

DON RUSS

RED FLOWERS

By Red Flower Bagheera meant fire, only no creature in the Jungle will call fire by its proper name. Every beast lives in deadly fear of it, and invents a hundred ways of describing it.

—Rudyard Kipling, *The Jungle Book*

The sky goes blind, angry socket
buzzing deep in evening's smoky haze.
But always the gaze again full blown
and under other midday suns, not new,
the bloody rose of a brother's wound.

Under love's old lenient moon
a bone-box gift, inside it a tulip heart's
split bloom, the lonely lover's own.
And in a dream the root-bound brain
burns petals above a clotted drain.