

Apocryphal

By Laura Solomon

We are the words that did not make the grade.
We lurk in the blank space beyond the margins
lamenting our outcast status.

We are literature's untouchables.

We are the clichéd words, the words that didn't fit, didn't click.
According to Collins, we are 'of questionable authenticity', 'counterfeit', 'untrue'.

We hide in gutters and under grates, waiting to rise again,
to hit the road, to drive down highways and byways,
looking for that special opportunity,
that lock that our skeleton key may fit.

Waiting to turn and turn again.

Will you ever let us in?

We are not allowed on the shelves
and must content ourselves with lurking in the Ladies' Room
of various libraries,
reapplying our lipstick
and adjusting our frocks,
obsessively checking our reflections in mirrors,
afraid that we won't be there.

*What did we do wrong? We cry. Were our mini-skirts too short, our T-shirts too
tight?*

*Did we look like the types who might burp and fart in public
Or put our feet into our mouths?*

We fall upon deaf ears. We are shunted aside.
We watch the other words enter, the perfect ones, the beautiful ones, the chosen.
The A-listers.

Syllable by syllable,
they claim their place in the cannon.
We have been shunted off the Z-list.

We hold hands anyway and look for the door
that has been left open just a crack
the book that we may climb into
folding its covers over our tired bones.

A spine to call our own.