

MINNIE BRUCE PRATT

The Difference between Inside and Outside

At dawn the sky is chrome yellow. We turn over,
we say to each other, *The storm is coming*.
Thunder, purple, white, light, red. At the window
I listen for rain to make its room of sound, how
once under the trailer roof clatter I was reading
about the future, once I was under a tin porch roof,
spatter, writing the spider lilies, now rain spouts
like a turned-on faucet, I'm back in bed, the light-
ning strikes next door, you hold me, you say *I've
got you*, petting my arm, you quiver back into sleep,
my company inside the storm that's fading east,
the last thunder inside me, conversational rumble
up from gut and lungs. My mouth wants to reply.

Outside I look for charred streaks, the strikes
scorched down a tree trunk. Rain showers shake
down from leaves in the wind onto the drenched
folded cardboard someone slept on before rain fell
onto the little room under the tree. The slick wet
surface of paper. Douglass said, to long for progress
without struggle is to ask for rain without thunder.
Lightning blow, your eyelids and fingers trembled.
The dream where you made rally placards, people
were massing, that's what you had the strength to do
in your dream. Today the cardboard is unfolded
under the tree in the sun, maybe the person using it
was alone, or maybe two lay in each other's arms
during the uneasy night, wrapped in streaks of light.