

# Who Are At War

**JON  
STONE**

08 BRAND

To Mr Salter, a word is a stout wire  
with which he hopes to pith the beast  
of his opponent's argument, scramble  
its brain, deactivate its nervous system.  
The defence will continue to breathe,  
the tongue go on wetly pulsing  
like it were itself alive, but all sense  
is reduced to confetti'd neural matter.

cornflower blue bottle miller's delight  
brooms and brushes ladder love corn blinks

clocks and watches stink device piss-a-bed  
dog posy pishamoolag lion's teeth

Another word is stalked around, sniffed  
where meaning has left a wreath of scent.  
From your vantage point, you watch counsel  
paw at it gingerly, then take it in their mouths,  
modified condyle locking to the cranium,  
and chew. The word gnawed to its core,  
the barrister then picks from his teeth  
filaments of bone, holds them to the light.

cock brumble lady's garters black blegs  
black spice country lawyers thief

cartwheel nosebleed break-your-mother's-heart  
devil's blossom bad man's oatmeal scabby hands

This word here, doggedly chased down.  
 The lot of them at it, scouring bundles,  
 storming through pages. Its impression  
 in the whiteness sighted, their expert tracker  
 is straight to the bolthole, his forefinger  
 a de-fletched tranquilliser dart. Then relief  
 as he trots up, the word limp in his mouth,  
 lays it at the feet of the hunting party.

mousemilk seven sisters virgin mary's nipple  
 littlegood devil's cups and saucers mare's tail

weather teller twelve o'clock john go to bed at noon  
 laughter bringer wink and peep drops of blood

The teabags are silk. The lifts constantly ping.  
 Men can pour hot water with the utmost care  
 but here is everything we dream to be.  
 Here are schoolboys with their names on books,  
 well-heeled servants and redundant Latin,  
 tossing in the air and catching,  
 still squealing, in their protractible jaws,  
 every ganglion of coded utterance.

fireflout lightnings sleepyhead  
 corn-rose wild maws cusk