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Ava Snowden Sailors

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Cyclone Weather

By Ava Snowden Sailors

The sun has been blazing and torturous all day
causing heat to shimmer in golden waves before us.
We chop endless weeds in endless rows of cotton
and wish for a cloud to float overhead
to offer a brief respite from the dizzying rays.

I awake in the night to the roar of thunder and
zig-zag flashes of lightning illuminating the sky.
The Oklahoma wind is shrieking wildly,
threatening to snap our new fruit trees like twigs
as they sway and bend double, beaten by blowing sand.

Papa had said it was cyclone weather that day,
and in swift panic, I spring out of bed
ignoring sore muscles and sunburned legs and arms.
A tornado is coming and I am the only one who knows
we're about to be swept into an angry black funnel!

I step quietly, heart pounding, into the front room.
There in the darkness Papa stands at a window,
keen eyes searching the sky for any sign of a treacherous,
ugly thread that could suddenly drop out of the clouds
to tumble and scatter us all into oblivion.

Relief floods through me, leaving me weak and trembling.
I turn silently to crawl back into the warm bed,
now eager to escape into a deep, dreamless sleep.
It's all right now because Papa is awake and watching
so I know I don't have to be afraid anymore.

Illustration by
F. Bennie Nossaman, Jr.