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## Second Place Winner: M E Powell

### Spontaneous Combustion

It's human conductivity that worries me

Not so much the strobe flash or the deep rumbling echoes in my chest sheet  
 lightning  
 along the footpath not the sepia red overhang of clouds that should be sunset not  
 even  
 the roiling wind that suddenly tears the hair from my shoulders to curl around my  
 face

None of that no what worries me is how efficient the human body might be at  
 conducting electricity because the man into whose path I walk like deer to  
 headlights has  
 to be six feet tall his shoulders taper down to his waist and that imposing arrogant  
 swagger just him and me in this gathering storm when I remember a story about  
 a  
 woman so afraid of spontaneous combustion she lived years in a bathtub can't you  
 just  
 see the bubbles and steam rising but how safe would it be in a lightning storm

Hey this is wifeland buster even if you left your ring at home you wouldn't be on  
 this  
 path if you didn't have one and probably a brace of kids just look at you around  
 here it's  
 the women who stay and the men who stray man's home is his castle and all that  
 but the  
 village is closed tight no entry tonight no matter the sway of those slimjeaned hips  
 it's  
 obvious you exercise

If it wasn't for this storm I might ask does that static raise the fine hairs under  
 your open  
 jacket and by the way are they sable like your hair or silvered like that thatch at  
 your  
 temple the hairs along your arm I mean I'm trying not to look anywhere else in  
 case of a  
 sudden lightning strike that might spark the aching need spread along the fine

hairs  
spill off the path into the warm wet grass fill the pit of wanting until we  
disappear in a  
little pile of ash

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