

Obituary 01: Wyatt Died

Obituary Writer (Voiceover): Hello. I am the Obituary Writer of this lovely town of Crestfall, Idaho. And this... is *Death by Dying*.

[quirky, pizzicato, welcome-to-this-odd-small-town-world music]

[typewriter keys, the bell dings, the carriage slides, more typewriting]

Wyatt Hudson, 47, died late Sunday evening as the stars began to fill the black abyss that is the sky. Wyatt, as everyone most certainly knows, was the local farmer of bluestem grass in the farmlands of Crestfall. Wyatt was basically everyone's favorite person on the planet. I'm not kidding. I never joke. Except when I do. But in this instance, I do not.

In the month of April alone, Wyatt revived 35 kittens from the precipice of death. He sky-dived with dolphins. He bowled overhand. He saved a boy from perishing in a recent mud storm. He baked everyone cookies in town every time someone died, which gradually made townsfolk wish more people would start dying off. Mrs. Shambles's dog caught on fire again...

[flames ignite]

And Wyatt extinguished the flames valiantly by swinging the dog around over his head.

[dog yelps]

The dog later developed telekinetic powers.

[futuristic echoing dog bark]

Wyatt recycles. Yes. Wyatt Hudson was freaking awesome.

The coroner is missing, so there was no official autopsy of the charming farmer, but we're all pretty sure we know what a gunshot looks like. It looks like a giant hole in his stomach from which blood and other viscous things have egressed. According to Wyatt's wife, Bernard, the story goes something like this:

[ominous twinkling piano music]

OW VO: They had been driving up the nameless dirt road that leads to their ramshackle home. Dust was launched into the air by their tires, leaving a cloud of dirt mist behind them. They were returning from the all-you-can-eat buffet at the Carlson and Carlson's Delicious Pastry Shop where the Carlsons serve delicious pastries. On Sunday nights, they serve bottomless slices of every pie imaginable: rhubarb, chicken pot, mince, and cherry.

They exited their vehicle, gravel crunching beneath their feet. And that's when they heard the rustling from the field of overly-tall bluestem grass. From the crops emerged the local Wild Man, a feral man who lived in the Dark Woods, surviving on a diet of mud and sticks. He also happened to work part time as a stock manager at the Bush'n'Hobby downtown, where Crestfallens get all of their bushes... and most of their hobbies. But for the most part, he was utterly deranged. In any case, he emerged from the bluestem grass in an ecstatic fervor –

Wild Man: AHYEEYAAAYEE!!!

OW VO: And promptly shot Wyatt in the stomach with a rusty revolver before cartwheeling away with surprising speed and agility. Case closed. Bernard's story was undeniably airtight. The pie *is* verifiably bottomless. And it is delicious. The Crestfallen Wild Man was found later the next day and was arrested with no resistance, the Wild Man saying with complete clarity, "Yeah, I figured."

Husband, father, and life of the proverbial party, Wyatt Hudson was a good man. Some men are great, but few can be considered good. Truly good. That title goes to a special few. He was generous, kind-hearted, and danced like nobody was watching. He is survived by his wife, Bernard, and their three kids, Denise, Chester, and Wallis. To clarify, Denise, Chester, and Wallis are goats.

And now, the condolences. The Carlsons send their condolences. They say...

[upbeat, jazzy, commercial music]

"In the mood for something delicious? Look no further than Carlson and Carlson's Delicious Pastry Shop, where you'll find the most flakey, fluffy, buttery goodness baked into a baked good sent straight from the heavens." Thank you, Carlson Family.

The Bush'n'Hobby also sends their condolences. They say: "Need bushes? You got it. Need a hobby? You... kind of got it, you can probably find it here, we're not sure, there are so many hobbies, it's hard to keep track of. If you collect stamps, you might walk away disappointed. We have them, it's just – you collect stamps. We also apologize for employing the deranged Wild Man who allegedly murdered Wyatt Hudson. That's probably how he bought the gun in the first place. Yeah. Sorry about that. Collect guns? We got 'em."

OW VO: Condolences also brought to you by the local butcher. He says: “Thank you for the goats!” I’m sure if anyone were to grind his precious goats into slabs of delicious meat, Wyatt would want you to be the one to do it. On behalf of the Hudson Family, I thank you.

[the sound of farmland, crickets, a breeze in the bluegrass]

Did I say case closed? My mistake, that was misleading. Because what is a tale about a kind, flawless farmer without a woeful twist? Passed the Hudson’s ramshackle home, passed the shed and stable, over yonder through the fields, is an abandoned silo. While I was innocently snooping around the Hudson’s property without their permission, I discovered the door to the silo was padlocked. I thought this... odd, so I climbed the rungs running vertically up the silo until I reached the roof, through which there was a small opening.

[subtly dark, droning music]

Below, at the very bottom of the empty silo, was a man. He looked up at me weakly, muttering with all the energy he had left in him, a single phrase: “Please don’t hurt me.”

[dramatic impact in music to accent this startling discovering]

Naturally, before alerting the authorities, I got an exclusive interview with the trapped man, just for you, oh curious readers.

[click, recording on an old handheld recorder, their voices echo through the silo, a faint white-noise buzz from the retro recording]

OW: Excuse me, sir, are you okay?

Gert: Could be better! Could be better if I’m gonna be honest. Do you have a phone?

OW: No, I’m sorry, I don’t have one on me.

Gert: Do you know where the police station is?

OW: The police are highly ineffective in Crestfall.

Gert: I don’t really know any other emergency services... Get the firemen! Get the Firemen! Wyatt has imprisoned me here and it’s just terrible. Okay?

OW: Wyatt was keeping you imprisoned here?

Gert: Oh yeah, many years... I can assume. Cause I don’t really remember anything.

OW: Wyatt was one of the most cherished men in Crestfall.

Gert: (*Laughs*) Ha! Wyatt was the Ugliest. Man. Alive. I mean that with his soul, okay? You can't *imagine* the things he used to do to me. Wanna hear? It's pretty bad...

OW: Yes, go on.

Gert: He'd take rats, and he'd bundle them up with socks, and he'd slap me in the face day in and day out. He used to pull out a bag of balloons and he'd pull a balloon out and he'd blow it up! And he'd take a needle and he'd *taunt* me with popping the balloon. One time I woke up, and he was already opening my eyes, and when I tried to blink the salt out of them, he wouldn't let me. One day, I was just minding my own business, and he just came over and he said I smelled bad. What could I do about it?!? One time I woke up, and he was... Do I have to say it... Fine, I will... He brought a giant china doll down and he set it up to stare at me. It's very frightening, it's right over there. He put a ladder in the silo, but he chained my feet to the floor, and he'd just go up and down it the whole day.

OW: Do you have any idea why Wyatt would be keeping you here?

Gert: You see, karma is a weird concept. When you do enough good, you gotta do an equal amount of evil to reach that sweet, sweet true neutral spot. And y'know, you might have seen his good side, but I'm the bad side.

OW: What about Wyatt's wife, Bernard?

Gert: Oooohhhh, Bernard! Who I have *never* met! And I am not *expecting* to meet any time soon. But she sounds like a lovely woman. The loveliest woman ever.

OW: Do you remember your name?

Gert: See that's where we get to some complications. Because I don't remember anything, really.

OW: I'm gonna call you Gert.

Gert: Gert's not the best name. Anything else?

OW: Gert, do you remember anything about who you were?

Gert: Well, if I could guess at anything, I was a man that didn't deserve the name Gert.

OW: That's okay, Gert.

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Gert: Please? Wyatt is an evil man. You *have* to tell people of this. He cannot have such a good legacy attached to such a bad guy.

OW: I will certainly do that. And I will find someone to get you out of this silo. I shall return for you.

Gert: Wonderful! Beautiful! Ok? You're a beautiful man!

OW: Thank you, Gert.

Gert: I don't like Gert. I don't like that.

OW: Goodbye Gert.

Gert: You didn't have to keep calling me Gert, y'know.

[click, recording turns off]

OW VO: I was confused. How could it be that Wyatt Hudson was the most cherished man in Crestfall, and yet was a kidnapper and torturer in his free time? This couldn't be. And yet there it was. On my way back into town, the Craigmire Cannon was fired –

[cannon fire]

Signaling the death of yet another beloved resident of Crestfall. I counted to five...

[cannonball whizzing by]

... and then ducked.

[cannonball hitting the ground]

The cannon hasn't been moved since the Civil War, and, well, the cannonballs have to go somewhere, so they all land in Wyatt Hudson's field. All around me like rocks in a quarry were a decades worth of cannonballs, some deteriorating from age. Over the years they had created a clean-cut clearing in the middle of Wyatt's field. And so life goes on, just as death does.

[a bustling crowd]

OW VO: The farmer's market was in full swing in the town square. Fruits and vegetables and grains of all kinds. Pastries and pies. Goat meat. Etc. There was Geraldine Portage, who sold "un-pickled pickles," which she refused to call cucumbers. There was Elder Isaiah Goodwin, a deacon at the Church of Right Here Right Now, who was passing out pamphlets on barn animals within the scriptures – for those so inclined. Bryndle Blackwell sold exactly one apricot a week, placing it at the exact center of her table.

When the farmer's market opens, everyone rushes to her booth, eager to be the one to claim the sole apricot, because when it's gone, it's gone, and Bryndle Blackwell closes up shop. Rumor has it, her apricots grant eternal life, but considering the sheer amount of deaths that have been occurring in Crestfall lately, I think it's safe to say that that myth has been debunked. George A. Spuddakker was a potato farmer and a well-known bootlegger. Every year he produces the most amazing potatoes that resemble famous people throughout history. Elvis, Alexander the Great, the white-man's historically inaccurate depiction of Jesus.

Despite all of this fierce competition, Wyatt's bluestem grass still wins out every week. No one is quite sure what you are supposed to do with bluestem grass, but Wyatt's mesmerizing charm drew people in. Even in death, people bought his grass by the pound-full. His booth is now run by his wife, Bernard, and sometimes his booth is run by no one at all, because Bernard has better things to do apparently, and customers *still* come, ready to spend ridiculous amounts of money for grass they don't even know what to do with.

My mind was elsewhere, however, as I wandered through the farmer's market. Who was Gert? How does one identify a man who can't remember who he is? And that's when I saw him. *Gert*. He was stepping out from the Carlson and Carlson's Delicious Pastry Shop, munching on a mince pie. He seemed completely fine, and more importantly, he *wasn't* in the sillo... We locked eyes... and he dropped his mince pie.

[*splat!*]

A damn waste of mince pie. This man was up to no good. He bolted, pushing passed the flood of pedestrians as though he were attempting to swim upstream. I darted after him, my wild curiosity getting the better of me. Through the crowd and beyond the market, I followed him with impressive speed for a man of my physique. Gert raced across the fields, ravaged by the recent mud storms, before diving into the Dark Woods.

[*the most ominous, droning music*]

The sun seemed to vanish entirely the second I entered the Woods. There was only night in this place, only darkness. Gert was gone. I turned to head back, but the edge of the Woods was no longer where it was when I entered. All around me was nothing but endless forest.

[wind whistling softly]

OW VO: The trees seemed to breathe as the wind brought life to their branches – in and out, in and out. The smell of rotten leaves permeated the air. A screech owl whinnied in the distance.

[screeeeech]

I lit a match –

[strike!]

And the darkness retreated by its light, but only by a few mere inches in front of me. Wandering for a day and an age, I sat beneath a slouching willow and found myself missing the haunting howl of the Wild Man. At least it would have been something familiar. I hoped they were treating him well in the local jail. The lower my match burned, the closer the darkness approached me, and I began to wonder if this is what death feels like. An encroaching shadow. Then I started thinking about Karen. Oh Karen. Maybe I should have stayed with her even though she cheated on me with that two-timing bastard Jimmy Hawkins. We could have made it work. We could have gone to couple's therapy. The sex was wild. The night reminded me of my loneliness and how purposeless my life would be if it weren't for my obituary column... Oh Karen. Just then, my match was blown out by some unforeseen force...

[whoooo... silence]

I was plunged into an indescribable blackness. Everything became quiet. Not the wheezing chirp of a diseased bird. Not a scuttling possum. Even the wind had grown silent.

[BOOM! dramatic, dark, freaky music]

Before me appeared a pair of glowing eyes. Beautiful and terrifying. Perfect circles. Swirling irises. I tossed my doused match and took out my phone, turning on the flashlight setting.

[phone unlocking]

Despite the direct light, its figure remained a silhouette, but its form took shape. The antlers of a stag. The outline of an elongated face – thin, long, and serene. The stalking hunch of a coyote prepared to attack its prey. My light snapped off and the ground opened up beneath me like a gaping maw. I felt my body fall and hit a springy surface – I was in my bed. What madness was this? As an Obituary Writer, knowing the intricacies of life and death is the same as knowing the difference between dreams and reality. And yet something lingered, circling my mind like a piranha in a fish bowl – I felt as though I had just awoken from a nightmare. Dawn broke over the horizon. It was morning. The *next morning*.

[*a bustling crowd once more*]

OW VO: In the town square, folks were purchasing their week's worth of groceries. The local butcher was selling his newest and finest selection of meats, with the exception of Chester the goat –

Chester: BAHHH.

OW VO: Who he had bonded with and couldn't bring himself to kill. He had looked deeply into Chester's eyes, and it felt like home. Denise and Willis, on the other hand, were total goners. That's when I saw Gert *again*, eating another mince pie. He was calling out for anyone to listen.

Gert: Hey everyone! You should check out the *abandoned silo* down at Hudson's old farm. I hear there some seriously *shady business* going down over there.

OW VO: But no one was listening.

Townsperson: *I GOT IT! IT'S MIIIIINE.*

OW VO: Someone had just acquired Bryndle Blackwell's single apricot and a brawl ensued.

[*angry mob*]

Gert: Hey everyone!

Old Hag: *Shut up! Shut up about the farm!*

Gert: ... Okay.

OW VO: I looked at him and he looked at me...

[*splat!*]

And he dropped his pie. Another damn waste of mince pie. *Who did this man think he was?*

A man trying to steal the apricot for his own moved in front of me, and by the time he passed, Gert was gone once more.

[*The-mystery-is-coming-to-a-climax type of music*]

The Hudson's farm was just as I had left it: peaceful, tranquil, a farmer's paradise. I approached the abandoned silo with an overzealous energy, eager to prove that what I had just seen was real, eager to find Gert missing. I climbed the rungs, clambered across the roof, thrust my head into the hole at the very top – only to see Gert emerging from a trapdoor.

OW: You!

Gert: You!

Bernard: *You.*

OW VO: From behind me came a voice, and before I could glimpse who it was I promptly toppled through the opening, tumbling into the metal tower. I landed right on top of Gert, and the two of us went sprawling. As I came to my senses, I could hear footsteps from the roof, climbing back down the silo. I scrambled to my feet, my eyes adjusting to the darkness. Gert was out cold. Silence... There – the door being unlocked.

[tink, tink, click, CLANG, creeaaaakkkk]

There before me, with a sawed-off shotgun trained right at my chest, was none other than Wyatt's wife, Bernard. I cannot stress enough that Wyatt's wife's name is Bernard. Her name is *Bernard*. Her finger hovered over the trigger.

Bernard: You okay, honey bunches?

OW VO: No reply from Gert.

Bernard: Hey... I know you. You're that Oh-bitch-ooo-airy writer who came around here last week snoopin' like you owned the place.

OW: And you're Wyatt's wife.

Bernard: Aye.

OW: And that's... honey bunches? Were you cereal enthusiasts?

Bernard: No, we were lovers. Mighty fine lovers at that. Thirteen years I've been waiting to be with this man.

OW: Did you... did you kill your husband?

Bernard: No more than I'm gonna kill you.

OW: Are you going to kill me?

Bernard: Yes.

OW: So you did kill him.

Bernard: Yes. I had to, see. He found out about Marian and I.

OW VO: Oh. It would appear Gert's name was Marian.

OW: And he got violent?

Bernard: Worse. He had the nerve of bein' all sweet about it. The man didn't have a bad bone in his body, it was enough to drive you mad. Couldn't *something* make you angry for once in your damn life? Anything? He offered Marian the guest bedroom and everything. I couldn't take it anymore.

OW: So you shot him.

Bernard: Boom. Right in the stomach.

OW: So Gert - I mean Marian was never being held hostage here?

Marian: Not in the slightest.

OW VO: Marian got to his feet.

Marian: See, with a reputation like Wyatt's, people might not take too kindly to a broad like Bernard shacking up with some man from the other side of the tracks. Wyatt deserved to be the bad guy for once. Of course, no one bothered to look in the silo 'cept you. So that kinda backfired.

Bernard: Alright, that's enough. He don't need to know none of this.

OW: Please.

Marian: Don't worry, baby, I got this.

Bernard: No!

[*gun shot echoing*]

OW VO: The following events are so intricate, tumultuous, and unnecessarily convoluted that the only way for me to properly explain is from an omnipresent perspective. At the very moment I was staring into the mouth of Bernard's shotgun, contemplating my own mortality, Crestfall Law Enforcement was delivering a consolation pie to the Hudson's residence. Crestfall Law Enforcement has a bushy mustache, with flecks of chocolate-glazed donut in its bristled hairs. He walks like a water balloon with legs and smells faintly of old biscotti. Crestfall Law Enforcement knocked on the front door just as Bernard fired her gun.

[simultaneously: knock knock knock, BANG!]

So he did not hear the shot. Meanwhile, time slowed to the trickle of molasses as I watched the next few seconds unfold. Marian approached me from behind. Bernard pulled the trigger. I side stepped. And in went the bullet, right into *Marian's* stomach.

Marian: Ow!

OW VO: Right where Wyatt had been shot. Bernard tried to fire her gun again but the mechanism jammed, creating a tiny spark in the chamber –

[gross bloody explosion]

Bernard: *(understated yelp)*

OW VO: And blowing her hand clean off. Just as Bernard's hand blew off, Crestfall Law Enforcement sneezed.

Crestfall Law Enforcement: *ACHOO!*

OW VO: He looked down at the pie. Hm. Raspberry. He's allergic to raspberry. *Why did I buy a raspberry pie*, he thought. Worried she would be caught even more redhanded... ahem, than she already was, Bernard ran from the silo and into the fields of bluestem grass. And that is when the Craigmire Cannon went off –

[cannon fire]

In recognition of Wyatt's recently deceased goats. The cannon ball soared overhead like a marble rolling across the sky. Bernard ran, the cannon ball flew. Bernard ran, the cannon ball spiraled downwards...

[what one would naturally hear when a cannonball hits someone's head and decapitates them in the distance]

OW VO: And the two met in the clearing. And with that, Bernard's head joined the rest of the cannonballs in the field. Crestfall Law Enforcement stood on the Hudson's front porch, having seen none of this, but he sniffed the air, with a vague sense that something of note just took place.

The Wild Man was released from the town jail, found innocent for the murder of Wyatt Hudson. His assumption had been that he was being arrested for accidentally killing a possum around the time of Wyatt's death, which is why he was so willing to comply with law enforcement, his conscience weighing heavily with guilt. He had thought the death penalty was a little harsh. The Wild Man approached me.

Wild Man: (*mumbling*) Beware The Shadow... You've seen it, haven't you? In the Dark Woods. I can see it in your eyes. Stay away from those woods... please? And one last thing: Mambo jambo down by the piano patch. (*grumbling*)

OW VO: This unsettling message struck me. I wasn't too sure what the piano patch part had to do with anything, but the beginning of his comment was clear: what I had seen in the forest was real. The Wild Man threw himself into the bramble and dematerialized into the fog of the Dark Woods.

That night, I returned to the Hudson's home and sat quietly on their deserted porch. Wyatt's splattered blood was fading to a dull brown. In the town square, a processional was being held in honor of Wyatt. Everyone cried in unison like a mournful orchestra. The Slapper arrived to confirm he was indeed dead, even though he had been quite dead for several days. Her job is to confirm that the deceased are indeed deceased, charging 60 bucks a corpse to slap them and see if something happens. Nothing has ever happened, but The Slapper has managed to become one of the richest people in Crestfall. Everyone crossed their fingers as she slid off her red velvet gloves and brought her hand down upon Wyatt's cheek with enough force to kill him all over again.

[*slap!*]

Nothing happened. So she slapped him again.

[*SLAP!*]

And again. And again –

[*so many slaps, over and over again*]

Desperately trying to bring Wyatt Hudson, the most amazing human being to ever grace this godforsaken earth, back to life. The Slapper had to be forcibly removed from the scene because she couldn't stop slapping Wyatt, but alas – she had done her job. Wyatt was dead. And that was that. I believe Crestfall's very own Pastor Jeff said it best in his sermon at Wyatt's funeral.

[organ music]

Pastor Jeff: Do you have a junk drawer at home? I know I do. Filled with uh... toe nail clippers, rubber bands, loaves of bread, discarded pens, canned peaches, the complete box set of all eight seasons of the hit television show *Lost*, hair scrunchies, twine, lefty scissors, 87 cents in change, (mostly pennies, a couple dimes), tickets to the carnival, dolphin puppets, pictures of your aunt, mayonnaise packets, your friend's mixed tape he claims to be “**straight fire**”. Our drawers don't start out full. No! They start out empty. *Hmm*. As we move through our days, we fill them up with little bits and bots, accumulated over time, and then we leave them all behind for someone else to clean out. What is that? It's what I call *legacy*. What kind of legacy are you gonna leave? What kind of junk drawer are you gonna leave...? Have you heard of Jesus? He had a legacy... It took a lot to clean out his junk drawer.

OW VO: A good man. That's who Wyatt Hudson was. Some men are great. Some men want to be remembered for what they have done. But perhaps it is better to be remembered for who you are. A good man. The townsfolk would be quieter that day. Not because they were thinking about any particular memory of Wyatt, but because they were thinking about Wyatt himself. The ways in which he touched people's lives, made them brighter. People cried loudly that morning to mourn his death, but they would be quiet that afternoon so they could give themselves the space, without the suffocation of grief, to celebrate his life.

[rustling, crickets]

A pre-dusk breeze moved through the willows, and the leaves chattered softly amongst themselves. The fields of bluestem grass rolled like waves toward some distant shore. Fireflies ignited and vanished, on and off, on and off. *This is an evening of great significance*, I thought to myself, although I wasn't quite sure what that significance was. I sat up straight and fixed my already immaculately knotted tie against my collar.

[grim, this-isn't-the-end-of-this-mystery music]

My eyes zeroed in on the Dark Woods, and I wondered to myself if my experience amongst its trees was better left a memory, or a passing dream.

This has been an obituary of Wyatt Hudson.

Unknown Ominous Presence: This has been *Death by Dying*.

[mournful, musing piano music - warped as though on an old record]

Written and Directed by Evan Gulock. Produced by Niko Gerentes. Featuring the voices Evan Gulock as The Obituary Writer. Tucker Ramseur as Gert and the Old Hag. Eva Eig as Bernard. Joshua Giordan as Pastor Jeff. And Niko Gerentes as The Wild Man, Apricot Winner, Mrs. Shambles Dog, and Chester the Goat. Music composed by Nicolas Gasparini, Kevin Macleod, Marc Alexandre, Steven O'Brien, Naoya Sakamata, and Niko Gerentes. Sound effects courtesy of Freesound.org. Creative Producer and Script Editor - Joshua Giordan. Recording Engineer and Casting Director - Niko Gerentes. If any of you kind, gentle listeners would like to send their condolences, comments, hopes, fears, or dreams, you can contact The Obituary Writer personally at TheObituaryWriter@gmail.com. Or follow on FaceBook, Instagram, and Twitter, [@DeathByDyingPod](https://www.instagram.com/DeathByDyingPod). And remember... if your head is going to get blown off by a cannonball, at least make sure your heart is in the right place.

[warping piano music fade out]