

THE HEN

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Soon after Hoover
promised “a chicken
in every pot,” the hen
embarked upon a grand adventure,
a ride into town in
the farmer’s jalopy, rust,
bailing twine, and fence wire
strung together like the leather
and laces of a loose-jointed shoe.

The hen sat up front beside
the farmer’s dog, a venerable geezer,
an odd couple that got along
in a curious unison, cocking
their heads at passing sights;
she clucked as a fretting wife
in low, wary comments
and the occasional, excitable cackle,
from him, a growling “humph.”

Long before the farmer’s
dentures rattled in his mouth,
like a clacking tractor engine,
he needed a tooth pulled
and didn’t have a quarter;
the hen became the barter.

In the dentist's waiting room,
in her cushioned chair, she
gracefully laid an exquisite egg,
warm, smooth, spotted, and tanned
like a girl's freckled shoulder;
she seemed to know—she seemed to ask:
“will you pluck my feathers
to the skin for a single meal or
fry my lovely, yellow yolks
forever in your skillet?”