





Book One
Death

1.

Close your eyes a moment and imagine.

Being born and growing up here in California, an eden spanned by the vibrant pinks and greens of orchards that flow in all directions like the spokes of an endless wheel. This is your world – where waves of yellow mustard flowers sweep across the valley to splash against the lion-colored foothills, air filled with the invisible hum of bees like fine golden wires.

And through it all you wander, touching the splintery slats of an abandoned hay wagon, running your hand over the hard round boiler of an enormous steam tractor, its cast iron wheels pitted orange-brown and shaling back their elemental oxide....

Archaic monsters they seem, kin to the dinosaurs. Yet all day you play among them, running

free

free

free

And then as evening starts to fall, the warm air turning violet, from somewhere a mother's voice calls magically through the indigo twilight:

Michael...

But you don't want to go.

And so you run deeper into the drowsy tent of darkening orchards, back where they can't find you, further into the rich perfume of life.

And where this richness ends, our story begins.



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