

# Abandoned Farmhouse

BY TED KOOSER

He was a big man, says the size of his shoes  
on a pile of broken dishes by the house;  
a tall man too, says the length of the bed  
in an upstairs room; and a good, God-fearing man,  
says the Bible with a broken back  
on the floor below the window, dusty with sun;  
but not a man for farming, say the fields  
cluttered with boulders and the leaky barn.

A woman lived with him, says the bedroom wall  
papered with lilacs and the kitchen shelves  
covered with oilcloth, and they had a child,  
says the sandbox made from a tractor tire.  
Money was scarce, say the jars of plum preserves  
and canned tomatoes sealed in the cellar hole.  
And the winters cold, say the rags in the window frames.  
It was lonely here, says the narrow country road.

Something went wrong, says the empty house  
in the weed-choked yard. Stones in the fields  
say he was not a farmer; the still-sealed jars  
in the cellar say she left in a nervous haste.  
And the child? Its toys are strewn in the yard  
like branches after a storm—a rubber cow,  
a rusty tractor with a broken plow,  
a doll in overalls. Something went wrong, they say.

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Evidence

Man -  
big - shoes  
tall - bed  
God-fearing - Bible used  
not a farmer -  
boulders / leaky barn

Woman -  
lilacs on wall  
Shelves - lined  
plum preserves  
canned tomatoes

Child - toys  
sandbox strewn

Failed!

weed-choked yard  
stones - field  
still sealed jars - abandoned  
nervous?

Winters -  
cold - rags

who?

word choice  
connotation  
nervous  
strewn  
storm  
rusty  
broken



denotation - defines  
connotation - your feeling  
images in  
your mind

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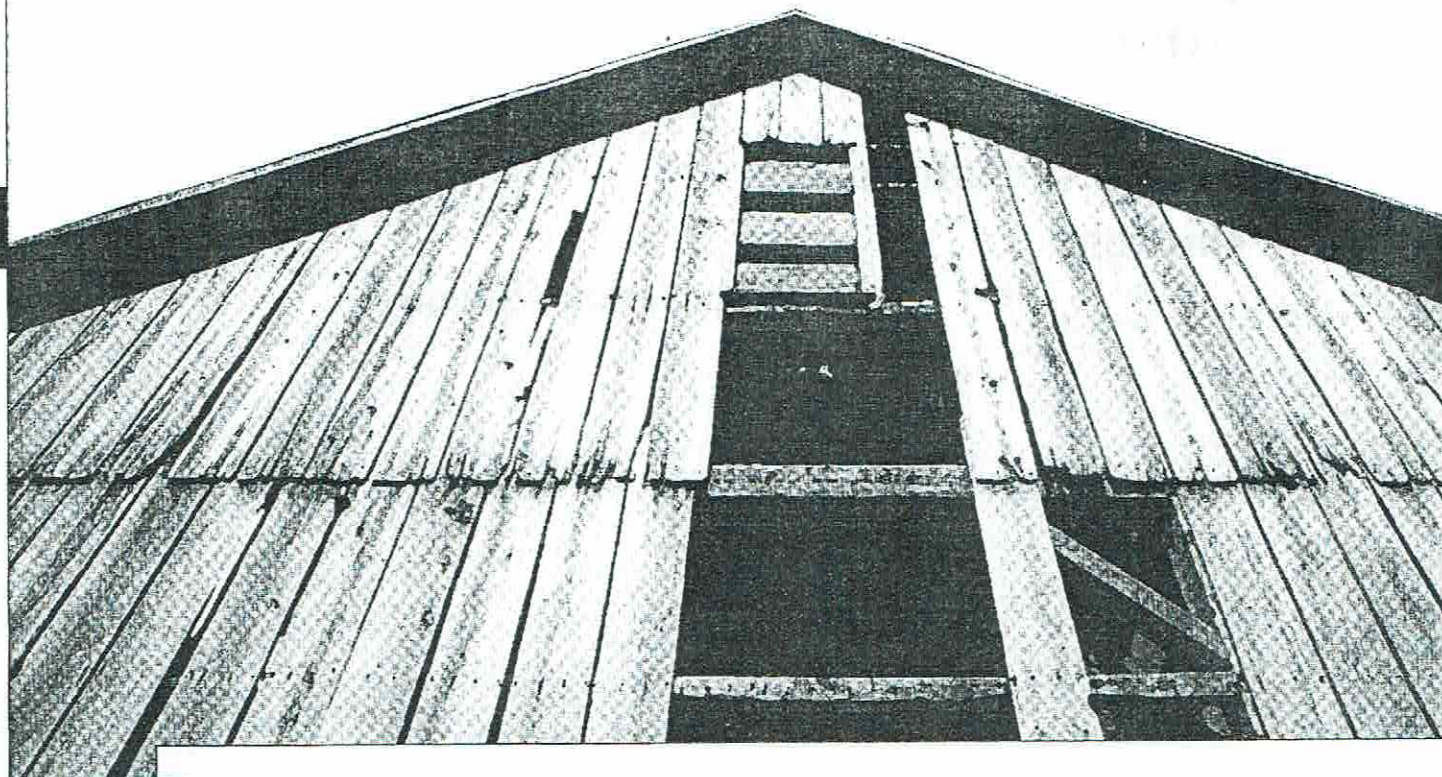
# Deserted Farm

Mark Vinz

Where the barn stood  
the empty milking stalls rise up  
like the skeleton of an ancient sea beast,  
exiled forever on shores of prairie.

Decaying timber moans softly in twilight;  
the house collapses like a broken prayer.  
Tomorrow the heavy lilac blossoms will open,  
higher than the roofbeams, reeling in wind.

22



Notes

Observations

Questions



# Deserted Farm

Mark Vinz

exile

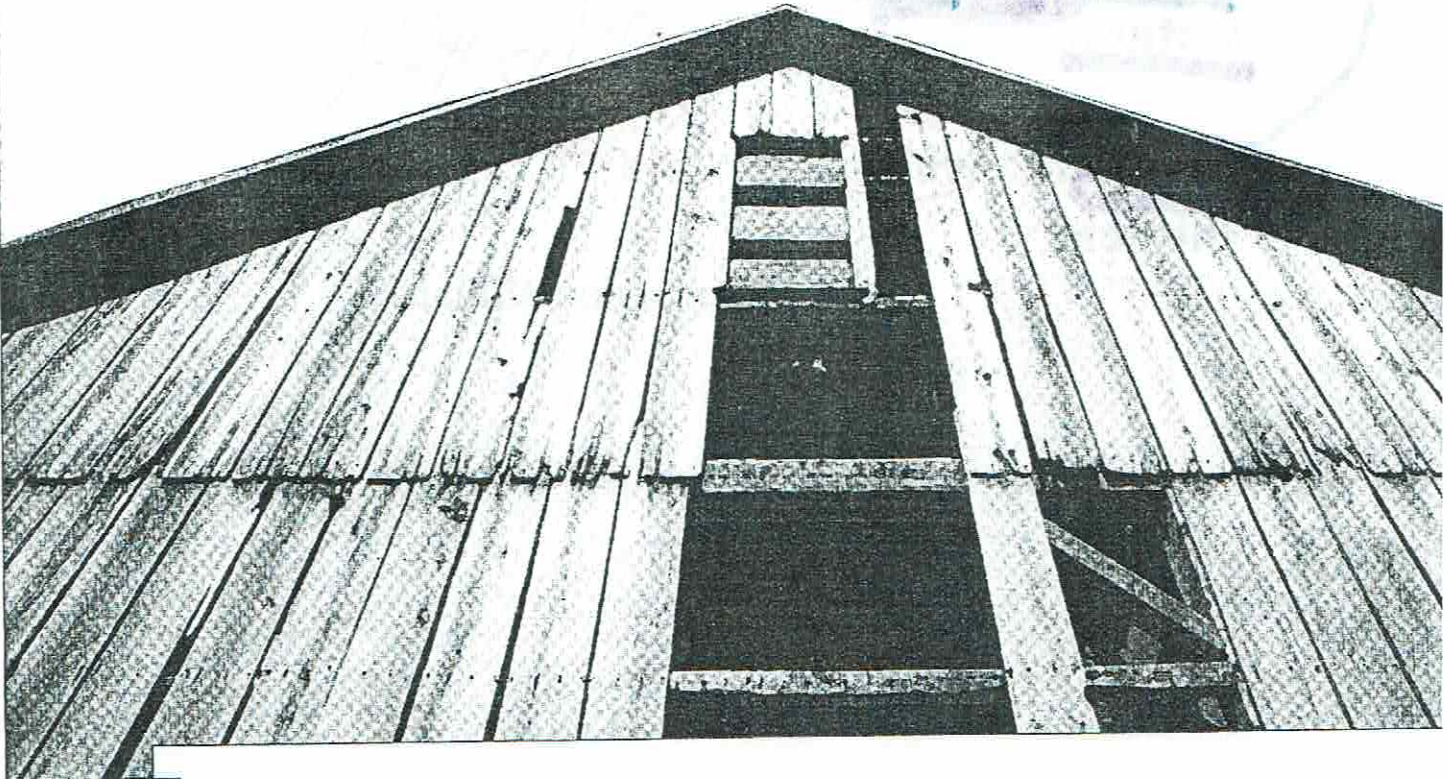
Where the barn stood  
the empty milking stalls rise up  
like the skeleton of an ancient sea beast,  
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dead  
bare

personification

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Mark Vinz

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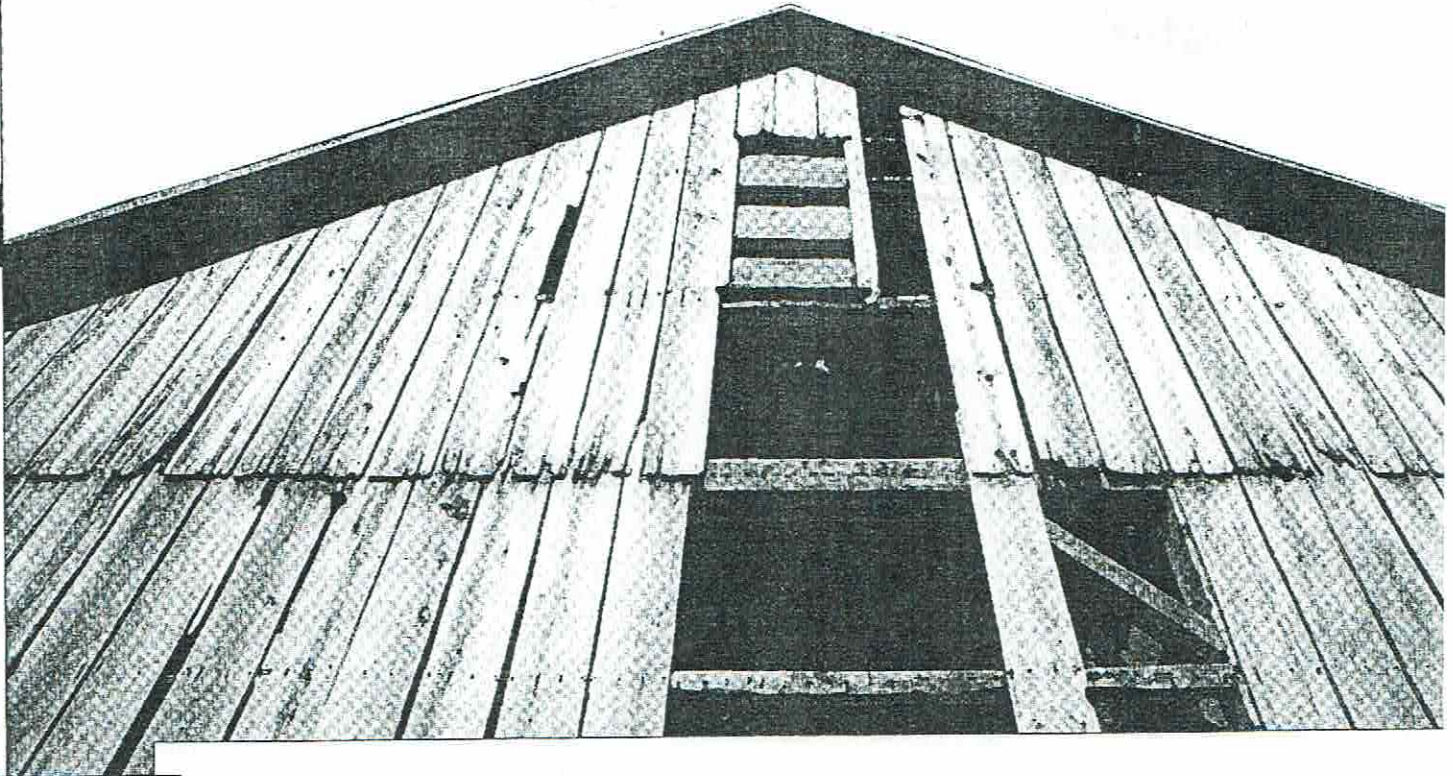
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But Tomorrow the heavy lilac blossoms will open,  
higher than the roofbeams, reeling in wind.

6 pm  
not welcome - bones

personification

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Notes ►  
Observations ►  
Questions ►