

First Snow

To clear the walk before the children start
for school, you rise and dress, and take the broom
beside the door, and go out into darkness
where the snow you sweep from side to side

is followed by the snow that falls behind
your progress down the squares. A dream returns
you half remember having when you woke,
and when you pause to look back toward the porch

it seems you've been nowhere—the walk you swept
is whiteness now, and as before. To take
a step from where you stand would be to risk
acknowledging you've come this far by losing

track of things. Then someone flicks the porch light
off and on, to say you're needed there.
You go, leaving a line of prints behind,
and even these are filled by daylight, when

the kids have vanished down the walk to catch
the bus, and everything is bright and still.
So for a second time you take the broom
and go to sweep the snow away. And find,

as though recalling now the other half
of what you dreamed, the pattern of your steps
impressed upon the walk and turned to ice—
the children's, too, going the other way—

revealed beneath the snow that flies before
your broom, until you reach the end, and stop
to see the footprints clear this time. The dream
comes back entire: a line of stones across

a stream in summer, when you know not where
to step, and yet in choosing merge with what
is swirling all around you. And, still searching,
waken to silence, and a first snow falling.

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