



Reds: I

The significance of red in my life has intensified over time. It peaked when I started to bleed. I mean *really* bleed. To the point that I thought I would end in a big reddish puddle.

When I got my period I knew exactly what it was and, the first night, said nothing about it. In truth, the color of my menarche was more brown than red, like earth coming out of me. But I knew it would get a lot redder. Or better said, I knew there was a lot more red to come. That's why I pulled out a bunch of old comics from the pit of my closet and stayed in my room all night, reading, eating useless food and enjoying my last few moments free of what all that reddening would bring.

I know people who hate pastels, green, even gray. But how to explain why I've hated red? How to explain it without explaining that, after countless periods and problems, half my wardrobe became stained with it? How the sight of it endlessly oozing from me terrified me. Would it have been as shocking if my body began bleeding brown again, as if merely a disintegrating Aztec figurine?

Most girls feel red-shocked when they start to bleed, as if they did something wrong. It is the moment when being a woman becomes exhausting. Not long after my moment, our parents took us to Disney World. For me, the excitement changed just as the plane lifted. I silently suffered until the seatbelt light was finally switched off, knowing I'd bled through my clothes and the items meant to protect them. I had on clear jellies and a white and yellow summer outfit. There was nowhere for red to hide. I wanted to suck the blood back up into me.

Throughout high school I used to cramp so tight I was regularly sent home. By then we had a VCR and a video store within walking distance of home and, despite many viewings curled up in a ball of pain, my love of film grew. During college I would call my mom just to tell her I was tormented by my reds. It always helped. She could sympathize because she had reds too. After college I traveled on a motorcycle for months and didn't bleed the entire time. The doctors said it was normal and that they could re-start the blood if I wanted. I'm certain they would've also punched me in the face, had I wanted.

When the blood returned, it did so exponentially, meaning every year there was more. After teaching film at a college for nearly a decade, I'd reached the point where I could more easily count the days in a month when I wasn't bleeding than when I was. On the hunt for a trustworthy doctor, I learned that finding a good gynie was harder than finding a good lover. Many can figure out how to please a vag. Few can figure out how to cure one. After half of Chicago tried to figure mine out, I flew home to see a family doctor who greenly referred to the vag as 'the environment.' I spent so much time, money and energy trying to deal with the ever-present reds. If anger is a brief madness, the period is a week-long. When I was absolutely convinced that I was losing my mind, the surgeries began; each one more painful and invasive than the previous. The bleeding would only stop after the third one. And then the dreams began...