The Nearly-New Garden-Variety Snake Was

less than four inches long, narrower than
a pencil, but already coded: Beware
Adam! Beware Eve! I looked
like Eve to him, tumbling him with my spade
into a chill spring afternoon.

I hold Eve’s ancient grudge, and his
imprinted portion of that curse was clear
as if fresh out of Eden.

Forking his baby tongue, he launched
his little length against me, programmed
to expect from the lifted hand,
the universal heel. I

broke the tradition. I
amnestied the enmity, and walked away,
scrambling his signals, leaving his genes
to wonder if he’d met with Lilith when
he’d thought I must be Eve.

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