

Planning for winter

It approaches with the
strident whine of
a trapped dog and the
cautious grace of
small feet on stairs.

Expectation iced
over by a
prediction; wind-blown with
dim prognostication.

“A big year,” he mutters
from his scarf-muffled
mouth. “The dog berries are
full,” toque-tasseled
broad head nodding.

The abundance of their
hanging, red fleshed
against concrete sky is
at once at odds: grass stains

on a white silk slip. His
words, staccatoed
by the thudding of junks
in the truck bed,
fall around me

like bitter snow. Later,
they pierce like wind- driven
hail on bare cheeks. “I do
not want it,” frozen words
dangling from his mouth like
the line of icicles
adhering to our
roof. I wait for
the shatter
of their
fall.

The expectation of
winter recedes
into slushy, dirt-dark
clumps and heavings.
As the birds strip

the dogwood trees of their
winter-rotted
carcasses, and the plow
scrapes the grass clogged soil

from beneath the snow, I
cry. The wood shed
stands empty as he stokes
the last fire. “Just
enough to get

us through,” he gloats, shrugging
slowly from his
sweater. “I planned for this

winter.”