

After the Tornado

The argument'd been bruising, running across three days, and had exhausted them both, emotionally and physically.

"You drink too much" had led to "You can't hold a job" which'd led to "Why don't you just mind your own damn business. You're no better than the drunk you called a mother" which had led to the first slap, a punch, and a flow of blood from a cut eye.

They both had blood murder in their eyes when the tornado siren went off, and for a moment they stood in a freeze-frame, staring at each other, not knowing whether to punch or curse or run for the tornado hole in the back yard. A noise louder than a break-away train settled the matter and they grabbed for pictures, a pretty dish, and the tv remote, not knowing what else do in the few minutes they might have left.

"Gawd," the one said, "Now I'm stuck in a tornado hole with you. What a freaking joke."

"You're the freaking joke," the other said. You provide us a house that's no better than a tarpaper shack. Even the sharecropper hereabouts got better."

"Well, you just find another who'd do you better and keep you likkered up all day."

A lifetime scrolled in front of them but maybe it was no more than the 10 minutes before the all clear siren sounded and they emerged from the hole.

They looked around and gaped at the debris. The tornado had scrubbed their property clear of every standing feature. No house, no pickup truck, no telephone pole.

They had nothing. Except each other.