

Wet Tracks Far from a Crossing

Marvin Shackelford

The tornado my grandmother fears
is in a trailer somewhere, mixing
himself a drink while the poor family
whose home he has invaded waits
in a bathtub. They believe
he is crazed and menacing, and they are
barely right. My grandmother
has locked on her fingers many rings
and household goods, a cellar key
made of ivory, and she is anxious
to invite us below her tower:
Listen, she says, to the crossings.
We are miles from the tracks.

And in my heart I am high
on a hill, house built by pioneers,
and her warnings broadcast
my childhood. We are all sons
of dead men, and they are safe.
Maybe we are safe, or we are drunk,
or the single headlight we watch
endlessly pinpointed ahead breaks
only under the distance of fear.
But when she calls to advise us
of power outages and green skies
we are listless, we are sidled already
to a bar where a whirlwind waits.

Marvin Shackelford holds an MFA from the University of Montana. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Portland Review*, *Confrontation*, *burntdistrict*, *Beloit Fiction Journal*, *FiveChapters*, and elsewhere. He resides in rural TX with his wife, Shea, and earns a living in agriculture.