

Redux

by Claire King

The first one convinced me that every vile thought I'd ever had about myself was true. The weight of his judgement crushed me slowly until I was so diminished I begged him to love me because I knew no-one else ever would.

When I found him again I peeled his tongue, word by contemptuous word, until he had nothing left but a scrappy shred of muscle flapping in his empty head, his eyes gaping and bewildered.

The second one could not bear to share me. He locked me in my lonely room where I waited for him to come. When finally he appeared, though, he was angry and threw rocks at my face.

When I found him again I took a poker from the fireplace while he slept and smashed his bones to powder. I sank my dog-teeth into his greasy jowls, spitting out his dead skin as I left.

I told the third one I could never love again. He smiled a sagacious smile and told me that is not the way.

'You must re-write the end that should have been,' he said. 'I will be here when you get back.' Then he sent me down dark labyrinths to find them again.

