

THE STORM

It was late in the afternoon of a grey muggy July day when the workmen began to unpack the equipment and pitch the tents of my father's medicine show. Our new showground was an old cornfield about a quarter of a mile from the small town of Locota, Michigan. The field was in a small valley and was apparently a dried-up lakebed.

A dark bank of clouds was gathering in the west and thunder rumbled in the distance. I overheard Kitty one of the actresses say to my mother, "There is going to be a bad storm tonight and the lightning will strike in this old lakebed. Why don't you bring the children and stay with me at the hotel?" My mother refused, saying that we would be ~~all right~~ in the truck. Before she left for the hotel Kitty gave our collie dog a friendly pat on the head. "Good night, Bingo."

A cool, fitful breeze sprang up and dark clouds appeared in the sky. It became dark quite early and the men had to quit working before they had finished putting up the main tent. They spread blankets on the floor of the cooktent, as they were too tired to set up their cots.

We went to ~~bed~~ in the truck and the roll and rumble of the approaching storm soon lulled me to sleep.

I had been sleeping only a short time it seemed when I was awakened by the roar and cracking of the storm. It ~~peered~~

Excellent bit of writing save for a few technical faults + tardiness!

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out thru an opening in the back of the truck. I saw lightning strike in the valley with great flashes of brilliancy and sharp claps of thunder. Then a terrifying ball of light came floating across the field. My mothers and fathers were awake. I called to them. The ball of light was moving toward us! Veering a little to the right, ^{as it approached} it passed within a dozen feet of the truck. It rose and touched the tip of the big tent pole and sent a shower of splinters to the ground. Then it floated down toward the tent where the men were sleeping. It hit the center pole and exploded like a bomb. Cries of pain and awful groans came from the tent as it collapsed like a torn balloon.

My father jumped out into the storm and ran barefoot thru the corn stubbles to the tent. When the lightning flashed I could see him tugging at the canvas. Soon he returned carrying one of the men. He lifted him into the truck and went back for another. Thus he brought all the men to the truck except one—Johnny, my fathers trusted friend, ^{who} had been sleeping near the center pole. He had been killed instantly.

For a time all was confusion on the truck. The men were moaning and groaning, but ^{they} were shocked more than injured. A few minutes later Kitty and the actors hurried up with help. When the lightning struck, Bingo had ^{run} ran to the hotel, woke Kitty up and by barking and running to the door had made her understand that something was wrong.

The next day most of the men were back on the job. It was a hard, sad day's work but by night everything was in order and ready for the performance. True to the showpeople's old