

A Scene

Niki Haringsma

It looks out through the man's eyes, the world always a little smaller than it expects. In between blinks it sees forest, grassland, sky.

The eyes work. It can make the man see things through them as well, transplant its memories into his skull. The man's throat feels tight. It squeezes and swallows and hurts. The man's throat is home.

Occasionally, it becomes all that it is and it wails, remembering, and the man soothes it and drags it back onto the path of words, and words are what it's made of and made for.

The man believes in it. Keeps on believing as he stands up on the stage. It speaks its words dutifully through his mouth. Just like it remembers speaking them.

It sees others out there. A human. A machine. A horrid old harridan. A me.

Time-stacked consciousness offers it glimpses into past and future. It flinches, looking at the me. It cowers, because someday it will be all that's left alive in the man's body — but it forgets, it always forgets, because it's nothing but blood and intent stitched into the red man's flesh.

It wants inside the harridan instead. It won't remember why.

The me stares up at it from soft arms wrapped around her, reads from its book and smiles.