Robert Olen Butler johndesantis

Severance

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✔ Verified Book of Severance

Summary:

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The human head is believed to remain in a state of consciousness for one and one-half minutes after decapitation. In a heightened state of emotion, people speak at the rate of 160 words per minute. Inspired by the intersection of these two seemingly unrelated concepts, Pulitzer Prize-winning author Robert Olen Butler wrote sixty-two stories, each exactly 240 words in length, capturing the flow of thoughts and feelings that go through a person's mind after their head has been severed. The characters are both real and imaginedMedusa (beheaded by Perseus, 2000 BC), Anne Boleyn (beheaded at the behest of Henry VIII, 1536), a chicken (beheaded for Sunday dinner, Alabama, 1958), and the author (decapitated, on the job, 2008). Told with the intensity of a poet and the wit of a great storyteller, these final thoughts illuminate and crystallize more about the characters' own lives and the worlds they inhabit than many writers manage to convey in full-length biographies or novels. The stories, which have appeared in literary magazines across the country, are a delightful and intriguing creative feat from one of today's most inventive writers.

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