

## In The Swamp

Ma was fit to be tied when Pa stumbled in all liquored up that night.

"What in god's name have you done now, Henry?"

"Don't be mad, Elsie, I jest borrowed a little money from the liquor store is all."

That's when Ma went straight over and grabbed the twelve gauge. "Henry Simpson, I'm gonna blow yer head clean off. That'll put an end to yer sorry ass." But when he started to beggin' and pleadin' and tellin' her how sorry he was and that he only done it for her she repented of blowin' his head off. That's when he tells her that we need to go back into the swamp and lay low for a time.

This place we took up in was built on stilts above the water sos you couldn't reach it lessen you come in a boat. And that's just the way Pa wanted it. 'Cause he tol' me that things got kinda outta hand at that liquor store and he went and shot the lady at the register. He didn't want to but she sassed him and he was liquored up and all. I don't think he ever tol' Ma that he shot her or she woulda shot him.

Bein' out there weren't so bad really. We lived on catfish and crawdads mostly. Our little shack was mighty cool what with the cracks in the boards and the swampy breezes comin' up off the water. I got pretty good at floatin' around through the byways and dark places of that spooky swamp.

One day when Ma had gone to town to load up on supplies, I was standin' out on the front porch when I noticed somethin' big movin' in the water. It weren't too far away so I says, "Pa, somethin's movin' out there, close by."

"Wha..?"

Pa was all liquored up on account of Ma bein' gone.

"I said somethin's movin' out there."

Pa came up beside me smellin' god-awful, squintin' and scratchin' hisself.

I pointed to a place in the shade of one of them big willow trees. "Over there, somethin' big..." And right then it done splashed up agin.

Pa scrunched up his face and said, "What the hell was that?"

"I don't know," I says. And then Pa got this big stupid grin on his face and says, "Ya know what boy, I'll be damned if that ain't no big fat catfish. Enough food for a week!"

"Ma took the boat, Pa."

"Hot damn, we can't jest let it get away."

Pa was leanin' too close to the edge, tryin' to get a better look, and afore I could do anything, he slipped and fell over, makin' a big noisy splash in that dark, murky water.

That's when I saw that big thing head towards him... But it weren't no catfish.