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Spruce Hen
Jim Johnson

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SPRUCE HEN

Something is always happening. Today I was walking along a tote road when I was attacked, attacked by a vicious grouse. The dark brown bird was the size of a hat my mother used to wear to church. Every morning she milked the cows. On Monday washed clothes. On Tuesday made bread. Each summer painted the house white like prosperity. Saturdays, nights home alone. On Sunday wore a new hat to church. This one now, with ragged wings and beak, strafed me once, twice. Like the sermons I never understood. This one was in Grouse. I ducked. Then she lit on the trail ahead. *Do not go on*, she said. *These woods are vicious, animals wild. Think of your soul.*