

Katherine Holman

A SHIELD FROM THE DUST

Seeing the bones start to
emerge on the bodies of
the cows in the barn
foreshadowed what could
happen if the bursting rainclouds didn't ever
take the place of the
dark dust clouds. In that
dead tree summer, we
found jack rabbits black
and birds fallen in the
trees behind the shed;
we wondered if God was
punishing our fathers.

Some nights, we wouldn't
talk about the darkness
in the daytime, about
the dust sifting in
through underneath
the door. Even if
Mama's wet dishtowels,
cradling the windows,
started to give.

Grandpa taught me to
play the spoons that year,
trapped for so long in that
old wood house. Cousin
John would join in on the
washboard, Gordon on the
fiddle, Henry with the Jew's
harp. Some danced the
Schottisch, others just
laughed and clapped their
hands, letting their boots or

shoes clamp down on the
warped wooden floors.

In just these moments we
wouldn't notice that the forces of
the sky were stripping the clothing
from our land. It was like the
men forgot for awhile, and
celebrated something we
didn't know about.

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