

# THE HEN

DAVID SAPP

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?”