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Far and Near

Xiaoly Li

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Xiaoly Li is a poet, photographer and computer engineer who lives in Massachusetts. Prior to writing poetry, she published stories in a selection of Chinese newspapers. Her photography, which has been shown and sold in galleries in Boston, often accompanies her poems. Her poetry is forthcoming or has recently appeared in *Spillway*, *American Journal of Poetry*, *PANK*, *Atlanta Review*, *Chautauqua*, *Rhino*, *Cold Mountain Review*, *J Journal*, and elsewhere. She has been nominated for Best of the Net twice, Best New Poets, and a Pushcart Prize. Xiaoly received her Ph.D. in electrical engineering from Worcester Polytechnic Institute and her Masters Degree in computer science and engineering from Tsinghua University in China.

Far and Near

Red Planet hums millions of miles away
as we expand our wings deep into space.

Yet we are hiding. Hiding from viruses
that are invisible and older than us.

The world is trembling as we cut down forests,
boil the wild with our hot pot.

Now virions sneak into our cities,
stifle our breathing.

In this hazy morning, winter jasmine blooms
spring, a pair of robins hop in the backyard grass.

And so bright and big is the moon — awoken and
humbled, I want to touch it with my sanitized hands.

How Corona Evolves or Makes Us Evolve, or We Have to Evolve Together

— video chat with Mom on a busy snowy day in March

Are you all staying home now?

Yes, our poetry group meets online.

We have five hundred people meditating twice a day at home at the same time.

And we only take walks in our neighborhood.

Don't go out, just do Taichi in your backyard.

We walk the opposite side of the street when people pass by.

China is the safest place now; do you go out?

We still stay at home. A manager calls every day to check our temperatures. We need to persist.

What are you eating, do you get things you need?

Rice-millet porridge, walnuts, Brazil nuts, pine nuts, and a Fuji apple

Don't go to stores.

These were home-delivered and left at our front door.

Soak vegetables in soda water to keep them clean.

Oh, good idea, will try

How is our granddaughter in the hot spot of NYC?

We have pleaded and she's not coming back.

She said she can concentrate better on the work over there
and prevent cross-contaminating us.

And she wants to read more books in the evening.

Does she stay at home and learn to cook herself?

She works from home but jogs along the river.

And we told her to make ginger, lemon, and honey tea.

Sometimes we shop online for her to grab a delivery time slot.

She used to dine out. Look at this photo what she has made last night!

*Wow, very impressive. Roasted chop,
red peppers and asparagus, fresh colored and shining.*

Do tell her not to go out and to exercise at home.

We can't keep warning her.

She wants to hear life's other stories.