Allison raised her shovel. She hit it softly at first. *Wap!* It bounced. The bones in its undeveloped body were shattered. There could hardly be anything left to break. But it continued to rasp through little reluctant breaths. Tears began to form in Allison’s eyes, and she hit it harder, leveling the shovel behind her head and bringing it down with all the force she could bear. *Wap!* It bounced a little higher. Its chest heaved painfully.

She had never killed anything before. She was someone who trapped spiders under little plastic cups and released them from the window. Joel chopped the heads off snakes that invaded her garden. She couldn’t stand to see the body flop as the head ejected. She had only watched him kill one, finding an excuse, which she couldn’t remember now, to go back to the house while he weeded out the rest. Then, last spring, Joel had talked about setting mousetraps out, but she didn’t let him. They had fought after a mouse chewed through an electrical wire and caused a small fire in the walls.