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Spirit Led

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Spirit Led

Jeri Schelhaas

The spirits of pioneer women find me
As I cross the Missouri in Omaha, going west.

The roll of the hills hides shadows of homesteads
and ghosts of women
brushing damp hair strands from foreheads
with the backs of their hands.
It's gray, morning gray,
Dress, apron, wash on the line,
Children's faces in the open doorway.

The early fog rolls over the land
And settles,
Slips between silver maples, single file along a creek.
The morning sun rises above thunderheads going east.
A hawk's shadow joins me in the left lane.

The uneven turn of a broken windmill,
poised in a gully,
Spins another dream.
Spirits in a nearby graveyard,
Dead women, young women, tired women,
Rest, wait,
Offer me their dreams:
Farmland flowing east to west, north to south,
A hollow for a house,
Beehive, garden patch,
A tree branch for a sack swing,
Birdsong, cat tail, morning glory,
Evening crickets, firefly flicker, purple sky.
A long view.

Just over a hill, like a sunrise in the west,
A golden arch breaks the horizon,
As well as my dreams,
And grows larger.
An outlet mall rests at its feet.
The spirits leave me.
I turn in and find women, real women, tired women,
Brushing damp hair strands from foreheads,
Clinging to shopping bags,
Wandering through open graves of spiritless dreams.