

Jaw

Corn is the primary US feed grain—around 90 million acres were planted with it in 2019 accounting for 95% of total feed grain. Of the 13.6 billion bushels produced that year, approximately 12 billion were stored.

— US Department of Agriculture statistics, 2020

The mother of the boy who suffocated in an avalanche of stored corn inside the silo said she wasn't surprised by the extent of his injuries, but was shocked that the impact had dislocated his jaw.

—*The New York Times*

The contained world of the concrete-walled silo is meant to store grain — soybeans, wheat, oats, milo, processed feed and rice — but mostly corn. Bushels and bushels and bushels of corn. A top hatch opens for filling by sky-scraping elevators that lift and pour enormous amounts, while motorized floor augers sweep below to keep the flow going, then push it out a lower door for hauling away to market. Sometimes the corn is so deep —

unstable and crusted with age — that workers who are called inside to walk it down off the sides, or poke it with a rod, are swept into a crushing, whirl-pooling darkness, as if by flood, or rip tide. A body's descent there is lonely, swift

. I read about a boy, 14, who was buried in a column of 500,000 bushels, in the time it takes to read this poem.

— from *Ghost Heart*