

Nest Eggs

Yesterday morning I prepared the roe of the mackerel queen
my son caught on a Saturday morning off-shore excursion.
Two swollen, pink, vein-bound bags exhumed
from the huge, silver damsel I fileted and sliced into pieces.
I lament her demise, eggs never laid, fish lives
that shall never be—fried, eaten and relished with shame.

And the peacock hen that set five eggs in our dooryard
at the foot of St. Francis beneath the penumbra of a sapling.
We watched in awe of her poorly chosen nest, and her
unfaltering devotion to the task. She'd stand
a moment, shift the eggs like a careful cook frying
chicken pieces, managing warmth, and some kind of order.

The curvature and needling devise of her beak revealed
its perfection for such, as did her shape, crouched
like morning fog upon a hollow. Day or night, rain or shine, she stayed.
In a downpour at dusk, we tried to help her, swiped a shower curtain
from the guest bath, to drape in the arms of the tree, fixed with clothespins
and best of intention. We left a radio blaring through the night, wakened

to crying, same as last month's hen that hatched three fuzzy balls
with legs she led half a week, feeding, gathering them in when
they strayed, until in a single obliterating moment they were taken.
For days she wandered, yelping, searching aimlessly. Now shells
lie asunder like smashed crockery, she's afoot and again, loose
in the air— that sound the world makes.

Sean Sexton