

# Business Partners

Another morning.  
He descends from the upper farm  
House to the barn.

I watch him from the barn door  
Survey the farmyard in morning light  
As I let the first cows in.  
His timing, his gait, and the mental tick I have to open  
The first round of morning conversation are as routine  
As putting the milk filter in the pipeline and carrying  
The milking machines back to the barn.

Our sunrise salutation has all the hallmarks of a Yankee  
Conversation with predictable introduction, body and conclusion.  
For starters, we have settled on “Good Morning, How are you?”  
We are always good.

Talk meanders across sports and weather.  
Occasionally politics is permissible.  
The economics of oil prices fall into this category.

But when it comes to farming particulars,  
We need an ombudsman, to herd, to hone, to weed out  
Our agenda. Because after we have finished chores,  
Set up some fencing, mown a hayfield, changed  
A tire on the hay tedder, hauled in a load of sugar wood  
And checked on the dry cows—“There is one due on the 15th”—  
The morning has spilled into Thursday and is threatening Friday.

I focus on the six cows that are waiting  
To be milked. He heads out to the other barn to feed  
The young stock. “We’ll get there” he says, “We’ll get there.”

What I don’t say but think is: Dad we’re already there.

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ROSS THURBER is a third-generation farmer in Vermont. His family, daily farm chores, and the foothills of the Green Mountains fuel his writing. He is influenced by the poetry of Robert Frost, Hayden Carruth, and Jane Kenyon.