

AN OLD BARN'S GHOST

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(1) There is certain ominous magic that dwells in old barns, almost as if they actually have souls. The old barn that sticks in my mind most is Corny Abbring's old barn next door to my home in DeMotte, Indiana. It is an ancient monument that has been standing for over a century; it bears no resemblance to the sterile aluminum barns of today. The barn is only a shadow of its former self, and though it hasn't been used in years, a spirit still haunts its woodwork. To look at its weather-beaten face is like looking at a great misshapen skull jutting out of a field of rippling amber hay. Its dark loft stares at the open space like a large Cyclopean eye. Its cracked, battered doors hang ajar, suggesting the grinning maw of a withered old mummy. Its wood groans as the wind whistles through the holes in its roof. On its south side, several beams of yellow pine brace the sagging barn against the wind, conjuring up an image of a bent old man leaning on crutches.

(2) Inside the barn, lying on its dusty concrete floor, are stacks of archaic farm implements, all rusted to the color of dried blood. In the stillness, it is easy to imagine the mooing and shuffling noises that must have come from all the empty cattle stalls. A rickety ladder leads up to the loft. Up there it is hot and stuffy. Moldy hay blankets the floor along with the feathers from the numerous pigeons that nest there, the sharp odor of their droppings tainting the air. The remains of a hay winch hang from the roof, which is pierced here and there by shafts of sunlight.

(3) One day the old barn will let out one final creaking groan and collapse into rubble. Its ruined carcass will be dismembered by those who covet its antique barn wood. Its magical soul will be shattered into a thousand fragments and scattered as far and wide as its wood, preserved only as decoration for a hundred homes and yards.