

the HARLEQUIN

Caleb Klaces
From A Photograph

I sat behind a blotchy curtain in the coach
while the rest took photographs of the former leader's car
parked on a marble floor
in a woodenesque-walled bunker.
He'd had his people axe the spies in the panelling
and taken to conducting business in the aviary.
Then changed his mind
and had the birds stuffed.

Thus began the covert replacement of the palace
with a copy of the palace,
the leader with another,
half again taller, with more pronounced features, who,
seen from the distance of the people, would look
more like himself, humble
without risk of assassination.

Yesterday, a man strode
across the field he was ploughing
to push the translator out of the way
and tell me directly
something that could have been this:

Behind his house the ground sloped upwards.
Since the rice had run out,
his wife had picked and boiled all the grass
to a height she was too weak to climb past.
In his arms, she had spoken of the leader.
She had wondered if he fetched his own grass,
or had people to do that for him.

Thank you for reading! Find more at www.theharlequin.org.