

Bloody Mary

by Laura Bibby

*The night is darkening round me,
The wild winds coldly blow;
But a tyrant spell has bound me,
And I cannot, cannot go*
~ *The Night is Darkening Round Me, Emily Brontë* ~

Death is a waking slumber, a disposition between dream and nightmare where all the events of life seep into your bones as they crumble to dust.

It is not supposed to be like this. I was to be welcomed into the warm embrace of God, enveloped in His love until the end of time after everything I did on earth in his name.

Not suspended in this empty nothingness.

Of course, I know where I am. I know this is purgatory, or some form of it and I suppose I should not be surprised after the life I had; an unloved Queen persecuted for trying to rectify the cruel, misjudgments of her father.

Bloody Mary...

I remember them all, the hundreds of men who died by my hand. I lit those pyres from the seat of my throne and now I am doomed to remember the faces of those I made watch their loved ones perish. Cursed with feeling their bodies burn forever.

Much time has passed since my death and my name and reign are no doubt, long forgotten in the living world. Yet still I wait for Him, safe in the knowledge that he will come for me eventually.

Bloody Mary...

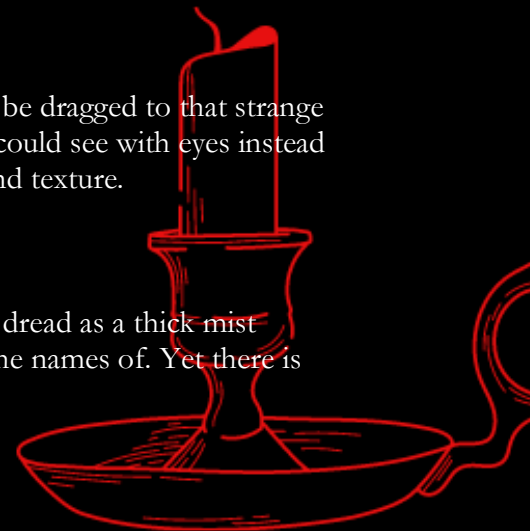
Often, I hear my name, or rather, the cruel moniker bestowed upon me by those who felt I was a little “extreme.” Sometimes I answer the call because I idiotically assume it is Him, but instead, I am plunged into another realm where voices speak of husbands and curses and I leave disappointed and confused. I am learning that there is too much pain in hope.

Bloody Mary...

This time it seems, I do not have a choice in the matter as I feel my spirit be dragged to that strange realm. My physical body is long gone, and it has been a long time since I could see with eyes instead of sensing; I can hardly remember what it is like to notice colour, detail and texture.

To look upon another and feel something.

I am *seeing* now however, for the first time since death and it fills me with dread as a thick mist surrounds me, undulating and swirling in colours I no longer remember the names of. Yet there is



light that shimmers beyond and I know it must be Him *finally*, so I reach for it, but fall straight through like wind pushing away fog. As the mist gradually clears, my new eyes adjust to my new surroundings and I manage to discern that I am looking into a room, darkly lit by the peculiar glow in one corner; something else I cannot name. Everything about the room is different from what little I remember of living. The furniture is unlike anything I recall before; carefully structured and shining with newness. I gather the room is a bedchamber and the bed itself is supported by a frame that shines like the blade of a sword in fire light. Next to that, on a small side table, gleams a glass goblet on a tall thin stem filled with liquid the colour of blood.

Blood. Warm and sticky. Dripping from my hands. Soaking into every pore.

Maybe this is the bedchamber of a Queen from another age? One of my successors? A relative perhaps? I am prickled with anger at the thought that this could be a relative of Elizabeth - my loathsome half-sister and daughter of that wretch of a woman Anne Boleyn.

Sudden movement by the door pulls me from my thoughts; a woman enters the bedchamber and walks straight over to the cursed light in the corner. At her touch, the light fades to nothing and the room is plunged into total darkness, but then the woman emerges from the gloom, holding a lit candle between shaking hands as she approaches me.

I panic that I have been discovered, especially when she speaks, her voice as clear as a bell on Sunday morn.

“Bloody Mary.” She says.

My whole being trembles at the words, twisting and lurching closer to the speaker. This call is my curse, I know it.

The woman stares, her dark eyes searching my face, even though I am sure I no longer have one.

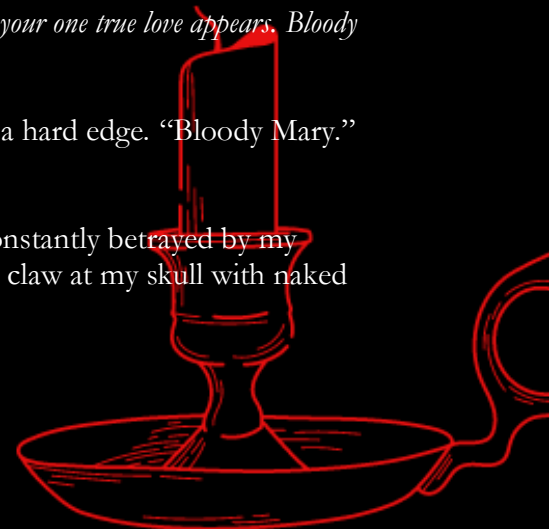
“Bloody Mary.” She says again, louder, blowing out the candle and returning the room to darkness once more. Her words are doing strange things to me, I feel as though I am being pulled into the room by an unseen force, my non-existent form becoming something tangible, human.

The woman frowns. “What were the ritual’s instructions again?” She asks herself, pulling a sheaf of parchment from the pocket of her dress.

Hold a candle to a mirror in a darkened room and chant her name, until the face of your one true love appears. Bloody Mary.

She narrows her eyes, a look of determination giving her lovely features a hard edge. “Bloody Mary.” She says again.

Her words are pure torture. I thought I knew pain as a living woman, constantly betrayed by my body but that is nothing compared to this. My bones crack loudly, and I claw at my skull with naked finger bones, plucking at the eyeless sockets.



*I am on fire.
I am all the bodies I burned at the stake.
I am every protestant soul engulfed in flames.
I am a traitor, a heretic, a ghost.*

I am my father's daughter.

I tried so hard to do the right thing, to right all the wrongs. I know I was hated for it, but I do not understand why I am being condemned this way, a pawn in a heathen ritual.

I ignore the twinge of uncertainty as I wonder if this *is* the Lord's work. Perhaps he has great plans for me after all. On the other hand, perhaps I was always destined to drag everyone down with me.

"It can't be true." The woman murmurs. "The ritual is supposed to reveal the face of my husband to be, not this."

Husbands. Rituals. Curses.

"It is the alternative" I hear myself say. "If you are to perish before marriage, I will appear instead."

The woman stands so close I am sure she can smell the boiling marrow of my bones. She really is a beauty, an epiphany draped in gold silk and I know then that I am truly cursed but now I know the consequences and it will never be worse than a lifetime spent without love.

If this is eternity, then there is still time for me to love and be loved yet, so despite the immeasurably agony, I reach for the woman beyond the veil and pull her to me.

Come unto me, little child, and burn until time's end in my terrible flame.

