

Methaphor

by Arlene Tribbia

Red is a boy you once loved, the fireman's son and you remember how you were a shy girl in a bedroom playing *Solitaire* when he tapped you on your shoulder, took you in his arms and that first kiss felt like a deck of cards shuffling fast inside your chest.

Red is also the strawberry field town where you grew up, but your eighteen year old self had to leave, so you packed a sleeping bag with apples, berries, clean underwear, cotton socks and poems and on the road you never missed a moment of merlot or sangria or beer and never failed to say: let's do it, come onlet's just do it, we only live once.

Another red is built with bricks from the ten thousand memories you have known: your grandmother's kitchen where you sat drinking a glass of milk or sneaking cherries from a bowl meant for jam, the skip and trip down the front steps, your skinned knees, when the flag meant America, when the long-haired boys of summer raced their Pontiacs and Chevys down Baltimore Avenue, when all you needed was love, these are the moments you saved under the glass of your mind.

The best red is you, still eleven years old in your bedroom sitting at your small desk and none of your childhood friends have died yet: you stare at a sheet of notebook paper, awk written all over it in teacherly ink, you chew on a peppermint as you erase dragons and sentences and words, the paper cuts your small finger, you watch a drip form on its tip while the snow swirls silent and lovely outside the window — your life is officially a metaphor or as the freckled boy who sat in front of you in class used to call it before he died that spring: methaphor.

