

Red Essay

by Anna Morrison

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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 nosebags,
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

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.