

"It killed him," she said.

She repeated, "It just came and killed him, right out of the sky," crying uncontrollably. She buried her head into Paula's breast, her nearest neighbor, the one who had seen the ambulance careening down the lane and came rushing back to tell her after seeing the ghastly scene on the other side of town.

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Earlier, the sunrise coloring the low clouds a fiery orange and red, Pete slurped his oatmeal, soggy with too much milk—he liked it that way whenever she complained about wasting the milk, he didn't really, just said he did—as he shuffled through yesterday's mail piled on the corner of the kitchen table. Mostly advertisement flyers on top;

*Your house was selected to be the first on the block for the revolutionary new siding material.*

Another one;

*Free installation with purchase of a new heating system. Plus another 50% OFF if you sign up by February 30!*

He made a little half laugh, half clearing his throat sound in disgust, wondering.

*Why kind of fool do they think I am?*

He quit looking at the flyers and glanced at the other envelopes below while spooning in another mouthful of soupy mush. A bill from the cable company, he grimaced. He knew what would be listed in the details pages. He knew he had watched too many movies—not the kind included in his bundled cable, internet and home phone package, some of them the adults only videos—and hoped she didn't look too closely. He pawed through the rest; the regular monthly bills were all there, one from Sears, Macy's, Ikea. They went on, all familiar. Their budget was straining to stay afloat.

She took care of the bills. She tried to anyway, but the envelopes would eventually pile up on top of the dining room china cabinet, unopened, crowding out the forest of family pictures arranged around its faded varnished wood top. It was their only nice piece of mahogany furniture left, done in the Federal Style someone once told him. It was handed down through his family for generations—he wasn't sure how many, he'd never bothered much about his ancestry line. It had always been there sitting in the same place, proudly displayed but slightly askew due to the ever increasing slant of the old wood floor. The paint on the old plaster wall behind it was four shades darker than the rest of the wall; no one had bothered to paint the room in several generations.

His ancestors had started in this little community as farmers, with multiple generations passing through the old two story, balloon framed house—the old method of wall stud framing, used for over eight score years and then abandoned in the fifties. He knew the particulars of home construction, it being part of his craft. But that ended after his grandfather, his son, Pete's dad, trying his hand at sales with the local *Ferguson's Farm Equipment and Supply*. But he was never more than a mediocre salesman at best, never got the *Salesman of the Month* award, putting the family homestead at risk frequently, but somehow they managed on the meager salesman salary. Pete's dad always seemed content though, with his choice to abandon the family business, positing frequent declarations of reasoning for the abrupt and unexpected switch.

*Better than sticking my hand in a cow's rear end*, he would say—that's what you had to do sometimes during birthing, it was quite gross. Pete remembered seeing it a few times as a toddler—before his dad's career jump.