

That Thing in the Sky

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Chapter One: The Thing

It's been ten years now, since it all happened. I think about those first few days a lot - how innocent I was, how little I actually knew.

I promised myself I would write it all down, and maybe pass on my stories to others.

I would like to tell you how planet earth is right now - how much our lives have changed, but instead,

I want to go back to when I was ten years old. I want you to see how little we actually knew about 'The Explorers'.

This is not a scary story.

It's not meant to be anyway.

It's a story about Margaret and me - and how we saw the world before everything turned upside down.

February 24th, 2016.

I don't think I had ever seen anything like it before - not in real life anyway.

I wondered if Margaret saw it as well.

The two of us trudged through the freshly fallen snow past a row of cottonwood trees. The stench from the cows a couple fields over drifted through the air like Carson Bumbler's sweaty gym shoes.

Our school bus picked us up and dropped us off at the end of the road in front of the Hickory Farmhouse. That's where Mr. Hickory lived with his wife and son named, Sheldon.

Sheldon was cool.

He had a furry lip and chewed on straw all the time.

Maybe he saw it.

"What are you looking at?" Margaret asked.



I pointed at the sky. There wasn't a cloud anywhere. Just something strange. "That," I replied, gripping tightly onto the strap of my backpack. "That thing right there." Margaret lifted her head up and brushed the strawberry blonde locks out of her face. She had been my best friend since the third grade. She had the

most hair in our school. Not that I could count it or anything. There was just a lot on her head. I sometimes wondered if she really needed to wear a winter hat because all that hair probably kept her head warm anyway. "That shiny thing?" she replied. "Are you pointing at that shiny thing?"

"Yeah, I am. What is it?"

"I don't know." She rubbed her chin with her mitts. "What I do know is that it's polluting our sky. Did you know airplane fumes affect our climate? It's true. You should look it up." The shiny object hovered over the silos beside the big red Hickory barn. It sputtered and spit out black liquid into the air.

"That doesn't look like an airplane," I said.

I only knew because planes had big wings and left giant white cloud lines in the sky - like chalk on the sidewalk. Usually the sky was filled with lines.

But there was nothing that day.

Nothing except that thing.

Argh.

What was it?

"Bailey?" Margaret tapped me on the shoulder.

"Yeah

"What's wrong with it? The shiny object circled the barn, knocking over the weathervane on the roof. Sheldon was out front on his driveway clearing the snow away.
"I don't know," I replied. "Maybe it's sick."
Margaret snorted and slapped me on the arm. "Silly, planes don't get sick. Only living things get sick."
A loud bang echoed through the farm fields and out over Hidden Trail Forest.
That was the name of our town.
Or village.
Or space.
Hidden Trail.
I only said that because it was small.
Maybe that was why people called it 'Hidden'.
We had a corner store and a fire station with one truck. I wondered for the longest time why 'The Explorers' decided to attack us. After all, we didn't really have all that much to offer.
If only what I knew now, I knew back then.
Anyway, Margaret's house was about a kilometre down the road from the Hickory Farm and mine was a little bit farther.
Considering we were only ten at the time, it took us about an hour to walk home each day.
We sometimes had to feed the cows because Mrs. Hickory worked in the big city and Mr. Hickory had problems with his eyes. That would tack on another hour to our walk. Especially when it snowed and we wanted to build snowmen.
Or snow-cows.
Man, those were the days.
"Do you think it's lost?" Margaret picked up some snow and licked it like an ice cream cone. She let it sit on the end of her tongue for a second before swallowing.
"Lost? Why do you think that?" I asked.
The little flying thing zig-zagged over the farm again, swooping down near the trees.
It hummed.
Like a microwave.
"I'm scared." Margaret clung to my arm. She bit the snow chunks off her mitts.
Over by the farmhouse Sheldon dropped his shovel and stepped out onto the yard. He was a big kid, like three of me tall (at least at the time). He was supposed to be in the tenth grade but instead he worked on the farm.
"I'm scared too," I replied.
Another bang blasted out into the sky, shaking the ground and knocking snow off the branches. I covered my ears.

A giant purple cloud of smoke burst out from the sides as the object shot back up into the air.
For a moment it hovered, high over the silos and barn. Then there was silence.
It seemed to just rest in the sky. Like it was waiting for something.
"What's it doing?" Margaret asked.
"Maybe it's thinking," I replied.
Margaret slapped me again. "Silly, little shiny flying things don't think."
"How do you know?"
"Because it's not living. It needs to have a brain to think and only living things have brains. Look it up."
I blocked my eyes from the sun with my hand. A small black splotch landed on the road in front of me, melting the snow around it. "Computers think," I replied. "My iPad thinks."
Margaret slapped me again on the arm. "Shush. I'm trying to listen to it."
Another black drop fell to the ground.
Sheldon looked over in our direction. He could see us now. He pointed up at the object.
"You see it?" he shouted.
I waved and nodded. "We see it!"
The hum got louder, like a storm from far away, slowly creeping up on us. My stomach turned, like I had just swallowed a carton of eggs.
A painful shriek punched me in the ears - shaking the ground.
I pulled Margaret into a snowbank and closed my eyes.