

## HORROR

# Red Delicious

By Micah James

**T**he impressions of light danced over his closed eyelids. Shapes bounced and swayed as the warm breeze brushed his cheek with a downy touch. Even with unopened eyes, he could visualize the orchard in which he lay. It had been so long since his peaceful days in the countryside. He had almost forgotten what it felt like just to lounge under the open sky without incessant demands and deadlines knocking on his skull like broken shutters in a gale. It was clearer to him now, more than ever, that he just wasn't cut out for the high-strung habitat of the big city business world. He belonged just where he was, outside amidst the endless rows of glistening apple trees.

The soft grass cuddled up against his sides, and his head was elevated on a mossy mound. As comfortable as he was, an electric impulse triggered his muscles into motion. The brightness burst through his vision as he blinked into focus. He could tell by the position of the sun that it was high noon, the sky as clear as could be. Leaves of gold and green swayed above him, interspersed with the most brilliantly ripe, red apples. His mouth filled with saliva at the thought of the delicious fruits. Stomach grumbling as if to validate his notions, he got to his feet and decided on a particularly luminous looking specimen.

He reached, and he reached, and stretched to the lofty branch but to no avail. Cursing his treasure for eluding his grasp, he took hold of the wide tree trunk and hoisted himself up with a strained grunt. Inch by inch, he carefully edged up the length of the trunk until he was face-to-face with the luminous apple. Extending as far as his free arm could manage, his fingers gingerly grasped the twinkling fruit and cautiously twisted it until the stem gave way.

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Prize in hand, he squirmed back down to the ground and rested against the sturdy base among the moss-blanketed roots. He inspected the smooth, cool surface of the crimson sphere and carried it to his lips. The crisp skin fractured with a satisfying crackle as his teeth closed down with ravenous energy, sending warm juices flowing down his chin and dripping onto his chest. With the unhinged glee of an infant, he savored his delectable bite.

His attention was wholly fixated on his feast until a piercing shriek erupted from the open. Startled beyond comprehension, his eyes burst open to the sight of his wife's pale face, mouth and eyes wide with contorted horror. Blinking, his eyes adjusted to the sight of his cluttered apartment, dimly lit by the flickering of a neon sign out the alley window. Gazing down, he took in the view of his blood-soaked nightshirt. A gasp escaped his lips, sending more drops plummeting down onto himself where they landed in a scattering of scarlet blooms. His limbs were entangled in a heap of linens and the bedpost pressed against his spine. Utterly dazed, he turned his eyes to his hand in which he so delicately held a lightbulb, shattered and oozing with red.