

Red

I. Red: the earth that dreamed you.

She collected in between times, as the light was coming or going. We watched her through the cracks, her body wide and forgiving as the trees, walking along the creases in the earth, all her skirts leveling the dirt, pulling it towards her as she stepped, stopped and bent down to pick. We watched her examine each round rock, brushing it off with her calloused fingertips, turning it round and round before opening her mouth to consume it. We watched her hold the stones on her tongue, rolling them around and around like songs before spilling them back onto the earth again— shiny, red and realized.

II. Red: all my wounds, her kisses.

Wherever you go, I will be there also, she sustained from the heaviest point of the bleeding heart blossoms. She surfaced in springtime, swelling with the world as it noticed her, buzzing ruddy in my pauses. *Some people love me*, she pontificated, her voice layered on lips and fingernails. *You have no power over me*, she blurred my vision, burning my ears as I hated all her sanguine limbs and wires. Her essence: a Blood Moon eclipsing my face, saturating the night with her presence. *We are one* she announced at the dinner table, pulling her body towards my shoulders, framing my face with her thighs, swinging her legs from my precipice, her fingers at my jawline, both of us radiating redness. *You can't stop me*, she exploded as I pinched her, bursting red even in her death, staining my fingers carmine. I borrowed my mother's makeup, but she was redder than layers and layers of clay.

III. Red: she clings to me in terror, my daughter unable to speak. I sing—

Hush little redness, little prophets on horses.
Hush little capillaries, bloodhounds and poppies.
Hush little pregnancies, rose-breasted grosbeaks. Hush little eruptions, seraphim and sirens.
Hush little rage, little nipples and madder. Hush little poison, little pain.
Hush little poet. There's nothing to blush about.

IV. Red: Ruby

At the canyon in the rain, at the bend below the falls, Ruby pulled my body by my bicep to the finish line where we sat in the runoff drinking the creek with the rest of our cross country team.

V. Dream in Red

I keep dreaming that my
mortification
is embracing me.
A long embrace, our chests
pressed together.
My back body mooned
into his heaviness.
His arms
around me.
His face bowed over
the shelf of my
shoulder.
His cheek to my neck.
And I keep saying
'you have no idea
how much this means to me'.

VI. Red: my coals, my crux.

What would it cost you to slow down? asked the aspens, turning red again, gathering in gutters, making way for snow.

What would it cost you to expose your face? asked the river, revealing dusty stones studded in her sodden muck, her glimmer gone.

What would it cost you to blush for the last time? asked the poppy, having first bloomed red last week.

To be shameless? asked the sky, to let your crimsons and carmines, vermillions and scarlets lay limp around your ankles?

What would it cost you, asked the red, *to love your enemy?* wearing my name on her cheeks, holding my heat between her ears, writing thin cursive poems down the inside of my thighs.

VII. Red: a love letter.

I see you at my hilltops, starting fires— waving flags on the frontlines of my picking, fists and tearing. Holding me above your head, bleeding to expand me, red thread between my pride and your mercy. I am vivid with your desire, vibrant red: my authenticity.

VIII. Red: my faith, my resting place.

Today I pulled my truth behind me
on a spider-thin lead—
a floating thing, a flash of red
in yesterday's memory.

Today one hand over the other
is my devotion—
as I pull my redness back
to her body
and rest.