

## THE END OF FORTY DAYS OF DROUGHT

For weeks the earth rattled like a giant dried gourd.  
Our land sifted into books, beds, teddy bears, coffee cups.  
Our teeth gritted on fewer words each day. A little hail  
pattered the roof twice, a broken strand of pearls.

Aunt Vi talked about her wedding in the '40s, called it  
a lovely day of long-leaf silver rain making wispy music  
all through her honeymoon with Uncle Hal, lost a year ago.  
She showed us the photos of their first lush wheat crop  
and her first cake made with their own flour.

We listened to Sinatra, Tschaikowsky, Garth Brooks  
while anvil-heads gathered and thunderclouds bloated  
without spilling their promises. Vi shared her sharp wit  
and last fall's Mason jars of green largess. Our prayers  
the reverse of Noah's, we made ourselves quit gazing up  
at the glare as if our eyes were a factor in fulfillment.

Monday, Aunt Vi had rain pains in her barometric big toe.  
The Lord rewards faith, she mused. We have to wait  
for what we want most, but it won't be long now.

Noon gravity tugged the cumulus into a shape like Italy.  
It sagged. Lean. Black. The boot's tongue flopped down,  
licked up our silo, whisked it away whole. We found  
the rubble half a mile off in one lone wet spot.

Aunt Vi always could tch! better than anybody. Later,  
she said that crazy auger drilled a hole in the sky.  
Tomorrow, she announced, rain would pour through.

It did. Honest rain all across the state.  
She nodded, gave us her sassiest "Told you!" grin.  
Just before her heart serenely stopped.  
The rain kept beating all night.