

The Talk and the tornado.

CLOUDS CONGEALED in the south-east, obscuring the sun. A strange shade of yellow dulled the sky and the air settled dead and heavy upon everything. Codell's uncle was anxious to have The Talk before the storm was forecast to start. His nephew was thirteen. No silly birds and bees; he was going to be direct. He'd promised his sister.

"Come with me for a little drive," he said to Codell. "There's something your mother wants me to talk to you about."

"Okay," said the boy. "Why don't we talk here?"

"We need privacy. Don't worry, you didn't do anything. It won't take long."

Codell's uncle drove them to a park and turned off the engine. They sat in the car and looked to the horizon, where clouds piled up in a dark vista of cumuli. In easy-to-understand, age-appropriate, and anatomically accurate terminology for both genders, Codell's uncle explained procreation. Out of sensitivity and lack of necessity, dear Reader, in this account the details are omitted.

By the time Codell's uncle finished, fat tears of rain splattered the windshield. "I hope you understand," the uncle told his nephew. "Do you have any questions?"

"Yes," said Codell. "How does the sperm get through the clothing?"

In the distance a charcoal rotation dropped from low, flat-bottomed clouds and spun itself into a funnel. The entire sky poured into it, a twirling spectacle of immense force. It belittled everything on the ground.