

2016

Primary Colors

Allie Vugrincic
Denison University

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.denison.edu/exile>



Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Vugrincic, Allie (2016) "Primary Colors," *Exile*: Vol. 62 : No. 1 , Article 12.
Available at: <http://digitalcommons.denison.edu/exile/vol62/iss1/12>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the English at Denison Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Exile by an authorized editor of Denison Digital Commons.

Primary Colors

by Allie Vugrincic

Walter Brown was frozen where he stood. From the stoop of his house on 8th avenue, he hadn't seen the yellow mustang rounding the corner, and the driver of that mustang, it seemed, hadn't seen his neighbor striding across the street.

The woman had waved to Walter, and smiled, and started across the road like she had something important to say. It struck him that he didn't know her name. She'd lived there forever, or so it seemed—truth be told Walter had no idea when the woman had moved into the little white house across the street. She had merely been a part of the aesthetic of the neighborhood from his narrow view out the window. Every morning she would walk out to her little Blue Volkswagen Beetle at the same time, dressed smartly in a pair of good slacks and a blouse, and head off, Walter presumed, to the city. People who dressed like that always worked in the city, or else wanted to work in the city. Walter had never noticed her before, but now, looking at her still face staring up from the pavement, he had the idea that she might have been beautiful.

A gentle wail rose on the summer breeze, like someone was calling from far away. She had been coming to talk to Walter, but why? He recalled mindlessly waving to the woman once or twice when they both happened to be on their way to their cars—his, a black BMW, utterly ordinary next to her charming little car. He'd known it by the color before, that blue, like the way he imagined the ocean would look if you stared out from some remote island. Now he saw other things, too: a charm dangling from the dash, a scrape along the back bumper, a flower window sticker. That Volkswagen had a past, a story, and maybe the woman did too.

Red danced down the street as the ambulance arrived. *Red*, Walter noticed. Walter felt he was noticing a lot of things, like the way that the blood spattered on the pavement looked like freckles, maybe the very freckles he saw spattered across his own face in the mirror every morning.

The EMTs rushed over, but they knew there was no need. The woman was gone, and all that remained was her Blue Volkswagen, still in the driveway, and the red on the pavement, and the yellow mustang that came and went with only the sounds of engine and bone cracking.

Walter suddenly wished he were downtown, looking out across the Monongahela at the antique lifts that still clung to the Incline. Sometimes, when Walter was feeling frivolous, he would buy a ticket and take the lift, just to stand at the top, see the same sights he always saw, and go back down.

The woman was covered with a white cloth, and the cops arrived. They asked Walter a bunch of questions that didn't make a lot of sense to him, like "What did you see?"

When all he said was "red," the officer asked again. Walter said, "Red, I saw red and blue and a fleeting yellow." The cop's brows knitted together into what looked like one big brow to Walter. He told Walter he was a witness, and Walter thought, why would I be that?

"You know," Walter said, "I've never had my first kiss."

The officer lowered his pen and raised his eyes slowly. He had asked Walter if the driver had swerved.

Walter walked away then, and the officer let him. He slipped closer to the scene of the accident, intimately close, and stared as the EMTs lifted the body onto a stretcher and hid it away in the rear of the ambulance. Had she ever had a first kiss? She seemed the type who would have had one, maybe by the fountain at the point just at dusk when all the lights were coming on. It would've been romantic, and it would've been with someone who she thought she loved.

"I would've liked to kiss her," Walter said.

One of the EMT's looked up. She was a young woman, though not too young. Her brown hair was tied carefully back in a high ponytail to keep it well out of her face, and she had freckles just like Walter.

"I'm sorry?" the EMT said.

"I said I would've liked to kiss her. I didn't know her that well, but I think it might have been nice."

The EMT stared at Walter. Her eyes were murky blue, like the rivers that ran through downtown. Walter remembered sitting on a bench once and watching a tiny tugboat move a huge rusted barge. It seemed like such an impossible thing, what that boat was doing. It pushed upriver, carrying ten times its weight without a complaint. Did it ever wonder if there would come a day it wouldn't make it up the river? A day when its engines would die, and the barge would be set adrift with nothing left to carry it onward?

A second EMT pushed between Walter and the brown-haired woman and retrieved something indistinct from the ambulance. The brown-haired woman watched her coworker, and Walter watched her, and neighbors and spectators gathered around the scene and watched Walter and the cops and the freckles on the pavement. The world felt like too much, like it was choking Walter and that in a moment it would all be over for him and he might die without ever kissing anyone.

When the EMT looked away, Walter leaned in and kissed her, a quick soft movement that was not meant to obtrude.

The EMT's face reddened, and Walter wondered if he had done something wrong. Maybe he had. Maybe he had been the one to hit the woman with his car. Walter suddenly wasn't sure.

"Oh," the EMT said.

"Sorry." Walter didn't know why he was apologizing.

"It's okay," she said, and she shifted her weight. The red lights from the ambulance kept changing the color of her face, and as the crowd grew around the scene a wild din began to rise.

"I don't think it is okay," Walter said, and he slowly walked back to his house, wishing there was less red in the world and more blue.