

herded customers into walk-in refrigerators with strong metal walls. The Satterlees and their guests packed into a small storage room in their basement. This small concrete-walled space doubled as the family's tornado shelter.

Outside, the tornado, still gaining strength, began its vicious attack on the city.

It was no longer just a cloud of swirling air. And it was filled with pieces of Joplin that it had sucked up from the ground. There were chunks of houses and parts of cars, tree branches and furniture, shards of glass and clumps of dirt.

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The monstrous twister was now a staggering three-quarters of a mile wide. Its 200-mile-per-hour winds pulverized brick buildings, turned houses into piles of splintered wood and shattered glass, and hurled cars and trucks thousands of feet into the air.

It ripped the roof off Home Depot, demolished a Chick-fil-A and Burger King, and turned a Walgreens drugstore into a pile of rubble. It wrecked six schools, including Joplin High School.

From the basement of the Satterlees' house, the family and their guests could hear deafening crashes and thuds above them. It was the sound of their home being ripped apart, of years' worth of treasures being crushed and swept away.

It seemed like hours before the noise finally stopped, until the tornado finally finished with their house and moved on.

Slowly, the family and their friends emerged from the storage room. They walked up the stairs