



Viable

Julie Hensley

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To enter Julie Hensley's *Viabile* is not to step but to plunge. . . With Hensley's guide, we travel through deftly rendered landscapes of the Great Plains and the rural South. We study the language of horses and historical figures. We probe marriage, miscarriage, childbirth, and child-rearing, "the things people plant to anchor themselves/ beneath so much sky." We hear our own fears and wants echoing back to us from the deeply human center of this book. —Julie Marie Wade, author of *Postage Due: Poems & Prose Poems* and *When I Was Straight: Poems* In the rich and vivid poems of *Viabile*, Julie Hensley rings the changes of a girl child's life, from riding stick-horses in her yard in Big Stone Gap to sexual discovery after sixteen summers, to homesickness in her first apartment, then to love, marriage and, motherhood. The path may be familiar, but none of it is simple, and there are sharp turns of grief and reckoning along the way. Rooted in the natural world—mountain, desert, prairie, seashore—and seeing herself as a creature among creatures, Hensley offers us words of life in all its uncertainty, knowing that "Creation is still a gift/ a yolk bobbing uncertainly/ inside a fragile shell." —George Ella Lyon (Kentucky Poet Laureate 2015-2016), author of *Many-Storyed House* In *Viabile*, Julie Hensley has woven a beautifully contemplated life, as the speaker becomes daughter, woman, writer, lover, mother, and branches outward into the voices of historical women who share the pain only mothers can. Sensual, intuitively musical, and incredibly observant, these poems turn a perceptive lens on the natural world and uncover a spiritual interconnectedness. Hensley's poems reveal how life crashes into us and through us, how at times we feel lifted by this storm, and at others we feel like we may be going under, or perhaps sometimes both, such as when the speaker after staying up all night with a sobbing child notices the "sun slow / through the kitchen window: / a wafer / dissolving into morning." —Matt Rasmussen, *Black Aperture*, Winner of the Walt Whitman Award

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