

**from 'Three bloody words'
Tiré de 'Trois mot maudits'**

Stephanie Bolster

*Une re-écriture au féminin des contes de fées pour faire valoir le sang
qui coule des trois mots maudits: 'happily-ever-after.'*

for years i have tried to get out of this mess of words this narrative
crawl through spaces between letters out into something real but this
is as real as it gets & i always trip on commas fall down deep into the
text i was born with my bloody inheritance of satin & pearls

they thought it a joke

that i forgot my name wasn't sure who i was
after that long tumble plunk at the bottom rabbit's rear-end vanishing
through an impossible door no one cared who i was just made me
scrub hundreds of teacups wash soiled gloves fetch pipes because i
looked the type

i tried to explain but they were too busy assigning chores ticking off
who'd done what so i slammed down my black patents refused to
bathe flamingoes pluck porcupine quills give the duchess a makeover
instead i shimmered like dear cheshire left them wide-eyed with only
my nasty grin that proved i was still alice

it wasn't a wolf but a prince

i found in the cottage trying to cram
gran's arthritic foot into some little shoe he beamed when he saw me
clomp in ringlets swinging told me to unlace my hiking boots peel off
thick socks try it on for size but i was a 9doubleC couldn't even get my
toes in he growled '& you looked so damn sexy in red' stalked off to
find the poor slip of a thing destined to tread palace floors quieter than
a mouse

i followed my story

like hanel's trail of crumbs away from the witch
thru the woods hoping i'd come to a clearing & find the birds had
eaten every last word but they were stale hard as stone sparrows
choked & the trees didn't stop pulling me on past word after word
glowing in the moonlight so when i glimpsed the tower i hoped for a
castle some gorgeous wordless prince but it was only gingerbread fat
hanel still feasting on the witch's definitions & her toothless spewing
out my story grinning 'i expected you'

if my hair had been shorter

i might have been safer capable of resisting
his plea his tug on my blonde rope but he looked so small a child fallen
into the sea waiting for rescue my strands just what he needed
climbed up thinking he was saving me but my scalp bled agony of dis-
tress as he rose clinging to the only beauty he saw in me how easy to
snip it off tumble him back to earth try to get away from this tower
find a little cottage somewhere the comfort of no locks but my own

lived with him all those years

& then she comes along sweet prissy
little girl in a blue nightgown where does he find these types? & her
entourage of boys fat & slobby with their uppity accents moaning for
mum & dad & some dog or other they think i'm a pest flitting sparks
sizzle them every now & then but i only want him to notice me again
hair golden pinned to my scalp eyes all blue twinkling bright wings he
never needed anyone else i was mother sister daughter lover to him
now slammed in my boudoir while she rocks him to sleep in that
nightgown & the boys say i sound like a trapped wasp

so i thought i'd escape

by hitching a lift out of the forest with a grizzled man in a pickup my hair still tangled from last night two wolf scratches on my cheek we sped along 99 out of the mountains into something like reality a map distances you could plot & see what was coming only occasional trees but his arm came up around me voice saying my eyes so big & beautiful lips so soft what long hair you have & i knew it was the same old story

in my story i don't even know what happened

it was already written
before i came along so i just put one foot in front of the other because
there was nothing else it was the same for all my friends i had two sisters
i think maybe three one of my parents was mean i forget which
somebody combed my silken hair made me pretty dresses married
me to some prince or else an animal who turned into one had a couple
of kids because it was written otherwise i would never bring anyone
into this story the whole time they were being born those three bloody
words running thru my head happily ever after