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Long Before GPS

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Long Before GPS

Long before GPS-driven tractors, before pre-marking crops
with motorcycle tracks, before highboys and crop dusters
became commonplace, before toxicology studies warned
of respiratory damage, I marked.

I stood
in ankle-biting wheat on windless daybreaks, holding
a white flag so the sprayer could line me up in the crosshairs
of his windshield and use me as a target for the herbicides
that would come closer to guaranteeing a crop, an income,
food for our table and bread for others. I waited for
the in-cab wave, then counted steps while the booms,
outstretched like Jesus on the cross, drove toward me.

The holy water of herbicide: a bitter communion
of Deep Woods *OFF!* and fermenting marigolds,
wafted never quite away, lingered in nose hairs on humid
Snoopy-pajama nights, nights too hot to sleep so

I stood
on my bed and lifted for a full-length look.

Born and raised in rural Manitoba, **LEANNE SHIRTLIFFE** (she/her) is a writer and educator now based in Calgary, Alberta. Her poetry explores farming, feminism, and family, and can be read in *CV2*, *Stanchion*, and *Stoneboat*. You can find her at LeanneShirtliffe.com or read her overheard haiku on Instagram: [@leanne_shirtliffe](https://www.instagram.com/leanne_shirtliffe).