

Letter Read in a Storm

Windows twitched, then stuttered in their frames,
muttering up an approaching storm.

Outside, two butterflies boiled
their wings over against a yellowing pane.

Clouds were coiffured crazily atop
each other. Lightning toppled tiaras down.

Inside, her eyes drew themselves up
to their full length. She opened the letter

with the whole of her face. Suddenly, the room
went black as boot polish,

and gravel in the driveway threw up
fistfull after fistfull of knuckle-white rain.

Her face snapped. Beads from her broken
necklace pattered all over the floor.

Flowers in a bowl, sweetpeas
from his garden, clutched absentmindedly at her hand,

and broke its fingers between them, gently,
one by one, dropping them onto the carpet.

A year after he was missing in action,
that official letter came. Unofficially,

two last yellow butterflies
were left to limp away across the lawn.

ROGER NASH