the sights. Naked females stood jewelry and phallic symbols between their breasts from chimneys. Some women wore gold and silver in chains, tortured them, and killed them. Smoke rose from their hips and spears on their backs bound captives animals on altars, sprinkled blood on their corners, burned fat and incense. Soldiers with swords hanging to serve their gods. Bells were ringing. Priests sacrificed

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source, he had fallen into the hands of these adversaries of God.

Naamah brought him into her chamber, and even though it was dark, he could see her bed and a huge man lying in it. It was Ashiel, a fallen angel, one of the sons of Anak, the giant men of renown. Naamah introduced Methuselah to him, saying, "Here is one of my oldest lovers," and the other one asked, "Are you Methuselah? She speaks about you all the time. She craves you, not me. Even though I am a giant and you are as small as a locust."

"He is small, but he is a real man," Naamah said. "While your semen is like water and foam."

"I will go now," Ashiel said, "to the men of wisdom in our assembly."

and earth. "Your father, Enoch," she said, "became "Let it be known to you that Yahweh's world is nothing lyre and pipe. Naamah continued to say to Methuselah. of Adah's sons, Jubal, the ancestor of all who play the as with his enemies. She begot her, Naamah, from one revealed to Methuselah that her mother, Zillah, was a he came into her. She revealed to him secrets of heaven save himself and his household and all the animals from commanded your grandson, Noah, to build an ark to but a madhouse. He has erred by creating man, and he harlot and she lay with all her husband's friends as well Lamech is among the shadows of Dumah." Naamah Actually, he is nothing but His servant. Your son Yahweh's head of the angels, the Lord Metatron the flood. But be sure that the flood will never come Ashiel left, and Methuselah embraced Naamah and

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make the old young, the fools wise, and reverse the sexes a skunk and the venom of a snake. Some of these men sand of the sea, the eyes of a fly, measure the stench of when you, Methuselah, lived with your faithful wives of heaven and bring the flood. But we have scholars who young and many. Yahweh threatens to open the windows the universe. We, the demons of this generation, are angels might rebel against Him and take dominion of and tired. He thinks He is the only God and is forever Nineveh, from Shinar and Gomorrah. Yahweh is old from Kush and from India, from Sodom and from wise men from all over the world is meeting. They came upon the earth. Here in the netherworld an assembly of us, Methuselah, and you will be twice as clever and ten have learned to tame crocodiles and spiders, they can learning sprang forth. They can split hairs, count the brow, and attended your flocks of sheep, many men of and concubines, plowed the fields by the sweat of your have discovered how to close them. In all these years times as virile." They can reach the very depths of perversion. Stay with jealous of other gods, constantly in dread that His own

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Naamah kissed Methuselah and caressed him. She said, "Yahweh had only one wife, the Shekinah, and for countless years they have been separated because of His impotence and her frigidity. He has forbidden all deeds which bring pleasure to men and women, such as theft, murder, adultery. Even the sweet coveting of another man's wife He considers a crime. But here we have turned teasing and tantalizing into the highest art. Come with me, Methuselah, and I will take you to the

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Methuselah and Naamah rose and she took him through a labyrinth of many passages. They entered a temple where each scholar was speaking about his land and its people.

A sage of Sodom told the gathering that they were teaching children in Sodom the art of manslaughter, as well as the arts of arson, embezzlement, lying, robbery, treachery, the abuse of the old and the rape of the young. A glutton from Nineveh was telling how to eat the flesh of animals while they are still alive and to suck their blood in its flow. Prizes were awarded to the most accomplished thieves, robbers, forgers, liars, whores, torturers, as well as to sons and daughters who dishonored their parents and to widows who had excelled in poisoning their husbands. They had established special courses for blasphemy, profanity, and perjury. The great Nimrod himself was teaching cruelty to animals.

An old demon by the name of Shavriri was giving an oration and saying, "Yahweh is a God of the past, but we are the future. Yahweh is dying or perhaps already dead, but the serpent is alive and giving birth to countless new serpents by copulating with our queen, Lilith, and the ladies of her court. The angels in heaven have all been blinded by the curse of light, but we will bring

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back the primeval darkness, which is the substance of all matter."

Harsh music was being played for the assembly, and the singing was so loud it pierced Methuselah's ears. He could not tell the difference anymore between laughter and crying, the cheering of female demons and the wild cries of male hobgoblins. "I'm too old for all this revelry," Methuselah was saying, not knowing whether he spoke to himself or to Naamah. He fell on his knees and pleaded with her to take him back to his tent, to his bed, to the bliss of old age and rest. For the first time in almost a thousand years, the fear of the grave had left him. He was ready to embrace the angel of death with his sharp sword and myriad eyes.

man and gave him dominion over all other creatures of hiding, Naamah among them. Methuselah knew the of heaven began to open and no one could close them. release the flood was about to take place. The windows sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, as well as the ark which future. God had taken a perilous risk when He created past quite well and he had gotten a glimpse of the in the depths of Dumah and Sheol a bevy of devils were were about to be swept away in the deluge. Somewhere the Almighty had told him to build. God's decision to had died, but he could not leave his wife and his three turned to dust. Noah soon learned that his grandfather All the lords of Sodom and Shinar, Nineveh and Admah Methuselah a bowl with date juice she found him dead. The news spread that the oldest man on earth had re-The next morning when the servant girl brought

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the earth, but He was about to promise by the rainbow in the clouds never again to bring a flood and destroy all flesh. It became clear to Him that all punishment was in vain, since flesh and corruption were the same from the very beginning and always will remain the scum of creation, the very opposite of God's wisdom, mercy, and splendor. God had granted the sons of Adam an abundance of self-love, the precarious gift of reason, as well as the illusions of time and space, but no sense of purpose or justice. Man would manage somehow to crawl upon the surface of the earth, forward and backward, until God's covenant with him ended and man's name in the book of life was erased forever.

Translated by the author

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