

Bourne
toWrite...
creative writing
workshops

Thaw

by Saffron Swansborough

Defrosting your heart is the easy part
Although I have no idea if this will still work.
They said I could only do it up to ten times
After the accident. This is my 16th, so Time is borrowed.
Pigs' trotters and slabs of beef are bedfellows.
Shades of deep frozen plum await alchemy.

I bring you out on your birthday
On a petri dish plinth
Like a sponge cake to the dining table
Floating in lukewarm water
Lamps and candles for the operation. Scorchlit.
Red wine trickles down my throat like gristle
Hand tremors, head lunging.
It saws the edge off.

Fifteen pinpricks in each corner of your heart
Are dotted like gunpowder.
Like an addict I insert each needle.
Four little ruptures linked by wires
To a voltbox which meets British Standard 7671
Requirements for Electrical Installations.
ON. Increasing power. Increasing power. Increasing power. Bam.

I extract you from your incubator
Your concave meltbed inner chamber
You warm to me. I make a vacuum in the room
By not breathing. Like a shipwreck you float
To the surface. Wrist, coccyx, knee hairs, neck nape
You filter through the reality wall
Naked grown man in the afterlight,
From shimmery pale liquid, to clay to bone
I make you real. Smiles. You say my name and
Your voice echoes back to where you are
Inside an endless cave, unseen backroom
But today: blowtorch rebirth day.

We talk about what you can still remember,
Which is fading on a canvas by a window now
I'm the black acrylic in you and will be all that's left and
Black is not a colour.
I babble 'news'. We hold each other
Our bodies touch and spark, bone to bone

Tongue on tongue, and other parts
Petal skin you are. Four eyes drink from each other.
What little is left? I push that away.

The trouble with a heart is, it always stops
In the end. Every time I bring you out
I'm fast-forwarding to the inevitable.
Your signal is weakening
I need to untie us, yet I'm hanging on by a thread.

You accept the end is coming, because you are already there
I'm a collapsible umbrella in the mist
I don't know how to wait a year for nothing.
When the dawn light sweeps the room
I put you away again behind the ice cubes.
The future is perishing so I shut the door on it.