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HOUSE IN THE MARSH

by Eric Whiteside



Fisherman don't have to live in it.
Just long enough to get
out of the rain.
No matter how broken down,
a house is better than the marsh.
The sun might set from left to right several times
before they reach the living room, but
there's a roof. It leaks a little,
but it's mostly dry inside.
There's a deck of cards someone left
in the parlor.
And if they meet and pass themselves,
they can just keep looking ahead,
never turning around,
at least it's dry inside.
But if the river floods,
then they better get out quick.
If the peacocks and the herons get quiet,
then they better get their things;
they better get out quick,
through the back doorway,
heading away from the river.
If they don't sleep going home,
they better wonder
who saw what storm

from the other door. What hands
pounding the door,
wringing every rotten plank into
an unbreakable backbone of stars.

