

The Endless Field

by Stephen Measure

I open my eyes and find myself in a field. There are crops all around—healthy green, smelling of life, meaning, purpose. They need to grow. They *must* grow.

But the crops aren't alone. Sickly weeds twist through the field, reeking of decay. They steal the nutrients from the earth. They spread broad leaves and block the sun. They entangle the crops, trying to choke them. And the field is endless to my right, my muscles stretched by weariness, my mind like it might break again; and the field is endless to my left, weeds as far as the eye can see; and I sink to my knees, and I fall on my face, overcome.

I awake and find myself in the field, crops still smelling of life, weeds still trying to choke them.

But I'm not alone. Workers are here, bent over, hoeing along the rows, ripping up the weeds. Workers are here, yet not enough, not nearly enough. And the field is endless to my right, my muscles stretched by weariness, my mind like it might break again; and the field is endless to my left, weeds as far as the eye can see, the workers far too few; and I sink to my knees, and I fall on my face, overcome.

I awake and find myself in the field, crops still smelling of life, weeds still trying to choke them, workers still working.

But we aren't alone. Others are here too, not workers, not tending the crops—they are tending the weeds. They encourage them, they support them, they help them grow and choke the crops. And the field is endless to my right, my muscles stretched by weariness, my mind like it might break again; and the field is endless to my left, weeds as far as the eye can see, the workers far too few, the weed-growers countless; and I sink to my knees, and I fall on my face, overcome.

I awake and find myself in the field, crops still smelling of life, weeds still trying to choke them, workers still working, weed-growers still destroying.

And some of the workers shrink, becoming weed-growers. They drop their hoes, neglect the crops, and turn to the weeds instead. And the field is endless to my right, my muscles stretched by weariness, my mind like it might break again; and the field is endless to my left, weeds as far as the eye can see, the workers far too few, the weed-growers countless, the workers dwindling; and I sink to my knees, and I fall on my face, overcome.

I awake and find myself in the field, crops still smelling of life, weeds still trying to choke them, workers still working, weed-growers still destroying, more workers dwindling.

And the weed-growers mock the workers, and more and more workers shrink. Already too few, and now even fewer. The crops need tending. The weeds need pulling. And the field is endless to my right, my muscles stretched by weariness, my mind like it might break again; and the field is endless to my left, weeds as far as the eye can see, the workers far too few, the weed-growers countless, the workers dwindling, the weed-growers mocking; and I sink to my knees, about to fall on my face ...

Then I see a row in front of me.

The field is endless to my right, my muscles stretched by weariness, my mind like it might break again; and the field is endless to my left, weeds as far as the eye can see, the workers far too few, the weed-growers countless, the workers dwindling, the weed-growers mocking ...

There is a row in front of me, in my hand a hoe.

I step forward and tear up a weed, weed-growers all around me, scoffing, yelling, mocking. I stand within the row and tear up another weed, then another. The crops are healthy green, full of life, meaning, purpose, crops that *must* grow. And the field is endless to my right, my muscles stretched by weariness, my mind like it might break again; and the field is endless to my left ...

I work within my row.

The crops are healthy green, smelling of life, meaning, purpose. Yes, the field might be endless, but we each have only one row.