

noticed it, if she hadn't been looking for it—probing ahead of her with a millimeter-wave radar, ready to swoop down and tell her to stop if it detected a land mine within a hundred meters. The girl who invented them had won the Peace Prize ten years back or so. Stacey couldn't remember her name.

From the Monument to Those Who Saved the World, she cut off the road into the fields. The drone swooped closer and beeped a triple trill, but otherwise left her alone. The wild feathergrass was up to her knees, and she pushed through until she found a deer track and followed that over the swales and ridges for the last half mile. In the treeline she watched a kite wheel and chitter, light on a branch, lift again into the sky wildly, impossibly blue.

There were only two Smerches. The wrecks were so rusted out and warped they looked like stonegiants covered in lichen, but she recognized the peculiar angle of the windscreen, the spearhead fins of the launch tubes. The far launcher was on its side, broken in half; it was hard to tell after the years, but it looked like maybe there had been a fire and something had melted. The feathergrass had grown up and into the suspension, the big tires were rotted away, the driver's compartment was missing. The other launcher was twisted and backbroken, like the strike had punched through the deck and gone off below. She tested the rust of the cab and it held so she lifted herself up to look in the window, expecting to see bones, but it had been stripped bare, just dead metal. There was nothing to learn, but she tried anyway, for hours, leaning against the fenders, climbing up on the flatbed and kicking at the rocket tubes—the drone squawked and honked at her, it didn't like that—tracing the few electrical lines the field mice hadn't been able to get to. That was all there was.

She perched on top of the cab and crossed her legs. She wasn't sure how long she sat up there, the wind in the field and in the trees, the sound of the empty world, big steppe thunderheads in anvil on the horizon. Arcs and trajectories seemed to dangle in the air around her, turning against her hackles. But if there had been a war, once, she could not now see it. She was not sure if she had ever seen it, and if she had not, what to call what