The Colour Out of Space

by H.P. Lovecraft

The Colour Out of Space (A short modern retelling)

West of Arkham the hills rise wild and thick with old-growth forest. Few people go there anymore. The locals call one spot the “blasted heath”—a five-acre circle of gray dust where nothing grows, not even weeds. Soon a new reservoir will flood the whole valley and bury it under water. Most folks are glad. Only old Ammi Pierce still lives on the edge of it. He’s the only one who talks about what happened back in the 1880s. And even he only whispers.

It began in June 1882. A meteor blazed across the night sky and slammed into Nahum Gardner’s fields, right beside his well. The impact shook the ground for miles. When morning came, people found a smoking pit and a strange rock half-buried in the dirt. It wasn’t like any meteorite anyone had seen—irregular, porous, glowing faintly with heat. Nahum’s neighbors gathered, stared, then went home uneasy.

Scientists from Miskatonic University arrived within days. They measured, photographed, chipped samples. The rock was magnetic, heavier than it looked, and gave off a weak luminescence at night. Worst of all were the colors it threw in the spectroscope: bands of light that matched no known element. Shades that hurt the eyes—colors that shouldn’t exist.

The rock shrank steadily, almost melting away under the summer sun. When they cracked a large chunk open, they found a fragile, glossy globule inside, about three inches across. It shimmered with the same impossible hue. One professor tapped it with a hammer. It burst with a soft pop. Nothing spilled out. The thing simply vanished, leaving a perfect hollow sphere behind. They never found another.

After that, the changes started.

At first they were small. The tomatoes ripened early but tasted bitter, like metal and decay. The corn grew tall and lush, yet the ears were gray and pulpy inside. Grass in the pasture took on a faint, sickly tint—nothing you could name, just wrong. Lightning struck the crash site over and over, even on clear nights. The well water turned faintly metallic. Nahum shrugged it off. Farms have bad years.

Then the animals began to sicken.

Chickens hatched chicks with extra legs or no eyes. Cows gave milk that curdled instantly and glowed dimly in the dark. Horses went mad, rearing and screaming until their hearts burst. Insects swarmed in colors that matched the meteor’s light—bugs no one could identify. The whole farm seemed poisoned. Nahum’s wife, Nabby, started acting strange—staring at walls, muttering about colors moving in the corners of her vision. The three boys—Thad (fifteen), Merwin (twelve), and Zenas (sixteen)—grew pale and listless. Their eyes looked too big.

Nahum finally admitted something was deeply wrong. He told Ammi one evening, voice low: “It came in that stone. It’s eatin’ the life out of everything. The soil, the plants, us. I don’t know what it wants.”

He wouldn’t let anyone near the well anymore. He said the water looked “too bright” sometimes, like it held light inside it. He tried pumping it dry once. The

bucket came up empty at first—then thick, viscous, and shimmering with that nameless color. He poured it out fast and nailed boards over the wellhead.

Winter came. The changes accelerated.

The trees around the house sprouted buds in December—buds that bloomed into flowers of impossible shades. The petals fell and left oily stains on the snow. Nabby's mind broke completely. She screamed about shapes in the attic, colors that whispered. Nahum locked her up there for her own safety. She banged on the door for days, then fell silent.

One night Merwin went to fetch water from the old spring (the well was forbidden). He never came back. Nahum searched with a lantern. He found only a trail of gray dust leading to the well. The boards were splintered outward, as if something had pushed from below.

Zenas disappeared next. Then Thad. Nahum found strange, brittle remnants in the attic—twisted, ashen shapes that might once have been human. They crumbled at a touch. He wouldn't describe them further. His own skin began to gray. His eyes took on that faint, unearthly sheen.

Ammi visited less and less. The last time he went inside the house, the air felt thick, heavy with something alive. Nahum sat in the kitchen, rocking, whispering: "It got strong on Zenas… he was big, full o' life… it sucked him dry… seeds… more seeds in the stone… they growed…"

That night the farm lit up.

From across the fields, Ammi and a handful of neighbors watched the house glow with a soft, sickening light. Colors pulsed through the windows—shades no painter

could mix, no eye should see. The glow brightened, then erupted upward in a fountain of shimmering fragments. It looked like fireworks made of living light. The fragments rose high, hovered, then streaked toward the stars and vanished.

Silence followed. The wind turned cold, carrying a smell like ozone and rot.

The men approached at dawn. The house stood empty. No bodies. Only gray dust on the floors and brittle husks in the corners. The well was open again. Something had come up, fed, and left.

The land never recovered. Crops failed for miles around. Animals avoided the spot. The gray circle spread slowly, year by year, until the reservoir plans were drawn up.

Ammi still won’t drink the town water. He says traces remain—deep in the earth, in the reservoir bed. On clear nights he stays inside, curtains drawn. He claims he sometimes sees faint colors dancing on the water’s surface when the moon is right.

Because what fell wasn’t just a rock. It was alive. A fragment from somewhere outside our universe—beyond light, beyond matter as we understand it.

It wasn’t evil in any human sense. It simply fed on life-force, grew, reproduced in ways we can’t comprehend, then returned home.

It was just a colour out of space. A colour that drained the world of everything vital and left only gray ash behind.

And somewhere, in the dark between stars, more of them are drifting.