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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.