

The Berry Thief

She shook the berries out of the tree and stomped on what she did not want to steal.

There were a few broken branches but the earth took these back. The berries too in time, though first their juice stained the topsoil red.

And yet the harshest scarlet clung to the soles of her feet. No matter how much she scrubbed, the stain refused to come off. Her feet remained red raw and sticky for days.

Not only this, she found a twig shard under each of her thumbnails that tweezers could not reach. A day later, her thumb tips turned as scarlet as her soles and stung whenever she reached for the remaining stolen fruit.

It was not till the tree grew back and its new berries flowered that her flesh became unblemished and soothed. From that day onward, she shied from the berry tree and its ruby curse.