

RED

Once it was red with just a hint of grey around the edges.

But now my world has become what I've made of it. I often reflect on my birth. Not that I remember it. I simply reflect from a present day perspective.

She pushed me from her womb, forcing my then flexible body through the tight tunnel of her longing towards the bright light of ignorance, or of what seemed to me ignorance for I had no knowledge of any light brighter than the dull diffuse glow of dependence. Someone grabbed my heels - strangely cold in the thin air of their world - and pulled.

I was in a place of aliens that was white and bright and nothing to do with me. I gulped my first cold breath and cried.

For a long time following birth I had smooth elastic skin and an innocence of eye. The reds were no longer muffled. They were harsh sharp shapes on my retina. Like chillies or the spilling of blood.

One day as I played with the familiar stump between my thighs I found that terror of childhood - the first pubic hair. And I wept for my loss of youth. The facial hair that sprouted soon after had to be razored from my chin with cold steel.

Colours lost their vibrancy. I began to take an interest in shape and form - swellings behind a blouse, the erotic curves of my acoustic guitar. And I longed to discover the texture of Her skin. My world had shifted from red to black and white.

When fully trained in the monochrome of some profession, I took her hand in marriage. She held my left in her right hand at the altar. The posy of flower stems in her other hand got crushed by her grip as we swore to love each other forever. Or at least until one of us died. Even now, in late middle life, I can smell the crushing of that foliage in her left hand as we took our vows.

And my life has become what I've made of it.

Oh, there have been moments of interest and intrigue - of colour even. The birth of Amanda, for instance, was light in the darkness. And when Adam was born I found myself with her hand again in mine. I said "Breathe." and "Push." and wiped her sweating brow with a blue surgical cloth. I could see nothing but red. - Blood pouring from her birth canal, the ruby in a ring I'd bought her before we married, a bunch of poppies that Amanda had picked for her.

Then the midwife reached between her legs to cradle and guide Adam's head into this world. I felt as impotent as Adam was at that moment of birth and I turned away.

He too cried as his dripping body dangled upside down in the hands of anonymous green surgeon.

Amanda is fifteen now. She has two small mounds growing beneath her blouse. And my life has become what I've made of it - a house, an office, a ribbon of tarmac joining one to the other. I have a bank balance, a leather chair and a wife. My office walls are painted grey and there are lines of time on my face. Tomorrow I will buy a rose and put it in a vase on my desk.

Put a little vibrant red back into my life.