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The Storm

By

John Gasparro Jr.

I'll long remember that exciting fall evening in October, when we visited my grandfather's farm on the great plains of Oklahoma. Sitting on that rickety pine-board bench out on the front porch of that old and weather-beaten farm house; I looked out in amazement across the vast expanse of corn fields that seemed to vanish on the horizon.

The never ending fields surrounding the farm house and barns gave me a feeling of isolation from the rest of the world--as if being on an island. The only signs that gave a hint of life existing there were the occasional cackle of chickens and the squeals of pigs. The big white house stood in stark contrast to the faded red barns. Mud covered green tractors and wood framed wagons--that filled the air with the pungent smell of creosote--crowded the side yard by the towering grain silos. That rusted, steel framed windmill that looked like an old oil drilling rig, made an eerie sound as it waved in the wind.

An occasional gust of wind whipped through the sea of tall green corn stalks, exposing the golden yellow and white husks that glimmered in the setting sun. The sound was as if thousands of streamers were thrashing all together. As the sun set, the wind became more blustery and in the distance, gray and white clouds were bunching together in a swirling motion--like huge puffs of smoke rising high up into the sky and joining to form what looked like a ghostly figure that became more and more ominous as it swelled. Deep rumblings echoed from the horizon, sounding like huge timpani drums being pounded. Overhead, a flock of black crows cawing harmoniously flew in haste--as if being chased by something.

A sense of anticipation came over me as I watched funnel shaped gusts of wind and dust dancing around each other as they appeared and disappeared, vanishing into the sea of corn stalks.

Some of the louvered window shutters began to slap against the house violently, with a creaking and yawing sound from the rusted and broken hinges.

As the dark clouds came closer, there was a flash of lightening that lit up the sky behind them. Then there was a deafening, cracking sound like the snap of a whip, accompanied by a bolt of lightning that spread out like a huge, electrified tree branch with its limbs reaching down into the earth. The blades on the windmill began to make a whirring sound, spinning faster and faster, as if preparing for flight. The chickens frantically gathered and scurried to the hay barn seeking refuge with the other animals there.

As I took in a deep breath, I sensed tension in the air; it felt heavy and had an organic smell like freshly plowed soil. The rumbling thunder grew louder and more threatening. Then the gusts of wind became steadier. The warm, gentle evening breeze became chilling and uncomfortable. Silver-blue bolts of lightning bombarded the land around and about as the horizon faded into blackness. Not far away, I could see a tidal wave of dust and brush rising from the ground and rushing towards the house.

An eerie darkness came over the farm. Suddenly, intermittent pinging sounds came from the corrugated tin roofs of the barns. Clusters of ice bombarded the ground and disintegrated like tiny meteorites. The whole farm began to resound from the pelting of rain and ice that ricocheted off each piece of machinery, until it became a symphony of percussion sounds.

Small puddles appeared in the furrows between the corn stalks, quickly swelling into streams and ponds. The water troughs spilled over in the heavy downpour. All of a sudden—like the sound of a herd of buffalo stampeding across the sky—the thunder became overwhelming and created a dazzling display of phosphorescent light that turned night into day.

I stood there on that porch shivering with excitement and exhilaration from the hail of rain that stung my face and arms like being hit with blasts of BBs. And, like a captivated spectator at a fireworks display; I watched the storm with awe and wonder.