Elegy for a poached shark

A little boy is prodding you with a stick. It is
his first encounter with the acrid smell of death, with
the raw pink wetness of our insides, of those hunks
of you gouged out and stolen, of rare parts divorced. Cold

and merciless thing, the boy’s mother thinks,
pulling his small hand and shivering at your empty
upturned eye. The surf is August-warm, and lays
foam gladioli around you. A jet screams

Overhead. They found you by your crown and pulled
you gasping into space; your gills stretched wild and mad
like cuts, before their serrated blades dug in and took each
profitable piece as though you bore them fruit. You did not
die on foreign soil. Instead, in all your pain, you were
thrown back, a boat with no oars, to drift, to die
alone. To wash up, humiliated, having lived
the only way you knew—having ate when you hungered, and left

all you did not need. Perhaps you did kill. Perhaps often
and with pleasure. But, I think—as your blood leaves
dark stains on the sand—
you never murdered anything.