

Screech Goes the Combine

by John Hosh

When I was eleven, my farmer father taught me to operate a tractor. When I was twelve, my father taught me to operate a grain truck (two-ton). My father wanted me to drive the truck alongside the combine while it was harvesting, and to take its load of grain *on-the-go*. My job during harvest was thus, when my father waved his arms, to drive alongside the self-propelled combine's left side and to match its speed and its heading. The combine, while picking up and threshing swath (a long line of stalks cut and laid down by a machine called a swather), would augur some threshed grain into the truck's box. When the combine's grain-tank had given all its grain to the truck, my father would wave me away. I would park the truck and wait for my father's next signal, or I would unload the truck at a granary.

Loading the truck on-the-go worked well on the morning that my father and I first tried the process. The process worked well through the afternoon and into the evening. Everything went well until nightfall. At almost 11:00 o'clock, my father drove the combine into the truck's side.



The truck's shudder, the screech of scraping metal and the combine's coming to a sudden standstill told me something had gone wrong. I stopped the truck immediately and shut it down. After grabbing a flashlight, I hurried out of the truck to see what had happened. By the light from the flashlight, I saw that the tube for the unloading-auger was dented and was resting against the truck's box.

I asked my father what he was doing. My father said he was teaching me a lesson. I asked what the lesson might be. He said the lesson was that, if he wanted to go some place, I should get out of the way. I said I did not know he was going to turn the combine toward the truck.



My father said he had sent out a brain wave that somebody was going to learn a lesson if he did not turn the truck away from the combine when the combine turned suddenly toward the truck. I did not know what a brain wave was but I knew my father liked to tell fibs. He

asked if I could not see that a whirlwind had pushed a patch of the swath to the side and toward the truck, and that he needed to swerve if he wanted to pick up the misplaced swath. I said *no*. I told my father I could not see the swath at all from inside the truck. I could not see the swath because the metal of the truck's cab and the metal of the combine's cutting-table blocked the swath from my view.

My father said he could not believe I did not know he was going to swing the combine's front end toward the truck. He said he could not believe I was unable to see what he was seeing. My father said he could not believe I would let the combine hit the truck. He suggested I, perhaps, was just being bull-headed and stubborn, and not paying attention to what I was doing. I said *no*. I said I had no idea what he was up to. I said, if the swath was not where it should be, he should stop the combine. I said he should go after the misplaced patches of swath after the combine had unloaded, when it was no longer possible for him to crash into the truck.



I guess my father thought the *pseudologoi* were watching him. I suppose he feared the gods would shun him if he went a whole day without doing something bizarre. It is sad so many people are like my father. It is sad so many people believe others can tune in to thoughts in the air. It is sad so many people are ready to be insulting and obnoxious to those who fail to do what Superman or Sauron might do if they were real. It is sad so many people do not think well and refuse to heed those who do.