

# First Rain of the New Year

*by Gary Hardaway*

Cold and small, it  
fligrees the window panes.  
Open your umbrella wide

and fetch the morning news.  
Though warmer than ice,  
the air still penetrates like fangs

fashioned from the clouds  
that dome the world  
a dimly luminous gray.

The black clay ground plumps up  
and twists the doorways out of square.  
Opened, the front door deadbolt

will not clear the strike again,  
will not hold what is outside, out  
or what is inside, in.

Compartments trickle together  
in light diffuse and unreliable.  
Fortify yourself against the day.

Drink coffee, strong and frequent.  
Set the thermostat to sixty-five and wear  
your thickest socks and sweater.

Scent the air with bacon  
and blood oranges. Sear  
then braise the cheap-cut beef

with yellow onions, clean  
but unpeeled carrots, bay leaf,  
rough chopped cloves of garlic,

burgundy, and consommé.  
Bake cookies and potatoes.  
Set ceramic logs aflame.

Settle in to hear the rain  
as old cracks close and new ones open  
in drywall patched and re-patched.

