

The Seed Apple

Sheldon Greene

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Sheldon Greene's *The Seed Apple* is the multicontinental story of a family whose improbable history crosses barriers of time and religion. Drawing from precolonial American history, the Jewish Exodus, and the environmental movement, the book unites the allure of mythology with the dirty dealings of life.

Mendel Traig's doctor sends him to Southern California for health reasons. Traig's rest is interrupted, though, when he is drawn into the town's drama over the construction of a large tower by the mysterious Binyan family. Any chance of a quiet vacation disappears.

Once Traig hears that the Binyans claim to be descendants of the Lost Tribe of Israel, and that they have lived in the Americas since the time of King Solomon, his curiosity is piqued. He immerses himself not just in the Binyans' remarkable history, but in their contemporary family politics.

Greene's prose is witty and spare. Traig, who first appeared in Greene's *Lost and Found*, emerges as a well-defined character: weary, and unsure of the modern rush of technology; balancing his history in the concentration camps of Eastern Europe with his current life of quiet solitude, he works to acknowledge his deeply repressed loneliness. The supporting cast is similarly well-defined, unusual, and reassuringly real. Characters drive the plot and ground the mystical, unpredictable story in an accessible way, though some sections do require a second reading.

The Seed Apple is written with a delightful mix of modernity, ancient history, and lore. Sheldon Greene's careful writing leads to a work strong both as speculative fiction and for its stories of daily life. This is an entirely fantastic tale that is as much about the nuances of relationships as it is about the mysterious family at its center, whose genealogy reaches back to King Solomon.

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