Summer's Last Tomato

Peg Robarchek

Misshapen,
as large and knobby
as a boxer's fist, with tributaries
at the stem where the mottled purple
skin split.

There will be no more
until next year,
unless one counts those perfect globes
of hard red in the supermarket.

I take it home.
It is already dead ripe,
its flesh a skosh too soft under that ugly skin.
I open it gently, watch the seeds and juices flee
the serrated blade, seep
across the butcher block.

I slice thick slabs so sweet
my mouth aches.

Repast

"… I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten…"
Joel 2:25

Replete,
the locusts have feasted, swallowing
whole years. Years intended for gathering in
courage, strength, the yeast of love.
Years when the dark wine
of joy could be counted on
to burst its tender
skin,
bathe us
in abundance.

Left in the locusts' wake,
the thin broth
of survival.

First famine,
then drought. We starve,
dry crumbs that hunger
after your promise
to restore us as warm loaves
sipping
sweet cream butter.

Harvest

First feast
hosted by the next generation:
turkey tender crisp in my roasting pan,
now hers.

Tradition
down the disposal, replaced with cranberries,
apples, orange zest and sourdough,
savory

with parsley,
rosemary, thyme moving beyond
yesterday's sage. Favorite new dish:
her easy grace

from sink to stove
to counter. Served with sweet tea steeped
in her absence of tension; beans seasoned with
her deep laugh

and not a quarter
teaspoon of the perfect spice I measured out for every
holiday, afraid of what might spill and stain.
Here she is,

testing done
and loose in her sockets, presenting her feast
of promise – an autumn harvest so abundant I dared
not dream.



Peg Robarchek's memoir, *Welcome to the Church of I Don't Have a Clue: My irreverent, post-evangelical, sacred life*, was published in 2023. Her poetry has been published in various journals, including Rust+Moth, Naugatuck River Review, Kentucky Review, Prime Number, Blast Furnace, Red Earth Review, and the Poetry in Plain Sight initiative of the North Carolina Poetry Society. A poetry collection, *Inventing Sex*, was published in 2015 (Main Street Rag). Peg runs, meditates, and was rescued by Zora the cat during COVID.