

Inspecting the Fields

Shoulders round as he crouches
in loam to squint down a row,
temples fanned with years of dirt
and seeds and constant scrub of wind.

Low morning sun lances through pines
edging the field, stretching long the shadow

of his John Deere, tires big enough
to swallow a man. From a back pocket,

fingers of sweat-hardened gloves
bobble like a family of nesting chicks

eager for whatever their mother
has to offer. Pinching a tiny shoot,

the farmer worries its green skin
between calloused forefinger and thumb,

touch as gentle as velvet
of a mole's neck. Holding a fistful of soil

to his nose, he inhales the scent, tongue
of earth blooming inside his head.

With sun climbing onto his shoulders,
he rises and wipes brown streaks

into the stone-washed denim
of his jeans, knees popping

like a gunshot of crows escaping
a field that a fox just entered.