

Sonny

R. STEVE BENSON

For Harris Haukoos

Seized by the day
he fell under a harrow
and his mother
looking through their kitchen window
saw the way Sonny's tractor
turned circles by itself
in the field and found herself
outside with apron flying
racing down the long
curving wrinkled narrow lane
past the mute mailbox
across the loose gravel road
into the weedy ditch
then jumping the wire fence

never remembering killing the chugging
puffing brainless tractor's powerful engine
reaching her only son—still in his twenties
and engaged to marry the gentle neighbor girl
who lived only two farms to the north—
in time to hold him and smooth his dark
soft hair goodbye, his damaged head
marked for sacrifice by rich clean Iowa topsoil
until he closed his clear eyes
with his face resting in her lap once again
and a redwing blackbird on a fencepost calling
in the quiet sunny field as a mother's tears
dropped like the longed-for moisture
the crops so desperately needed
that hot dry year.