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Byway

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Robert J. De Smith — September 2019

It is everything: The woman rigged out To hang steel girders Onto a red skeleton in a farm yard, She stepping from her pickup In flannels and a harness; The shivering shoulders Of the Loess Hills, Oxbows long cut off, A derelict faded yellow Excavator beside a ditch, A hawk gaining altitude with labor, The road at times matching The river bends, then rising Over successive hills, Then arrow-straight beside rusted rails. A magnificent tall hip-roofed barn Replete with a cupula, Now weather grey and stark. A boy, in a cerulean hoodie, Beside the road, right door open Of a ridiculously large truck, A dualie, Looking furtively over his shoulder As he relieves himself in the ditch; A glazed block double grain bin, Shelterbelts of trees, Shorn of their farm places; Sand and gravel, Extracted from pits, In its various hues of brown; And the river itself, winking through trees; The blue-green and brighter green Of field on field of soy and corn, Rising on contours. Decrepit machinery, parked in neat rows The last time they were of use; Towns, spired and roofed, almost a relief, But so is the next bend, Bridges and gravel turnouts And must be a dozen turkeys, Two grown, the rest small replicas, Crossing the road and disappearing Into the tall grass and Black-eyed Susans.