BRIAN SIMONEAU

The Man Who Counted His Chickens

Before they hatched he built for them in mud a home
bound by taut wire. He waited there and imagined
waking to chores, collecting eggs and mucking nests,
the sweep of wings against his skin. When they started
to molt, he learned to count feathers by their shadows
under starlight. He trained himself to hear a fox
blinking miles away, to spot a single thread
of rust-red fur snagged in the grass. We who once sat
at his table, whose little ones once helped him feed
his flock, we watched his fences stretch to neighbors' yards
and past, the woods behind our homes filled every day
with his hammer, with scraping steel. When he wandered
the empty roads at night, rifle on his shoulder,
we heard his breath and under it we heard our names.