

*Joyce James*

## **Their Anniversary**

Up there's the rooster who's no joke —  
Since the turn of the century,

He's become a soft crower, copper inside out,  
A metal craftsman shaping the mold.

Welded, he stands erect, comb straight,  
Chest at attention. On the garage before dawn

Earlier than most, he points  
With bright abandon the day's drift,

Not always an ideal position, yet charmed  
By bringing to bear the most current, the luckiest wind.

This gift's from me to my parents — a weathervane —  
For their fifty years in the same house

Where they still talk although it is more to themselves —  
More of an unwillingness to blame the other

For any misfortune, the old tractor hard to start,  
Rough roads, the time gone too soon.

The summer my mother tied their dog  
So he could crawl under the smokehouse for shade,

My father on his hands and knees pleaded  
For the pet he thought caught underneath to come out.

The animal eyed him from the mound over our root cellar;  
Even catching sight of the dog did not change his mood.

He was too deep into disaster.  
My sister tells the story better than I do.

Putting a cold, shiny rooster up  
Quietly cock-a-doodle-dooing for their neighborhood

From a garage is the gift a grown child gives  
Because we still cause our parents grief.

How could I know he'd try to take grain to the roof?  
It was the same, the evening he coached a starving, wild kitten

From a hole in the haymow. His chambray-blue shirttails  
Blowing in the night air, his jockey shorts

Loose on his skinny legs and mother behind him —  
Everyone who could help them dead —

She's handing him what he calls out for —  
A ladder, his gloves, the saw.