

Farm Dog

Twyla M. Hansen

He never came inside the house: Pets
belonged outdoors, no furry creatures were
allowed to sooth our disturbing dreams.

Before I came along, earlier dogs were more
beloved than Brownie: Ching, a chow, and
Yankee, who chased cars on the gravel road.

The mutt became my pal when my brothers
left home: A time of great change, unrest,
escalation, and an unpopular war that loomed.

Not many noticed the beginnings of the end: The
emptying out of small towns, the farm consolidations.
As we struggled, Earl Butz said, *Get big, or get out.*

In grainy photos: I'm ten or so, in a summer dress
next to the windmill, gripping Brownie's neck,
grinning, his mangy hair not clearly visible, and

in the next I'm a teen with cat-eye specs holding
a purse, modeling the skirt and blouse I sewed,
dreaming of being someplace, anyplace else.

In-between: Dad decided to quit farming and learn
a new trade. Days blurred by. The dog died
under the porch. It took a week to find him.