Fall 1979

This Morning's Tornado

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Recommended Citation
Rice, Pamela (1979) "This Morning's Tornado," CutBank: Vol. 1 : Iss. 13 , Article 29.
Available at: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank/vol1/iss13/29

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THIS MORNING'S TORNADO

Tonight it's in the paper, how it killed forty people in my hometown. This picture, taken just before, shows the sky black, but should have shown the sky green, calm, and the town moving about in the language of animals, waiting.

I can't find the names of the dead. This doesn't say whether Banks had opened the filling station by the time it happened, if he looked up with eyes dirt yellow, and saw it coming - whether Mr. Moss saw anything at all or if he forgot to pull the shades in the store, if he sat with his head bowed after the roof came off and the ancient black shoes lay torn from their rows out of the dusty bags.

I try to call my mother. She would have watched me take the back path to school. And J.T. Henley, in his sheriff's car, would have chuckled this morning at any who trembled. Even now I can see him out at the Ritz on the highway waiting for the National Guard. He is eating slowly, eyeing Charlotte who comes just close enough to pour coffee and ring up the bill.