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A Bedroom Community

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A Bedroom Community

We were all bedded down in our nightcaps, curtains drawn as swamp coolers and sprinklers hissed every brown summer hour, or in winter sagebrush hardened in the cold. It was still dark as our fathers rose, dressed, and boarded blue buses that pulled away, and men in milk trucks came collecting bottled urine from our doorsteps. Beyond the shelter belt of Russian olive trees, cargo trains shuffled past at 8:00 and 8:00, and the wide Columbia rolled by, silent with walleye and steelhead. We pulled up our covers while our overburdened fathers dragged home to fix a drink, and some of them grew sick—

Carolyn, your father’s marrow testified. Whistles from the train,

the buses came, our fathers left. Oh, Carolyn—while the rest of us slept.