

Falling Off The Roof

by Sally Reno

We are all in the living room waiting. Bobby, me, Bobby Jr., Maeve, and four year-old Mack. We are quiet and still...even Mack is not fidgeting...but alert, not relaxed, waiting.

A thump on the roof right over our heads I momentarily mistake for a clap of thunder. Next, a rolling sound like squirrels dropping acorns on the roof but much louder, a little slower and *floppy*. Finally another thump, this one muffled, out on the front lawn. Bobby and I move toward the front window. The children turn backward on the couch to look out.

On the lawn, a shaggy hummock that had not been there before rises up, separating itself from the grass. It is some primal chthonic beast or some born-again road-kill. It sways, ripping itself free from the earth, shaking off clots of dirt, grass and *other things*. As the thing lurches upright, I can see now that it is an old woman with snake eyes... a *dead* old woman with snake eyes and peeling flesh. She is putrid and maggoty. She is coming right at us. She is *my mother*.

Burning with terror, I back away from the window, bump into Bobby. He takes hold of my shoulders and whispers, "Get your coat." The children are now all looking up at us, Bobby and me. They are round-eyed, expectant. Only Mack still stares out the window. He bounces and squeaks, "The babysitter's here!"

