

It was never cold here, even at night. The mosquitoes kept people company, always so close and huddled together. There was no room for cold. I think that was the worst thing about the town. The mosquitoes. I remember when I moved here, the first few days, I woke up with mosquito bites on the bottom of my feet. I was sure that was a missed medieval torture technique. Moving was so easy. A place surrounded by so many trees and so little light seemed like the type of place that would get cold in the evening. Maybe it is, but you don't notice, at least, I never noticed. I was always too preoccupied with the trees, the stars, or the house's silhouettes. The way the town looked seemed nearly other worldly. The feeling of the air rubbed my skin the wrong way. The small house by the edge of town in particular. It was made of the same wood as the trees it was next to. You could tell because it was impossible to see without someone pointing it out. It had always belonged there. When I first moved here, I was so curious about that house. That went away, though. I was too scared to go look at it by myself, and I figured there was nothing to it anyway. I had never seen anyone go near it. Eventually, I forgot where that house was. I walked at night and said hello to my neighbors during the day. I usually stopped by the shops to pick up some ice cream from time to time. I got used to the mosquitoes. I had settled into a life. Until I heard a scream. The scream wasn't loud, though; I only heard it because I was out walking at night at the edge of town. It was coming from the house. The house I had completely forgotten about. The scream wasn't desperate, though. Seemed like the kind of thing you could pretend you didn't hear and keep on walking. I don't know why I didn't. I guess I didn't like that I forgot about the house. I don't like to forget things. I walked over to the house through the overgrown grass. As I got closer, it began to look less like a house. There was a screen, not exactly a window, at eye level. A sort of fabric that looked like cobwebs scattered at the edge of the roof. The wood was falling apart. Cracks between the planks were so big the

house might as well not have had any walls. If it wasn't dark I would have been able to see straight into the house. The door had been lifted off its hinges. I didn't want to go in. I had barely remembered what the scream sounded like. No one else had heard it, no one would judge me for not following through. No one would know. I continued through the grass. I could feel bugs zipping around me, crawling on my legs. When I got close enough to look through the screen, I couldn't see anything. It was dark but larger than I thought it would be. The only thing I could make out was a silhouette of a chair. I walked around the house to see if anyone was inside. It was so silent, the mosquitoes seemed to be as cautious as I was. I didn't know what time it was, and I didn't know if anyone would be able to hear my screams. I wasn't brave enough for this. I don't know why I didn't leave, I wanted to so desperately. I wanted to turn my back to the house, to run back to the touchy, loud mosquitoes, to go back to life with ice cream, to pretend I didn't hear. I saw claw marks down the side of the house, not large ones, but tiny, almost like human nails had carved them into the wood. I walked to the door. It was leaning against the side of the door frame. From here, I was able to see deeper into the house, the stars worked as my flashlight. There was a man sitting hunched over in a yellow chair. He had gray hair, dressed in a suit. His tie hung down, swaying, being pushed by the breeze. I heard an eagle flutter to the side of the house. The eagle clawed through the wood of the screen. Yet still, the man in the yellow chair refused to move. He simply stared at the glass of water that lay on a wooden coaster atop a birch table. It wasn't possible to gauge if the man could hear the eagle clawing through the wood or the creeks that rippled across the house. He simply stared, unblinking and weaved into that yellow chair.

I still don't know who screamed, maybe it was the man, the eagle, or the water, sick of being looked at. Did I really want to find out? I would have to help whatever it was, right? No

one screams for no reason. It would be my duty to help the person who screamed, to help the person in need. However, if there were no people in need, I wouldn't need to do any helping. Maybe it was the man, it must have been the man. He was the only person in the house. How would I even help the man? He doesn't look like he would take my help. He looks busy, maybe I should go away? But leaving would mean doing nothing, I have to do something. I felt the build up in my veins, energy was coursing through me. I began to feel my heart beating in my chest. The walls began to cave in, reaching for my throat. The floor I swar started rising, it was consuming me. I was sinking. There was no way to save this man. He wouldn't listen to me. Look at how he lives. Look at the state he's in. He's not going to live. He won't make it out of the house in time. He looked so stuck in a pattern. I stepped further into the house past the door. At the same time, the eagle finally ripped the screen it had been clawing at and flew into the house. It soared across the room, circling the old man. The eagle cawed and clawed through the air. It was so angry. I watched as it attacked the old man. From the side, I could see the talons ripping apart his face. The bird was desperate. Unveiling the mans bones. Shredding his muscles to ribbons. The eagle seemed psychopathic. The pain it was causing seemed so far away. The man wasn't moving, the bird showed no resmose. I knew it must've hurt, I knew he must've felt it yet it was all so inhuman. His unblinking eyes were no longer there. The bird tore them from his skull and scooped them down. The flesh tore and blood splattered across the chair. The eagle was relentless. The sounds it made seemed to be straight from the devil's throat. It clawed with such evil urgency. The bird seemed to have just flown out of hell.. The bird must have screamed. There was no other explanation; the man was much too calm to produce a sound like that. The bird didn't stop tearing at his face until it was unrecognizable from the man who had just sat there. I could see the white bone peeking through amidst a canvas of red. I couldn't look away,

though. The bird's talons were now stained red. I'm always surprised when I see blood. I forget how bright it is. Should I kill the bird? It's dangerous to tear apart a grown man like that. It must be evil. Why did the bird had such distain for the man's face. The eagle carved what could only be seen as satans face. The blood and bones so vibrant. I had never seen human bones before, I hadn't known how pure they looked. Should I be afraid of it? The bird moved to the man's hands. It began picking off his fingers one by one. I watched it tear his nail off and peck all the flesh off his bones. There must be a reason for this. No creature could do this without a reason. Nothing is that wild. I watched for hours as the bird continued to devour every part of the man. I felt sick. I watched it reach past the man's lips and tear out his tongue. The stars began to fade. The sun was coming up, people were going to wake up soon. The bird hadn't looked at me once. It must have felt my gaze, though. I was staring so hard I was sure it would look at me at least once. But it didn't. I had to leave. I turned my back and walked through the grass up to the road where I made my way back to my house. The air was sourer than it had been last night. I thought maybe the man's blood had gotten washed up in the wind. He was being spread throughout the town, and I was the only one who could smell him. When I got to my house, I began to prepare. I had to go back tomorrow night. I had to kill that bird. It was a danger to the town. It could fly into anyone's house, it could attack anyone on the street. The town would be safer if it were dead. I walked to my kitchen and started searching through all my knives. I didn't have a gun, so these would have to do. I spent the day fantasizing about how to kill the bird. I would slash it down mid-flight. I would see the blood spill out of its body. I would hear it fall to the ground and see its wings struggling to get away. I'd watch it die and then leave. I would have to have protection, of course, sunglasses to protect my eyes, and I would need to tape pillows around my body to protect me from the talons. I waited all day until the stars came again. I gathered all the

pillows in my house and taped them to my chest, arms, back, and legs. I put on a large jacket to hide them and slipped glasses into the breast pocket. I stuffed at least 9 knives through various pockets of my jacket and pants. After I was ready, I made my way back to the house. I walked to the edge of town, and walked through the grass. I was there right where the house was. Or used to be, I guess. The woods seemed to have swallowed up the house, taking back the wood, the screens, and the fabric that looked like spiderwebs. It must have been a lie, the trees must be lying to me. There was a house here, I was here yesterday. I saw the gaps between the wood, I saw the eagle tear out the man's eyes, I was in the house. How could it not be here? How could the bird disappear? How had I forgotten. I couldn't have. Maybe I just forgot where it was. So I looked across the grass, and I went deeper into the forest. I looked at the trees for any indication that they were lying, searching for the gaps I saw in the house. I felt my eyes getting stained, I felt the breeze blowing but I didn't care. I needed to find the bird. I needed to keep moving and stop forgetting. I went farther into the woods not minding the bugs getting too close to my ears just as they had last night. The woods seemed to be getting bigger, as if it were taunting me. How did that man just sit there unmoving? Why didn't he care about his life? I would never let that happen to me. I would never forget why I keep living. I pitied that man. He never even drank that glass of water. He didn't bat an eye when the eagle flew in, let alone when it tore him apart. How can a person reach that stage? Not living, yet too lazy to kill themselves. Staring because blinking is too much, because what if when you close your eyes you forget what you look like, you forget where you are, or who you are. Maybe I shouldn't blink. So isolated from the world. I kept walking until I finally found the familiar house. I'm certain it moved. No one would be able to hear my screams. I walked past the door off its hinges inside the house, like I did last night. The man's corpse wasn't there though. The water was still on its coaster, the bird was hiding. It

must have eaten his entire body. The chair looked so empty. The water looked so enticing. I walked over to the tattered yellow chair. Why would he let this be the place he dies. I placed my hand on the arm of the chair. It was softer than it looked. I bet he was comfortable here. I wonder how he felt. If he was happy here. I knew I shouldn't have but I did. I moved to the front of the chair and sat down. I blinked. My body suddenly felt heavier. I was now wearing a tie. My eyes fixed on the water and I held my gaze.. I heard the eagle come back but I didn't look, I couldn't look. I felt like I hadn't seen my body move in such a long time. It seemed so difficult, so strange to move now, like I would disrupt something if I moved. I don't know what. I heard the eagle getting closer. I know I have to get up. I have to move. I have to kill the damn bird. But moving was so hard. Everything seemed so predictable now though, if I stayed like this I knew what was going to happen. It was comforting. I got so used to my eyes being open, to being in that position, to staring at the water. I found myself trying to memorize where each molecule floated in the glass. I heard the eagle break the screen on the window. I felt it circling me. I knew it could tell I wasn't going to move. The eagle swooped down reaching for my face. I don't know if I actually did, or just thought about it, but I screamed.