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Goodbye to Preparations

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••GOODBYE TO PREPARATIONS

JOHN WHALEN

Painting this house for three weeks
after lifting the bedrooms from the regrets
of the previous family was a way of reaching

from the mud into the shadows.
Painting this house was not what I said:
a window seat on a bus with a sort-of plan.

Goodbye to hunger not for the reason
of sudden anger. Our arguments
did not choose gifts, rather, hard words recognized

what was a gift and what was not.
A toddler's car seat caught in the blossoming forsythia.
An arrowhead sifted from the sand

and deposited upon the shores of my thirst.
Painting this house was a mirror held up to the one
picture of my father beaming. Water in the background.

Painting this house was goodbye to preparations.
Hello to each eave within its own shape.
This house and I, unafraid.