

Twister

by Jack Swenson

The lake folks went outside to watch the tornado. It was headed their way according to the news. They hauled lawn furniture into front yards so they could get a better view of the lake. Women brought out coffee and cookies. Men smoked pipes and cigars.

"I seen the 1919 cyclone," said Albert. "I was there. We hid in the basement. Dad put his arms around us and prayed in Norwegian." Carl said the trees in town were covered with women's bloomers after the wind died down. "It looked like Christmas!" he said. Edson claimed the twister picked up a horse on one side of town and set it down a mile away unharmed. Albert said his cousin stuck his head out a window to see what was going on and got hit by a two by four. "It kilt him," Albert said.

The light failed, and the wind blew, and when it began to rain, everybody went inside. Nobody had a storm cellar at the lake, so they watched through unshuttered windows. The rain pelted down, it got dark, and they couldn't see a thing. The wind roared like a thousand locomotives. Then it brightened again, the rain stopped, and the sun--low in the west--peeked out and turned the lake shore into a garden of sparkling light.

Buzz Estvold, who was only nine, sneaked out to look for dead bodies. All he found was an overturned rowboat. As he climbed the steps from the lake, he heard the song of a single bird hidden in the upper branches of tall elm tree. Everything was shiny and dripping wet.

