



The Small Of The Back Of A Tornado

by Nick Holle

FLYMF May 2007, The Beginning Of The End Issue, Volume 4 Issue 5

I keep having this recurring dream where a girl of stunning beauty approaches me and makes a profoundly hilarious (and insightful) joke about my necktie. I don't laugh, obviously, because I am stunned.

I begin to realize why she is talking to *me*—the necktie is terrific! But also, her beauty is hidden behind some woefully oversized pants, ridiculous green-rimmed glasses, and a widow's peak the size of Pike's.

I see right through all of these things. I've already decided that I've never touched the small of a girl's back that was this beautiful.

I tell her this joke she makes is interesting because it reminds me of a dream I had once. I don't begin telling her about *this* dream—that would disturb her and lead us into the temptation of endless existential thought. Especially being that it's recurring. Instead, this is a different dream:

"I am outside during a tornado warning. This is not as stupid as it sounds," I say, "because I am unafraid. I have rocks the size of Gibraltar."

"Is this a dream about your arrogance?" she asks me.

"Heck no," I tell her. "It is the exact opposite."

"Good. I thought I made a mistake by coming over and making that profoundly hilarious (and insightful) joke about your necktie."

"It was really funny," I said.

"Thank you." She beamed. When she smiled, her cheeks displaced the skin throughout her face, causing her widow's peak to dip another half-inch.

"Suddenly, there's the tornado!"

"A big one?"

"A category three."

"That's it?"

"Maybe a four."

"Oh my God!" There was legitimate fear in her eyes. And I began to love her.

"I want to watch this tornado and everything that it destroys."

"That's morbid," she said.

"But brave," I replied.

She rolled her eyes. "Get on with it."

"The tornado is heading left to right a good distance away. I am in awe of its spinning. I am in awe of its colors. It looks like—"

"—your necktie."

"You're unbelievable!" I exclaimed.

"I know!" she exclaimed back.

"This tornado was in the shape of a—"

"—funnel."

"And a thousand times bigger than a Dodge Ram."

"And ten thousand times bigger than an actual ram."

"It was beautiful."

"Like me," she said, knowing she was absolutely right. In a way.

I went on, "Just as it looked like it would continue on into the horizon, it changed paths. And after a few seconds, I realized the path was towards me."

"Ah, crap."

"I stood there, not really believing it was going to come closer, but it was coming closer. And closer."

"Ah, crap."

"My body went numb. Inside, somewhere, I was screaming. Run. Scream. Get the hell out of here. And yet I stood there too afraid. The tornado was less than a hundred yards away."

"When I'm afraid, I think of puppies."

"I was reconciling myself with the fact that I was going to die. And by reconciling, I mean sheer panic. I began shaking. The outermost winds began to hit my face. I was sad and angry and ticked off that I ever came outside to see this tornado."

"Angry is the same as ticked off."

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“I wanted to reach into my pocket and call 9-1-1. I wanted to be in the basement of the southeast corner of the building. Or was it southwest?”

“It’s northeast,” she said

“Closer and closer.”

“Seriously. Puppies.”

“I would be sucked up and swirled and ripped into pieces. It was now a hundred feet away. My entire life didn’t flash before my eyes.”

“It didn’t?”

“No. Only two-thirds. Because right then, the tornado switched paths!”

“Hooray!”

“And I was saved! I was humbled. I had never been happier to be alive than at that moment. In that recurring dream. In some way, God or the gods or whomever spared me in order to right my ways.”

“Left your ways.”

“I watched as the twister twisted away, knowing how precious my life was. If things were a little different, I’d be dead. But now, I am alive. And free. I knew my life meant something. It had purpose.”

“Is this a dream about you being born again?”

“Heavens no. It is the exact opposite. I just wanted to call my mother and tell her I was okay.”

“That is sooooo sweet.”

And this beautiful girl reached out and touched my arm gently. I wanted to pull her to me and marry her. Then I’d run my hand over the small of her back.

“And then,” I said, “Suddenly, I giant six-foot saw blade comes shooting out of the backside of the tornado. Before I could even consider what I was seeing, it sliced me in half at the torso.”

Her widow’s peak fell to new depths.

“I was dead.”

“What?”

“And that was it.”

“I don’t get it.”

“That was the dream,” I said to her. “I often have ironic dreams that mean next to nothing in the end.”

She didn’t respond. She only stared back at me, disappointed.

“Except, in this case, I was sliced in two. So that was something.”

The beautiful girl, with her widow’s peak, then removed her ridiculous, green-rimmed glasses and her oversized pants. She leaned in close to me and whispered:

“Ah, crap.”

And she walked away without a word.

That is when I wake up. And I never see her again, until the next time I have the dream.