

Spirit of the Orchard

By Unknown

Mrs. Lou Cooper, my uncle's wife, a large stout woman, told this as a true ghost story, in Cleveland County, Arkansas, 1877. A slaveowner named Box had died in the big farmhouse—Box's place—and my stepfather rented the place and stayed there one year, made a crop. Good land, but he didn't stay there but one year. I used to hear something walking—tap, tap, tap on the floor, like a chicken, come right up to the bed.

The thing that brought the matter to a head was my aunt coming to the field one day to get fruit. We had a large orchard, ten acres or more (forty acres fenced in, and half of it was in fruit). And he'd let people come and get the fruit without charge, apples, peaches, plums. But four white Indian peach trees, big ones, he had marked with a string for family use, and told them not to take those. She said as soon as she pulled the fruit she heard this loud groaning at the house. She pulled half a dozen or more of those large peaches and put them in the bottom of her basket. She took the basket and went on to the plum orchard. He had it fenced off so the hogs wouldn't get in. The groaning stopped at the house. But as soon as she put the basket down the plums began to rain down. I never have seen such an orchard; the trees were so thick they just overlapped. (Box made his slaves put them out; sometimes you got two different kinds of apples off one tree.) She didn't know how she got out of there; she heard the groaning up above in the tree, and the basket was filled (so that looks like the spirits had action). She didn't come to herself till she was a quarter of a mile from the house (the orchard was back and east of the house) going home, and she never did come back. She was almost frightened to death when she got home. She told that because she was almost out of her wits.

We moved away the next year.