



Sedition

E. M. Wright

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In E. M. Wright's steampunk, alternative past novel, humans become biomatron slaves when their body parts are replaced with mechanical ones, and their brains are changed to suit their new stations by dampening or removing all human emotions. In this devastating dystopia, biomatron Taryn hides who and what she is to keep herself from becoming enslaved and losing all sense of self. Fast-paced, clever, and allegorical, this novel considers what makes people human after all.

Set in Victorian England, the story begins with a house fire that destroys six-year-old Taryn's arm, necessitating its replacement with a mechanical arm that appears as if flesh and blood. The story fast forwards to Taryn's teenage years, where she's in the household of a local lord and educated alongside his son, neither of whom know Taryn as anything other than human. This fact would destroy her education as a mechanic, her home, and her future. An unexpected encounter threatens to upend her entire life and reveal her identity as a biomatron—a part of a larger, darker plot that's tied to the years prior to her twelfth birthday, years that she can't remember.

The action explodes with careening air ships, castles filled with malice and brainwashing, and automatons crafted as weapons. Taryn's world is rich with parallels to historical injustices, but also ingenious steampunk details that highlight a cross between the rigor of clockwork mechanics and the power of fantasy. But the conclusion resolves few of the questions that were raised by the rising action, instead suggesting a second volume to come. Still, *Sedition* is powerful because of its social commentary, compelling setting, and unexpected heroine.

CAMILLE-YVETTE WELSCH (May / June 2021)

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