

“The Barn”
(Ravages of War)

The need, to be alone, to find the silence which cloaked the peace and the gentle place inside each of us, these are the things that drew him to the barn on that crisp autumn afternoon. He wanted to escape the normalcy, the almost mocking tone of a day like any other.

A day when children board school buses, a day when mothers pack lunches lovingly into brown paper sacks or metal boxes. A day when husbands go off to work, knowing home waits at the end of the day. A day when the Earth continues on its rotating axis as though it were just like yesterday had been, just like tomorrow would be.

The barn, with its timeless dust motes, floating through the air, illuminated by the rays of light shining through the cracks of the wood that has seen so many seasons come and go. The wood that swelled with the spring rains, baked in the summer heat, and stood fast against the driving winds of winter.

Only here did his soul find some semblance of the peace that it cried out for. Only here did he feel the haunting memories of the carefree boy, his boy, who had known no heartache, no tragedy, none of the losses that inevitably find their way to us as we travel

through this life, naively expecting the fairytale stories so often read to small children as they prepare to slumber.

How could everything look the same? How could the fresh smell of hay, the earthy scent of the animal inhabitants of this shelter, continue to fill his senses as they had from the time the boy he called Son, played in this sanctuary. He sees the boy, swinging joyously from the rope hanging in the hay mow, now only a distant memory, his long ago laughter echoing through the dusty air. Only then do the tears, and the untarnished and meaningless medals finally fall from his shaking hands, and his world, as he knows it, forever changed.