

**Bourne**  
**toWrite...**  
creative writing  
workshops

## All the Better

by Saffron Swansborough

I keep an axe behind the door because one day I will need to put you out of your misery.

Your afternoon walks are becoming more prolonged and you are limping. When you curl up beside me by the fire, my arm rises and falls quickly on your back with the force of your panting. There are clumps of your hair in my hand.

I preen your thinning whiskers now. Brush your browning teeth. You've been mute for years but you can make yourself understood with a shake of your head or by narrowing your eyes.

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When we met, you couldn't wait to get me into bed. I'd just left school. Mum had sent me to the corner shop to get some supplies for Nan, who was ill, and I clocked you as soon as I walked out. Skulking around on the opposite side of the street. Handsome. Fur coat. I couldn't work out if you were a hippie or a raver. 1999. The cusp of change. You crept behind me through the park and I let you.

When I got to Nan's her neighbour said she'd gone into town – can't have been that poorly then – but I had a key. We checked in all the rooms then shared half a cigarette she'd left in her bedside ashtray. You dived into her wardrobe. Completely upfront about your taste for women's clothes and dressing up. I didn't mind. It was all new to me. Exciting. Other. You put on her lipstick and said, "Come here and kiss me, my dear" in your posh voice. You tasted of Regal and steak and I loved it.

My streetwise style back then - baseball cap, gold hoops – you adored. But it was that red Adidas hoodie you worshipped. I laid it on the bed the first time because I was worried about making a mess. When you kissed me, you restrained your tongue within my mouth so that I could breathe, but when you explored my body you unleashed it. It was as long and muscular as my arm, dripping like a sponge. You licked me over and over so that it wouldn't hurt. That was the only time you had me on my back. Afterwards, it was always from behind, and I was to keep my boots on. Like hooves, you said.

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Now you are incontinent and trying to hide it. Your tongue droops. Evolution dictates that you will die first. I'm only 45. I will have others.

When I sharpen my tools at the timber yard where I work, sparks fly and I think about how quickly I can do it. It will be messy, I'll need to drive you into the woods. It'll be the first time I see your blood. You saw mine on day one. You licked it off my thighs and that's when you called me Little Red.

We never discussed it but I know how you want things to finish at the end.