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February 3, 2016

Mr. Tom Sawyer
101 High Mountain Drive
Prosetown, Vermont

Dear Tom,

You may have not heard the tragic news, and I hate to be the bearer, but young Billy Anderson lost his life this week. We were at his father's farm cutting the winter's wood with the buzz saw. It was a beautiful day for this time of year. You probably remember cutting wood on the farm from when you were a boy: mountain ranges in the distance; the sweet smell of the wood; the snarl and rattle of the saw.

You know how, after a terrible thing happens, you wish that one little thing might have been different? I was thinking how, if one of us had said, "Billy, why don't you take the rest of the day off?" that he might have been spared. There's nothing like being let off early—especially to a boy doing a man's job. That's not what happened, though.

Luella came out to tell us that it was suppertime, and that's when it happened. I don't know if Billy became distracted when she called, but the saw seemed to leap at his hand. In an instant we all knew—Billy too—that it was serious. I remember hearing him say, "Don't let him cut my hand off—the doctor when he comes. Don't let him, sister!" It was heartbreaking. It was obvious to the rest of us that the hand was already lost.

The doctor used ether to put Billy under. At first, he seemed to breathe normally but, as his father listened, his heartbeat slowed and his pulse weakened. None of us could believe it. His father and mother went with the doctor to the hospital and then the funeral home. The rest of us pitched in to finish the day's chores.

I hope you are well. Give my best to Elizabeth and the kids.

Your Friend,

Tom