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Circle Dance of the White Buffalo

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Circle Dance of the White Buffalo

No eagles flew on the first new day of 1889.
Prairie grasses lay rutted in waste
behind wagons of land claimers.
Silver mining creeks reeked of dead trout.

Brown pine needles abandoned branches
where buffalo stampeded to rocky abyss.
Dark storms encircled the world
as a dishonored sun crouched behind the moon.

In the red butte lands beyond the mountains
Wakova, a Paiute shaman, knew how to
harden the sweat in his hand to ice,
loosen skies to drown a drought,

summon gale winds from distances.
Wakova watched for answers
in the messiah-realm of light.
The spirit dance came to him

in troubled trance as a primal buffalo
winter-white hide aglow like a sun,
amber hooves pummeling a black sky.
Dance in a circle, its message imprinted

on the mind of the medicine man.
All First Peoples were called to unite,
give up war and in-fighting
to pound the ground in dance

beneath the sky of five straight days.
Pale men, threatened, called it
Ghost Dance and would not abide
the Lakota who practiced, in honest faith,

the dance that would bind the people
to their ancestors, restore the grasses,
bring bison and wild game back
to the plains, return first verdancy.

It would be a scant two years until
they merged with earth at Wounded Knee.