

## Red, like love

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To Fabio and Serena

The nurse stopped and leaned against the edge of the stage, “Now think about that day and tell me what colour you imagine it to be.” She smiled and pointed with her chin at the first us sitting in front. There were about twenty of us, sitting anyhow on the seats. We stayed silent and, perhaps without realizing, we had all put our hands on our bellies. Some of us were caressing them. “Green. Like the hope that everything will be all right.” “Yellow. Like the sun I wish was there.” I got lost. White, cold, like the neon lights in the operating theatre, like those in the butcher’s. It was blasphemous, almost, on that occasion. And yet, the joy that should have filled my heart occasionally faded. That frost took its place, taking me back to less than a year earlier, under that white light, as they scraped away my becoming a mother. “Light blue, like the baby boy about to be born,” I heard to my right. I came back to the present. I said listlessly, “Green, like the scrubs the midwives give you.”

Here’s the day. Pain. Fear. Anger, at those around you, and it keeps telling you what to do, while you just want it all to end, and as soon as possible. Breathe! Push! Breathe again. Push! Push again! No green hope. No yellow like the sun. Red, like the midwife’s face.

“I can see the head. Push!” Red, like her latex gloves now covered with blood. “They gave me twenty stitches, inside and out, I was so lacerated,” said the one in the front row, on her second pregnancy. Those who have already had a baby should be forbidden from telling their stories. Red, like the lacerated flesh. Red, like the fear of dying during the birth. “Push! One last push and it’s over!”, the midwife says. I can hear the crying at last. The cold white has faded. I let my head fall back and look at the ceiling. They put a bundle on my chest, and I see a little face looking out, a little wrinkled, red, still blood-stained, and so very, very beautiful.

If she asked me now, I’d say “Red” to the nurse. Red like the love I’ve just given birth to.

di Translated by Di Pietro & Nuzzi (Reviewed by Prof. Rolf Cook)