

Waking from dream to snow: an inch of it  
covering the yard. I get up, start making  
my bed, turn on the radio—there's proof,  
someone's saying, that Saddam Hussein  
has aided Al Qaeda. I'm smoothing white  
cotton sheets, shaking out pillows. The Coast  
Guard has been deployed on military duty  
for the first time since the Vietnam War.  
I'm pulling up the comforter. An anonymous  
official warns we could use nuclear weapons,  
a preemptive strike. The quilt I'm spreading  
was made by my husband's three sisters,  
a gesture of love for his marriage to a woman  
so different from them she might as well  
have come from an alien world. The quilt is  
patched, appliquéd, embroidered; its tiny  
stitches taken by hands used to diapering  
babies, scrubbing floors, paring vegetables,  
kneading dough. The news grows worse  
each hour. A gray train of cumulus over  
the northern horizon is turning rose.  
This moment is cold and precious  
as a sliver of ice in the mouth  
of someone dying of thirst.