Adam sank wearily on a flat rock at the entrance to his cave domicile and rested his head in his hands. Eve, emerging from the cool darkness into the noonday glare, observed his dejection.

"Whazzamatter, pop?" she chirruped.

Adam lifted his head and an expression of acute distaste spread over his face.

"Don't do that," he complained testily. "How often have I requested you not to run your words together? What's the sense of my inventing speech, if you're going to slangify it before it hardens?"

"Okay, bo," she said. "I'll be good."

"Good!" he snorted. "With 'okay' and 'bo'!" He laughed a hollow laugh. "And you were to be a helpmeet for me."

"Well, ain't I -- I mean -- aren't I?"

"You're a -- a -- ball and chain," he told her.

"What's that? Is it something nice?"

"Yes," said Adam. "Nice. Like sunburn on your nose or cockle-burrs in your hair!"

Eve gave him a long and searching look.

"What is the trouble? Come, tell lollipopsy."

"There you go again, distorting our native speech," Adam wailed. But his wail lacked emphasis. Eve wisely held her peace and waited.

"It's the business of naming all the birds and animals," he explained. "At first I thought it was fun, but it's getting to be a real chore. I can't find names to go round."

"What's that you've got wrapped about your torso?" she asked suddenly.

"That's one of them."

"One of them what?" queried Eve with superlative disregard of grammar.

"That's just it," Adam said helplessly. "I don't know what to call it."

"Let's have a look at it," she suggested. "Maybe I can help."

Slowly Adam unwound fifteen feet of the something from his abdomino-lumber regions and laid it on the ground. It proved to have a blunt head at one end, with a pair of snappy black eyes, and at the other end it tapered off to nothing. Between the two extremities it was crisscrossed with lines that made an enticing pattern of lozenges.
"Gosh!" exclaimed Eve. "It's sorta long for its size, isn't it?"
"And limber," Adam added.

Eve stooped and picked up the thing to verify this. Quicker than quick, it coiled itself about her perfect thirty-six and squeezed.

"Well!" Eve exclaimed. "It surely is a fast worker--squeezing on such short acquaintance."

The unnamed beast lifted its head and a cubit or so of its length, and looking Eve in the face, it dropped one eyelid waggishly--over the eye on the off side from Adam, however. At the same time it squeezed her hand.

"Why, you fresh thing!" she cried, and clouted it with her open palm.

The sinuous beast loosed its grip and fell to the ground. But as it lay there inert, again it directed that silent nictitation at Eve.

Adam retrieved the creature from the dust. As he did so, it made a peculiar noise, like steam escaping from the family cooking pot.

"Listen!" Eve cried. "It's trying to talk to you. Maybe it's trying to tell you its name."

"What did it say?"
"S-s-s-s-s-s!" repeated the sinuous creature.

"There," exclaimed Eve delightedly. "It said 'S' as plain as anything. That must be the way its name starts. Put it down."

Adam obediently laid the thing on the ground. It scuttled away into the bushes.

"You dumbbell!" cried Eve. "What did you let it go for?"
"Didn't you tell me to?" asked Adam in surprise.

"Of course not."

"You told me to put it down," he insisted.

She made a gesture of impatience.

"Not the what--you-call-it," she explained. "I told you to put down the S--to write it."

Adam glared. "Why didn't you say what you meant? Why didn't you say 'write' instead of 'put'? What's the idea of having a language, if it isn't to be used correctly?"

"Well, who's to be the judge of correctness?" Eve asked tartly.

Adam replied firmly. "I am."

"But ain't I helping you? Why can't I have some of it the way I want it?"

"Because you want to make it all wrong," he told her.

"Sez you," observed Eve, and laughed scornfully. "I don't suppose you ever made a mistake."

"Just one," Adam retorted. "I fell asleep and let somebody steal one of my ribs. And see what I got for it."

Eve grinned. She was darned good to look at, and she knew it, long before Adam ever told her so. Women are like that.

"If the bone had been taken out of your head, I wonder what you'd have got in return," she mused.

Decidedly, Adam was coming out a poor second best in this battle of wits. It irked him beyond measure that this five-feet-four of femininity could tie him all up in the speech he had invented. He didn't know it, but Eve was already beginning to take over from him the manufacture of the language. That was why, many years later, it was always to be referred to as an also-ran.

Adam, a few new words not yet expressed by his foot in spontaneous scintillation, pitch out of his mouth.

But be good, the first syllable it carried was a "Stop!"

It slipped round to his hand. The creature, with a loud screech, charged Adam's face.

"Well, I seen this," said the spheroid accuser.

A look with his palm took the edge off the "Die!"

What is it the present tense?--dubbed, "Who-t"

"I got it," he explained. "I came from somewhere."

"Sure,"

"Of course."

The creature made a dart for the apple.

Eve raised a dart, and, with the jaws slothaneously, a raised part of the head. The creature, with a suspiciously raised part of the body, pitch out of the way. The creature, now a frequent part of the history. But the subject is not the subject of the history. The story is not the story of the subject. But the subject is not the story of the subject.
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ferred to as the mother tongue. Father wasn't even to be considered

an also-ran.

Adam felt his temper rising, and he had a sudden notion to unleash

a few new words that he had composed the day before, but which he had

not yet exhibited to Eve. To be exact, they were words that had risen

spontaneously to his lips, when, in climbing a palm for some coconuts,

his foot had slipped and caused him to take all the hide -- and a gener-

ous amount of subcutaneous tissue -- off his shin. They were explo-

sive, scintillant, calorific, amplitudinous words, calculated to fry the

pitch out of a spruce tree or ignite an asbestos cliff.

But before he could take the irrevocable step, out of the bushes wrig-

gled the fifteen feet of lozenged sinuosity. In its widely distended jaws

it carried a big red apple.

It slithered across the ground and dropped the fruit into Eve's

hand. Then it coiled itself up on its tail, like a length of hawser, and

with a loud "S-s-s-s-s," slowly and meaningfully winked at the woman.

"Well, how lovely!" chortled Eve. "That's the swellest apple I've

seen this season." She sank two rows of milk-white teeth into its scar-

let sphericity. "You never brought me as nice an apple as that," she

accused Adam, as she munched the fruit.

A look of consternation came into his face. He smote his forehead

with his palm.

"Stop!" he shouted. "Don't eat any more!"

"What's the grand idea?" Eve wanted to know. And bit off another

mouthful. "Why shouldn't I eat any more?"

"Because you'll die if you do," he declared.

"Die?" Eve's eyebrows were raised. "That's a new one on me,

What is it to die?"

"It means euthanasia -- going bye-bye for keeps. It means cur-

tains -- dull crape ones."

"Who told you that?" sneered Eve. But she did not take another bite.

"I got it straight from headquarters. Do you know where that apple

came from?"

"Sure," said Eve. "From a tree."

"Of course it came from a tree," Adam assented. "But what tree?"

"The one with apple leaves," answered Eve.

Adam snorted violently at that. "Listen!" he shouted. "That apple

came from the tree in the center of the garden. I had extra-special or-

ders not to touch that tree or its fruit. So I hung a 'No Trespassing' sign on it."

"But this curious creature couldn't read your sign," said Eve.

The curious creature bobbed its head and said, "S-s-s-s."

"Anyway," retorted Adam, "there's no reason why you should eat

the apple. Throw it away."

Eve raised her hand to obey, but the elongated creature at her feet

made a dart and snatched the apple from her fingers. As they watched,

the jaws slowly widened and the ruby-tinted edible disappeared. Simul-

taneously, a bulge appeared just below the creature's ears -- or where

the ears would have been if it had ears. The bulge, of a size and form

suspiciously suggestive of the vanished apple, descended along the up-

raised part of the animal's anatomy.
It's swallowing my apple," Eve said in an awed whisper.

"Just imagine -- a throat fifteen feet long," said Adam.

The apple continued to descend. Then suddenly its progress ceased. A tremor, a little shudder, ran down the whole length of the little beastie. This was succeeded by other tremors, each a little more violent than its predecessor. But the bulge that was the apple refused to budge either up or down.

Then things began to happen. Those fifteen feet of flexibility became frantic. The elongated animal curled itself up, circumbendibus, into a tight spiral, slipped out of that into a reversed corkscrew, and then, almost too swiftly for the eye to follow, tied itself into knots, a whole gamut of them -- Granny knot, Blackwall hitch, stevedore's knot, double Flemish loop, carrick bend -- a series of convolutions and contortions that were bewildering in their rapidity.

"What's the matter with it?" asked Eve, wide-eyed. "Do you suppose it's going to die?"

Adam laughed. "Nothing with as much animation as that is dying. I'd say it has a pain in its stomach, if I could be sure that it has a stomach."

"S-s-s-s!" said the wildly threshing beast.

"You're right," declared Eve. "It has a stomach. More than that, it has gas on its stomach. That's why it makes such a funny noise. It must pain terribly."

"S-s-s-s!" said the writhing beast.

"An ache usually does pain," Adam observed sagely. Eve gave him a freezing glance. "Another wisecrack," she commented. "But you've said a mouthful, for now we have a name for the thing."

"Whadda ya mean, a name?" Adam wanted to know, forgetting to pronounce his words accurately in his excitement.

"It starts with an S and it ends with an ache. That makes S'n'ache. Why not call it a snake?"

"Not so bad," Adam admitted. "Not bad at all. But I wonder whether the thing will like to be called a snake."

The tormented animal lifted its head and winked wickedly at Eve.

"Yes-s-s-s-s-s-s," it said.