

## BRUCE SNIDER

### Tornado Season

On my knees in the gymnasium, I pictured  
my mother's jewelry box, my father's  
fishing rod, the mobile home park  
in Nappanee swept away. I envied  
the missing still lost in the storm,  
licked clean by wind, faults torn away  
like shredded wood and insulation.  
I wanted to see my uncle's farm  
from above, grain silo doors akimbo,  
lavender spitting blooms along the fence.  
I wanted to see train tracks buckle,  
nail-driven straws of wheat. I wanted  
to make the sound the wind made,  
black eye of the storm peering into  
me, the funnel cloud as it swirled.  
I wanted to be carried—

green sky, sudden hail—with everything

I knew: blue spruce, white pine, the greyshingled  
barns of Whitley County, face

of the barber with his sharpened razor,  
Marie at the Waffle House, Beau

Tucker over mufflers in his shop. I could  
sense them all, faithful and faithless

passing overhead with car doors  
and street signs, with stone angels

from the steps of the Catholic church  
last seen cracked down the middle

as they disappeared over burning fields.

# Closing the Gay Bar Outside Gas City

As if I'd dreamed it up, the front door  
still swings, and the dance bell rings  
before it dies amid alfalfa, stalks of corn.  
On the floor: a faded pair of jeans,  
buttons from a shirt. Two condoms  
coil like sleepy salamanders  
in the back. In Indiana nothing lasts  
for long, though here the bathroom lock  
still sticks, nourished each winter  
by ice and snow. Outside: bones  
of rabbits, possum-blur, some ghost's  
half-eye through the window screen  
where now the only seed that spills is thorny  
vine and thistle taking back what's theirs.  
Even the magpies, locked in some  
blood-sleep, stir in the eaves as if  
to speak of patience and regret. Stains  
from tossed eggs mar the sides, dents  
from stones pitched through windows  
boarded up where FAG and AIDS  
are sprayed in flaking paint along  
the front. In fifty years, only birds  
will couple here. Deer will pause  
where a door once opened out to starlight,  
locust thorns tearing like some last testament  
to beer and lust. Even now, a raccoon  
stirs near the window, looks in at me  
as it moves past, like some stranger  
no longer interested, some boy  
who left his lip print on the glass.

# Forecast

Today, I'm taking my father  
for more tests, his eyes

failing even as we walk  
out into the knee deep drifts.

Like his father before,  
he takes two shovels from their hooks,

the particles of his hands  
sewn somewhere in mine,

so much of him  
silent in me as we walk

the bright hemorrhage of white.  
He starts at one end,

I start the other, each scoop  
unmaking the snow, which has taken

over porches, stoops, skeletal trees  
hedging the road. Soon,

he won't be able to make out the handle  
he's gripping. We don't speak,

piling the crude heaps,  
first him, then me, the black

grammar of railroad ties  
announcing the perimeter.

The weatherman calls for more—  
seven inches by nightfall—

but the old Chevy rattles  
as I rev the engine,

my father leaning to scrape  
the windshield clear of ice

until he's certain I can see.