**Loss**

by Richard Holt

Avril heard the call and knew instantly it was special. Something like coooo-rok with a falling inflection, coming from over near where the big trees had been felled.

It had been while camping here, during the last big campaign, she’d met Sophie. And it had been Sophie she’d been thinking of, not the bush. All the heady scents and all the heavy heartedness of this embattled place could not hold her attention. Instead she’d been replaying conversations, hearing Sophie’s brittle vowels in the wind. The harder she’d tried not to think them, the more persistent the thoughts had become, of the time they’d shared, and maybe that she’d been too ready to fall again. Let herself be hurt.

Always the restless dreamers, she thought, flip-flopping now between love and the frog. The call was close. She found the sound app on her phone and pressed record, worried what she had might slip away.

Fifty metres past the forest edge, in among the piled debris, she found an ochre puddle in the depression left by a dozer track, and, in it, a small amphibian of a type she’d never seen before, calling and waiting, calling and waiting.

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