

# Drowning in Wheat

By John Kinsella

They'd been warned  
on every farm  
that playing  
in the silos  
would lead to death.  
You sink in wheat.  
Slowly. And the more  
you struggle the worse it gets.  
'You'll see a rat sail past  
your face, nimble on its turf,  
and then you'll disappear.'  
In there, hard work  
has no reward.  
So it became a kind of test  
to see how far they could sink  
without needing a rope  
to help them out.  
But in the midst of play  
rituals miss a beat—like both  
leaping in to resolve  
an argument  
as to who'd go first  
and forgetting  
to attach the rope.  
Up to the waist  
and afraid to move.  
That even a call for help  
would see the wheat  
trickle down.  
The painful consolidation  
of time. The grains  
in the hourglass  
grotesquely swollen.  
And that acrid  
chemical smell  
of treated wheat  
coaxing them into  
a near-dead sleep.

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