Red Essay

by Anna Morrison

https://bombmagazine.org/articles/two-poems-by-anna-morrison/

It's impossible to be continuous.

Before, during, and after,
you are a bread basket.

You are numerous, nebulous clouds.

Alarms come and go. Smoke

clears,

smoke follows.

Many yesterdays were baking days—a nice plump mouthful. Not the woods, but a suburb of Philly where they worship,

where they put a second mortgage on their home to build a sanctuary.

We begin with a girl named after her outfit.

Everyone knew about the teacher,

but the little pot of butter did not understand the dangers.

Gathering nuts, making nosegays,

counterfeiting her voice:

the wolf thereby provided with his dinner.

They baptized him again.

Listening to stories next to Grandmother on the wood-plank bed: you must change the ending,

you must walk quietly and patiently.

Precocious girls preach all the rules.

I say wolf but

potlucks and prayer circles.

Hymns and ruffled stockings. Call and response.

Breathe privately.

Mr. Smoothie stares,

gives you piña colada for free.

You get to burn from every angle, concealed but also reduced to hiding places.

Everyone knows diagnoses are fluid,

equilibrium is elusive.

This only becomes mental illness if it causes her harm.

A red Minnie Mouse skort

activates a growth spurt. Choose a fence that enhances your mood for hearing sermons. Flicker liturgically in a food court. Even the waxy cups are watching. It's dark inside a wolf.

She could write a little essay on any subject and in such a vacuum as to preserve fruit.

Pacific Coast flaunts sprightly

and flippant

charms. I believe I am asexual, multi-colored houses.

Speechless and clumsy,

I never know what will happen.

Preoccupied

with the idea of kissing, but shaky on what may follow,

she would disdain

that level of admiration.

The earth quakes during palm readings.

I want to become her drive-in church.

Tectonic plates move constantly, but they move slow:

when stress overcomes friction, tongues of fire happen. New freckles are found.

He tells me he likes to read, and I dust off my shelves. I tell him I have not kissed anyone, and he rapes me.

If you can't stand the first person, get out of the kitchen.

She has weapons in her basket. Or custards. Wine and cake—she may have been sampling.

There are similar but escalating sleights of hand: he wants to eat both the girl and the food in her basket. Basically she is stupid.

Past specialness

doubles the likelihood.

In such young women,

traumas curl

till Christmas ribbon.

The greatest predictor of red

is red. Smoke detectors sound

in the bakery.

Remove

batteries.

The clothed wolf kisses her hand on bended knee.

Place the knots just so and they are colorful bows.

I origami

(wolf-bait).

Even my motives wear a red mask.

Home is full of windows and pillows. We named the fog

Svetlana. She overwhelms cyclists,

squints for deer. My beloved gave me a red-tendrilled succulent

after an argument.

We reconceive as romantic comedy—Pretty Woman with Protestantism instead of prostitution: I think it's wrong when she buys me all the dresses. She thinks it's exotic when I drop a fork down my nightgown.

Adept with reins, she says yes

when a cowboy asks if I'm her girlfriend,
daughter, bestie, or wife.

There's an active volcano—
we venture by land and air,
by sea and lava tube.

To fit the tooth of a phantom requires no dainty gnawing.
One common way to collect a tooth: sedate the person who owns it.
She enjoyed a rare night of perfect sleep because I didn't even scream.

Hold off to be in order. Tailored hides coax me:

you too could become a luxurious cloak.

A curious beast caught some hurt. They risk bodies for what reward. An upset at every step. Feeler-ringlets grow the surface. Reach down before lips crystalized, before fingers grew sparry.

Lava here moves vegetarian. People and animals run to escape.

Plants burn.

You may not smother them. (Reboot compassion.)

Basalt draperies

nap in perfect traps. Cave creatures eat their own discarded exoskeletons.

When flashlights fail:

rest your head on your forepaws.

Words practice

cartwheel

total darkness.

If you told someone you are caving,

lava straws and lavacicles point their toes like helpful arrows.

Do not lean against the slime.

The slime is alive.

You would kill it.

It was too loud and bright inside the wolf. The oven timer wants up out of the earth. Basket fern. I need to eat something in order to continue.

Even the creeping herbs brandish grooves. You are not supposed to stir, but zeal

tries metals.

Reaching preludes viscous fires,

hissing coral reefs.

It's Waves tilt their heads

to kiss the red edges.

e to be virtuous.

Tidal movements

lapse into kitsch and steam. I am ashamed

of my passion. Hazards stroke a Leviathan,

and the pleasure is mine. I feel,

and I need to know.