



Godfall

Van Jensen

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A giant's body falls from the sky, exposing extant rifts in a small Nebraska town in Van Jensen's shocking novel *Godfall*—a murder mystery with a science fiction twist.

Before the giant being—dubbed Gulliver by the press—landed in Little Springs, the town was in the midst of a steady decline. David, its sheriff and a native son, was determined to protect it from creeping crime. But the arrival of the alien object changed Little Springs overnight: government officials arrived, determined to secure the possible resource; foreign spies were suspected; and the population bloomed from under one thousand to almost one hundred thousand in just a few years. A cult arrived; plans were made to build a mosque, inciting the ire of those who feared outsiders. Still, David held on, despite facing an uptick in violence, an influx of drugs, a new cult—and a murderer.

Though Gulliver is an ever present factor in the story—a being made of crystal particles that arrived with a spire through its center, and whose body is covered in mysterious marks—the book is most concerned with the vicious events occurring in its ominous shadow. A developing serial killer hones their skills, graduating from one gory scene to the next, perfecting their methods of carving up victims. At their opposite, David's investigation is both impeded and complemented by the government's; some information is shared, though the truth about Gulliver's connection to the crimes is obscured. And the return of a rejected daughter of the city leads to additional complications—for the sheriff, her childhood best friend; for the government, who resents her journalistic savvy; and for the killer, who wants to be understood.

An alien being arrives, feeding the xenophobia of a once-dying town and inspiring a killer, in the revelatory novel *Godfall*.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (November / December 2023)

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