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Mott, North Dakota
Jim Johnson

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Jim Johnson

MOTT, NORTH DAKOTA

Flat and barren here. The barn caved in. The silo rolled away. Only yesterday the roof blew off the house. Little to stop the wind except this faded building once a schoolhouse. The windows have cracked and are cobwebbed. But between the new curtains and wallpaper, a lamp, gone-with-the-wind style, flickers. It too has a bad heart. The new teacher has painted her face and taken to black nylons and lace. Only whiskey and Hank Williams' music got into your life, and now you too are gone. The sheep dog nips your feet for lack of sheep. And at the interstate where a sign states that John Birch lives, the children who board a schoolbus are told: never talk to strangers. Even the pump out back has thrown up its hands.