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It Is Still Winter Here

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Making a Door / Dennis Schmitz

a weedy creek peeled from corn
fields, the whole
countryside where I grew up
thaws from the front

windows of this dollhouse
we are making together.
my daughter kneels
to chalk night
on the back windows
wanting for this one house
all that our family lived
her eight years
even dreams contorted
to the neat minimum

of her bedroom.
I ask to enter
the doll's world, tell
in altered size what I dreamed

in my half of the house:
how I reached
speech through a series
of dahs, made my face
a welt on the five senses—
I go on distributing
myself over the assigned parts
the house is almost done

I hand her the saw

It Is Still Winter Here / Linda Pastan

I need no thermometer to tell me—
the rhododendrons are enough,

closed down like old umbrellas
all along the drive,
and your grandmother's voice from Florida
speaking of the weather there
as if the sun were some huge stone
rolled against the door of death
to hold it shut.
Here birds blaze briefly
at the window; a fox has died
under the deck, and we haul it away
our breath condensing into cartoon balloons
but ours have no words in them.
Even the trees seem no more than kindling—
so many dry sticks, and your grandmother's voice
crackling along the wire just now
like a brush fire soon to be put out.

On Obregón / Greg Pape

Across the street
from the only cottonwood tree
on the Avenida Obregón
there is a white burro
harnessed to a cart
that has stood still
for over a decade.
Between the long white ears,
a gaudy paper flower.
Beneath the slung belly, between
the four patient legs, a bucket
that now and then a man
empties in the gutter.

All day, the flashing
of gold watches, the thin rustle
of money (like the flower
between the burro's ears), the traffic
in baskets and plaster saints