

1995

Nude (Artwork)

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tornado summer

So many nights that summer
 you both slept in the hallway
 while i listened
 for sirens. for the drains
 to start sucking before
 the funnel passed.

I crouched in the hallway
 the safety zone in a tin trap
 home with a flashlight
 in one hand and a transistor
 in the other while your father
 watched the sky from the porch

coming in for coffee
 occasionally during an all night
 vigil. his nerves taut.
 Oklahoma was declared a disaster area
 that summer - the summer of choking
 dust and bloodshot eyes.

Now you flinch at the sirens
 eight hundred or maybe even a thousand
 miles away. and i know why.
 i didn't think you were old
 enough to remember, but i guess
 some things go deeper than memory.

Your father drove beside
 a tornado for miles
 one day. he said it looked
 single-minded - as single-minded
 as air and earth could seem.

Why didn't he tape it?
 you asked me not realizing
 there was a time before camcorders.
 and i saw. for the first time
 the difference in my sons
 children of two decades.

But you slept there in the hallway
 together that summer in the dry heat
 you can't recall. Sometimes your brother
 reached for you instinctively in his sleep
 watching you even as I did.

-Liz Bolyard '96

