**WHAT IS “HORRIFIC” ABOUT THIS EXTRACT?**

JEEPERS

Tom grumbled good-naturedly to himself as he hoisted the third scarecrow onto its perch. Wiping the sweat from his brow in the midday heat, he surveyed the line of scarecrows stretching back across the field of maize.

“Come on now, son. Damn hay still needs baling out back. Hurry the hell up with them damn scarecrows.” His dad shouted to him from a hundred feet away in the farmyard.

Tom watched as one crow, and then another, and another, landed on the shoulder of the first scarecrow. Funny that. He could have sworn that he had only perched three scarecrows but now there were four. Another crow landed loudly; and another.

Eyes; those were eyes he had caught in the corner of his eye. Cold fear crept down the back of Tom’s neck and spread all the way to the tip of his spine. Holding his breath, he crept through the tall maize, never allowing his eyes to leave scarecrow number one.

On the edge of the field, Buck the old guard dog whimpered and whined as he watched Tom’s movements anxiously. He padded and paced up and down the edge of the field, forwards and backwards, too terrified to dart across to warn the boy he loved so much. With huge dark eyes, the hound watched the horror unveil before him.

Short of breath, Tom stood sweating in front of the first scarecrow. Its long dark sacking whispered in the summer breeze, as loud as thunder in Tom’s ears. With dawning horror, Tom looked down towards what should be the bunched hay the scarecrow should have instead of feet. No. Claws. Long claws. The claws of an eagle. The claws of a very very big eagle! Tom was frozen to the spot, eyes open wide in terror as the pointed, sharpened claws clenched and relaxed, clenched and relaxed.

Frozen with fear, Tom’s petrified gaze met the malevolent gaze of the scarecrow. Evil dwelt there. Pure, menacing, violent evil. Tearing himself out of his terror trance, Tom spun and sprinted towards the farmyard, nothing more than a whimper escaping from his lips. Luckily for him, he could not see the scarecrow swoop through the air towards him, silhouetted in the sunlight like some devil escaping from hell. Luckily for Tom, he didn’t see it land upon his back.

Unluckily for Tom, he felt the razor claw pierce the skin of his back and hook itself around his spinal column. Unluckily for Tom, he could not scream. It was as if his voice was being stolen along with the rest of him. The scarecrow dragged him away through the dirt of the field at breakneck speed.

Howling wildly, Buck knew he would never see his young master again: not alive, anyway.