

Darrell Petska

Living Among Chickens

Across celestial fields they range now,
festive in their plumes: my snow white Leghorns,
chatty Rhode Island Reds, and diminutive
Rainbow Bantams—rulers of the flock.

How earnestly they'd scratch and cluck,
pursue willy-nilly flies or pause in step,
tipping their heads to the strains of some
fetching melody playing on the wind.

Most ladylike, my girls, unless tomatoes,
lettuce or squash appeared on their menu:
brief scrums ensuing as they'd squawk
and claw their way to repletion.

Belles aware of their high station, they'd
preen and strut about the farmyard,
buk-buk-buking their practical wisdom
to take each day one peck at a time.

Living among chickens, how could one not
value life's simple joys: good company,
unhurried hours, contentment—and the privilege
of holding a warm, fresh-laid egg?

Upon the mantle of mind my dears perch—
Agnes, Dot, Rosie, the feathery rest—
their bright, surveilling eyes seeming to ask
whether their investment in me paid off.

***Darrell Petska**, a retired university engineering editor, is a 2021 and 2022 Pushcart Prize nominee. Previously, his work has appeared in Chiron Review, 3rd Wednesday, Muddy River Poetry Review, Verse-Virtual, and widely elsewhere (conservancies.wordpress.com). Father of five and grandfather of six, he lives near Madison, Wisconsin, with his wife of more than 50 years.*

