

on red

yesterday i bought red boots. it was a good purchase, i guess, because today someone told me if i was a color, i would be red. of course, then i started seeing red in everything—the neon sign pulsating on the skyline. the sauce dripping from my fork as i reach over for another bite of gnocchi. the singular strawberry i stole. the careful scribble on the sidewalk, dedicated to a María. the color of a cold day on a stranger's cheeks. the lipstick my mother tried on and said she was too old for. the hair dye in the sink, pooling at the drain like blood. the fickle fire burning in my heart.

i bought the red boots at a small secondhand shop. i like to think about how some woman of the world is watching over me, placing them at my very favorite shop, waiting for me to find them. this woman must have also been a girl once—head turned up to the red sky, unable to pull away from the drunken city lights glittering red with potential, red sauce stain on her crisp white blouse, scribbling in her little red notebook filled with furious poems and furious dreams, red rage accumulating on her cheeks every time she was made to feel small.

maybe when she was nineteen, she had also bought the red boots from a secondhand shop. some woman of the world before her had grown up into these boots, was watching over her, nudging her to the right place for her to find. this woman too, was once a girl—purse filled with red lipstick and illegible scribbles and an inexplicable longing, heart aching at the sight of an open wide red sky through the wires of her cage, looking down at the bloody hanger and her bloody hands.

our wild passions into laughable madness, our unencumbered rage into forgettable silence. yet we live. we live on and live long, long enough to watch another generation put on the red boots, generation after generation of red autumn leaves, red sunsets, red scribbles, red obsessions, red courage, coursing through red veins, bottled up in a girl's red heart, and it's called art, some recursive relentless portrait of a lady on fire.