

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

## Halved

by Saffron Swansborough

Start with my eye, Emily told the surgeon, my right one.

Is all the work I do going to be on the same side? Dr Bradley asked.

Yes.

Right, let's work through your list and see where we go.

After my right eye I'd like you to work on my ear, Emily continued, as if ordering specific screwheads at the ironmongers. Calm, precise. Perhaps I'll only need one anaesthetic for all of this? And do the right nostril done as well.

The doctor looked over the top rim of his glasses at his patient. A woman approaching her fifties, athletic, no roots showing. The usual type of customer – a woman happy to pay to look better – but this was not a usual order.

Deadpan he replied, Yes we can do that.

Emily stared at the physiological diagram of the human frame on the wall. Half of it showed the exterior, blotting paper skin, the other half the skeleton, muscle and tissue. Dissected straight down the centre, its mouth leering at her.

She placed her right wrist upright on the table. I want you to do this. She waggled her fingers, a woodlouse on its back.

The whole hand? Aha, mmm yes. He made a note.

Emily tapped her foot and pointed to the back of her boot. The right foot? he asked. She extended it. From little toe to here, she said, pointing at her crotch. A skin graft. All the way.

The whole leg?

Have you done this much surgery before?

Yes, but not all at once. There will be six of us operating on you for Phase 1.

Emily pointed to her lips. I need you to do my mouth.

Just the right side?

Here (touching the corner) to here (she placed her finger on the Cupid's Bow).

The surgeon nodded at his clipboard. Before we move on to the internal organs he said, let's recap on what I have agreed to do so far? He cleared his throat.

Right eyeball is to be removed completely. To be sealed with the eyelid using skin glue. Irreversible. We will leave the ear intact but will block the external auditory canal with malleable cartilage. The same with the right nostril; to be obstructed. Right hand: digits are to be stitched together, fingertips infilled.

To the mouth we will apply a combination of skin glue supported by double-stitching from the right side upper to lower to central region of the mentolabial sulcus. He looked up. Your breathing should not be affected but you'll need to take sustenance through a straw? Emily nodded, eye contact unflinching like a warrior.

From your right buttock we will take 12-14% skin and tissue, and graft it upon the right leg. Internally, Phase 2, you have requested to have your right kidney removed, which is entirely healthy?

I have.

We can put it on a donor register, they go quickly.

I don't care what you do with it, I just don't want two any more.

Dr Bradley exhaled. Now things get much more complicated and there is a very real risk of death. The heart. You want the right ventricle and right atrium tied and blocked?

That's right, one route in and one route out.

Assuming you survive this...

You are asking for us to cauterise the brain. Specifically, the frontal and temporal lobes affecting memory? This will leave you unable to perform basic functions...

I can't anyway.

...Going to the toilet, eating...

Take it. I can't live with them. They are torture. In fact, amnesia would be a blessing.

Dr Bradley laid his spectacles on the desk and rubbed his eyes. May I ask you something?

She nodded.

Why go to these extraordinary lengths? Why not...

End it?

Yes, why put yourself through all this, not euthanise?

Because I had a life before. I was a person. Every day is like a prison sentence and I need to shut that half of me down. I have already become half of who I was. But what's left isn't gone yet. (Whispering) Have you ever lost someone close?

No.

Then do your job and let me move on. The pain will be a welcome distraction.