

Abecedarian for a Hometown Tornado

by Andrew Alexander Mobbs

Antagonized by charcoal skies, townsfolk
bowed their heads in prayer, beelined for Polaroid
cameras to document southern springtime
destruction bleeding out in the electric air.
Elementary schoolkids curled under wooden desks,
fearful of the sky tearing its seams, sirens
going off at the drop of a drugstore dime,
hallways left hollow in metallic hiss and creak.
I imagine my parents, twenty-something and
just out of college, exchange a fleeting
kiss goodbye before dad got in his gold Nova,
lead foot gunning for his folks' during
midday darkness, drifting in brick-splitting wind.
Not much back then but your family farms,
open land to gobble and shred, those five
poor souls laid flat beneath white sheets in the
quiet aftermath of pine sap sizzling.
Remember, just weeks before, several
science teachers at the local schools had
taught lessons on twisters—how spiraling
updrafts and downdrafts can waltz inside
violent velocities of daggered rain. How
when the storm cellars finally open up to a
xanthic haze of debris, each living throat
yells out their drawled grief, a soft
zephyr spreads the scent of honeysuckle.

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