

Leonard on the Farm

JACK COOPER

He had less than a dozen teeth,
wore shoes with ten years of pigshit
and a feedcap from ConAg.
He lived in a trailer
on a wide spot in the road with his wife
who stayed indoors from a lung condition
and always had to remind him
to change for dinner.

He offered three questions
before he hired me to put up hay
and he answered them all himself
because he needed the help
and didn't want to know how dumb I was.

If one set of lugnuts rusts away
and the wheel on your truck falls off, he asked,
how do you attach your spare?

With one nut from each of the other wheels.

If your rotten old wagon works
but can only bear half a load
what would make you haul it back to the field?

When your shiny new wagon snaps an axel
because it couldn't handle twice as much
like the dealer claimed it would.

And when do you say NO to the fertilizer guy
who wants you to trade in your manure spreader
for his fancy white powder?

When your pigs are healthy
with only the corn you grow yourself.
Not after their gums are bleeding.
Not after you find out
you have to add flesh to their feed.
Not after your wife is dying.