The Skies Opened with Malice

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Dark clouds rolled in over the fields and filled the sky, blocking out any glimpse of the stars or the moon. Fairbanks County would be covered in a pitch-black canvas tonight. The storm was drifting closer and closer and thunder rolled across the old wheat fields and silenced the croaking frogs near the pond. The night was lightless and roared in agitation, so I wasn't surprised when about an hour after bedtime I heard my son Daniel yell, “Daddy!”

I lay sleepless in the otherwise empty king-sized bed staring at the ceiling. For a moment I wanted to believe that I wasn't the only one laying there, but I knew that it wasn't true even before I turned my head and looked at Kadie’s empty pillow beside me. Her place had been empty for almost three years, and even though I hated being reminded of her, no one could replace her side of the bed.

Daniel called for me almost every night now, especially when he couldn't see the stars or the glow of the moon out his window. Most nights he dreamt of some terrible monster, and each nightmare came accompanied by the darkness. That's what he's really afraid of, the dark, but I assured myself that he'd grow out of it, kids usually do. I reached over to my nightstand and snagged the alarm clock in the dark. Just as I thought, it's 10 p.m., an hour after his bedtime. At least his nightmares are on schedule.

I lifted the blankets and swung my feet onto the floor. The cold wood shocked my bare skin so I slipped on my slippers. Without turning the lights on, I rose from the bed and staggered through the room, almost knocking over the dusty framed photographs of the three of us, back when things were happy and Kadie and I could still smile together. It had been almost three years since the accident and the divorce. I hadn't seen Kadie in about 6 months, not since she got out of jail.

The doctors told me she had been suicidal. She was drunk and had taken a handful of pills. She refused to tell me why she took Daniel with her; she would stare at the floor and wait until a doctor or policeman led her away or until I stormed out. It took them eight hours to find Kadie's car. She had driven off the road and crashed into a tree. She was passed out against the steering wheel the entire time from a head wound. The