

Two Poems: “Tomatoes” and “Asian Shrimp”

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Pennsylvania Poets Series, September 26, 2018

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Asian Shrimp

What brute reduced forty-seven countries
and the foods of four billion to an entrée
so named? I prefer not to know, for the answer
will be too close: someone I already treasure
or passingly greet, who’s dwelled from birth
in my adopted town, who as a youth unearthed
a glittering kingdom interred in a remaindered
cookbook, then dreamed of it nightly but never
went, yet worked to bring a shadow of a replica
of what it seemed to be, to Dutch Pennsylvania.

Tomatoes

They ended this week, close to November,
freak snowfall downing tree limbs
onto gardens, awnings, bikes. Temperatures

had kept tomatoes swelling into fall,
in biblical rain. My scientist friend says this
is apocalypse, we're in it. He's unsentimental –

he deals with it all day, as some do the economy –
but, teacher of English, I'm shocked each time.
I had filed the weather as synecdoche,

along with polar melt, national debt, the flight
of the cranberry north – all fine images.
Labor Day, I blanched the annual landslide,

raced them as they wept on the counter,
bleeding, splitting, growing black spots,
practically moving, punishing procrastinators

by exploding or simply dying. I said in jest
they'd made me farm wife for the weekend,
even cherished the moment of *rats!* I've lost

the recipes I marked in books all winter,
tabbouleh, simple pizzas, Israeli salad.
One day when the world is even warmer,

we'll rail against loss, how nothing tastes as it did,
how "American" could once be said
with apple pie, how we used to bid

our plants goodbye at season's end,
knowing they'd be back – not always where
we wanted them to be – and how we spent

our winters shoveling snow, our summers by the sea.

From Adrienne Su, *Living Quarters: Poems* (San Francisco, CA: Manic D Press, 2015).
This collection can be found at Barnes and Noble: <https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/living-quarters-adrienne-su/1120333675>.