

The Fields
By Lucas DeGraaf III
To the prophet

Every so often a field would burn. A spark would turn into a little fire that would end up engulfing the whole thing. There was a local legend. Of a being on fire. All the farmers were terrified of it. In the off chance the being was seen, people would flee. Retreat home to prepare in whatever way they deem appropriate at the site of the hellish creature. It was supposedly so haunting that the scarecrows would abandon their posts in fear of dying in the flames. It had been years since the last field had burnt.

Charred skin, warm to the touch. Moving quietly. Can't be seen; won't be seen. Anxiety, patting down any heat, suffocating any little flame that appears. Couldn't be anywhere. Forest is too dangerous. The water will kill, out in the dirt. Slim silhouette traversing unknown paths. Too bright. Orange and yellow light illuminates the ground under the night sky. Put out the flame.

Top of the foothill. Someone all alone. Quiet and unmoving. In the center of the field, surrounded by crops. Tall, dry stalks of corn. Insurmountable distance. Too dangerous. One flame, one spark and then flee. Voices of anguish and despair. Crying and pain, burnt and dead. They would be together though, if he was still there.

The story, the way the boy tells it at least. It was there. He had gone down to the creek to fish, and he didn't catch anything. It was getting dark, and he made his way home. Suddenly a wolf lunged out of the thick bushes and attacked him. Biting, clawing, and scraping, both the wolf and the boy. He grabbed his knife and sunk it into its side. Shocked and injured, it scampered away. Torn flesh and gashes all over his arms and legs. Blood pouring out like a stream, he crawled, pulling himself towards the road.

A silver light, so bright it was almost blinding. A reflection, white light off a silver figure in the center of the field. It approached cautiously, putting out little flames, trying to remain warm, not hot. The figure was bright and unmoving. It started to make its way down the hill. The figure started to move. Stalks of corn rustling and bright light reflecting off the moving figure. Flames out of the charred skin must stop. Making its way down the hill towards the road. It saw him shining brightly. A scarecrow covered in metal, like a suit, not in the center of the field. Rather, standing at the roadside.

Loud screams piercing the air. The boy lay wailing in a pool of blood. He couldn't move. It looked around continuously, anything, anybody... the boy. Bright flames coating his arms and legs. Frantically moving, putting them out. The scarecrow looked at the creature and shook its head. It stopped. The scarecrow looked at the boy, and then the field, and then the creature. He grabbed a stick, lit it with a small flame on its arm, and then threw it into the dry corn field. A

small fire began to grow amongst the stalks. The scarecrow looked at the creature and nodded. A flame and then another. Small flames out of its arms and legs. He nodded. Fire out of its chest, its back, and shoulders. He nodded. Its eyes turned orange, and he started to breathe fire. He looked at the creature and nodded once more. A path of red and orange flames tearing through the corn field. Flames charred the ground in its tracks. An explosion, a bright light, a roaring fire that engulfed the field in flames. Smoke and ash covering the blue and purple sky. The scarecrow fixed in place, staring at the field. Hot, very hot but intact and unburned, a wry smile. Screams and anguish. Cries for help and people fleeing with their possessions down the road. The boy screaming in pain, bleeding out, fearing that he would get burned. They grabbed him, dragging him away from the burning field.

The boy claims it saved him. Others say it tried to kill him. Some say it was a bad miracle. No one sees the creature anymore. The scarecrow stands unmoving and rusted at the roadside. A sign hanging from his neck, "It needs the fields." Every so often, an iridescent light flying through the night, down unknown paths. Every so often, another field burns.