

# Abecedarian for a Hometown Tornado

by Andrew Alexander Mobbs

*Cabot, Arkansas, March 29, 1976, 3:18 PM*

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.

