

ROBIN CHAPMAN

TOMATO SEASON

Daily down the rows of head-high plants
hung sticky with sap and browning leaves
we hunt the red globes of the Better Boys,
the Celebrities, the pendulous pouches
of Amish Paste, the red lanterns, large
and small, of Romas, hundreds of marbles
of Sweet One Hundreds, stalking the rarest
prize of all, the heavy Brandywine—lumpy
green-shouldered broken bounty, its heavenly
body too intense in tomato flavor to waste
on the assembly line of blanching, peeling,
saucing, freezing, drying; and so we feast
right now on each misshapen ripeness—let
winter's store of lesser, perfect shapes
remind us of summer's sweetest taste.