

This could be an
architectural catalog.

1:25 Front Door

Feet feel heavy on concrete, or maybe that's only true in the mornings. Someone is walking. Someone is walking, and the step, step, step is creeping. You feel it in that ambiguous region between your ears—and your skull tightens in rhythm. Where is he? But you do not know, you reframe: Where is xe? Distance compresses. You are in America, you move right. The choreography would demand xe moves left. Step, step, step. Step, step, step. The joints of the concrete stretch between your strides. You desperately want them to align. You still have not seen, but now so faintly you feel the presence of the taller human who is now right behind you. Now right to right of you. Now right in front of you. The brush of passing was slight but was it disinterested? And stops. Stops? The space between is tight now; you realize: you are already here and xe is here too. This is the door. Thought separates time. The hand is disembodied as it lets open the lobby. “After you.” And now the game begins again.

1:2 Bed

Soft cotton sheets form a canopy over her head. They are propped by a pillow, and curled underneath, she imagines the extent of them—over her body, dipping down to the floor, extending out beyond the bedroom door, through the living room, hugging the grass, enveloping the world. The only reminder of time is the soft projected glow of a double-hung window on the canopy's interior, lighting the plastic skin of a doll the girl is holding. Although the girl is lying flat she is holding the doll upright. The space beneath the sheets fits the doll. The doll stands proud, undressed, arms and legs splayed. The girl touches the doll, memorizing the curves of the torso. She touches herself. She notes the differences; she finds parts of herself that the doll does not have. She does not have words, but she categorizes the textures: the skin of the doll, the skin of her body, the skin of the bed.

1:2000 Hall

When I was eleven I found a hallway in the basement of my church that, in perspective, converged to a point. During Sunday School, I would raise my hand politely and ask to use the bathroom, and then I would sneak down the fire stairs to the side of the classroom to visit my new discovery. The white drop ceiling tiles paired with the white linoleum tiles on the floor created a parallel grid that would overwhelm me in its expanse. The florescent lights would hum in my ears and I would run. I would hold my breath and run until I needed to breath. When I took a breath I knew the magic would disappear. Occasionally, I would run so fast, pursing my lips and holding my nose, that stars would fill my eyes and then a deep black—my own personal night sky—and I would lay down on the cool tile and feel the universe wiggling through my veins. Then I would walk back down the hallway, back up the fire stair, and return to my Sunday School classroom, where no one would guess my secret. Now I don't go to church any more, but I think that even if I did I would not be able to find that hallway again.

1:50 Closet

The monsters only come out of our closets at night, when the depth of wide eyes exposed by thin irises obscures the folds of a house, until your breath betrays you and the slight itch circling the corner of your ankle finally, without a movement, disappears. The chills disappear as soon as they come, like when turbulents scrambled your stomach on the plane ride back home. Airplanes are a topic I've been reading up on recently; we are all apparently a significant percentage more likely to cry watching a tragedy on the small seatback screen than from your living room sofa. Maybe thirty five thousand feet feels vulnerable after fifty-five million years of ground-dwelling evolution, or perhaps the tight containment of your skin between the thick dark hair on the arm of the man to your left and the heavy perfume of the woman to your right reveal so suddenly the social contract you have entered with the world. You have not constructed this world, and yet you are trapped in it, so even at low resolution it seems more poignant now when you are reminded every single thing you ever thought you had has a life beyond your own. Your blindness in that single moment is lifted, but yet it is not, because in the same instant your eyes flood. The bottoms are swollen still; your lids are red. Please, I did not mean to embarrass you. Don't hide your eyes now. I've seen them already; I've seen the universes they hold. I've seen them staring back at me through the slim crack between the door and the frame.

1:100 Office

Did he ever notice how the corners of the desk do not fold but are edged by the blades of machines? What in one alternative might have been the sponge of wood is not and will never be again, at least not here and in this place. The books have been sterilized, even Keats no longer makes the cut. Those already defenestrated mark the streets below, although to be defenestrated would imply that the windows could accept the breeze from outside. No, they are drowning. There is no breeze. Did he ever notice how the glass mocks the rain with its fluid figure, its disfigurements from the oblique?

1:500 Rug

At ten years old you decided it would be a good idea to have a rug burn contest. Your mother and I, we laughed, but we should have told you no. You returned, forehead large and red and swollen. You told us you won, but you had already lost. When you were twenty we bought you a rug for your new apartment. We knew it would be trash; that always seems to be the case with rugs. A lifetime could be measured in its trashed rugs. Is it too abrupt to transition now to your death? Your life, circumscribed by your rug. Was the violence always woven into its threads? Fabric is deformed by those who hold it, deformed by those held by it. A body bag too conveniently already spread below you. Some claim cleaning his harder with rugs; I know now it is harder without.

1:5 Gas Station

The distance between five and twenty-five years is five times the first lifetime, but only four times for the women told to speed it up. At six times five the brain will start to deteriorate, but that sweet euphoric scent of petroleum in the air is sure to speed that up as well. The sludge of the earth is piped into our arteries to speed us all up. Get a job, they say, get going. The sign is lit, bulb exposed beneath a broken plastic cover, and it stays on all night long. Is it safe to work at night? The time between morning and evening contracts between ten and five and the light bulb stays on. Get out of here, get going. When should a woman work? The bathroom smells like gasoline again. At ten times five years the oil rigs could be underwater. Oil and water don't mix. Wash your hands with soap. Scrub for twenty seconds. Dry hands, get going. If not work, then what? Miles long but fast. The distance between home and the station is five miles. The distance between home and the station is five hours. Control time by changing homes or changing distances, get going. Five times five seconds past, four times, get going.

1:25 Kitchen

“Will you smile at me?” I ask. They lift the wooden spoon from the pot, and in its subtle cavity is carved two eyes and the curve of a smile, something like a parenthesis that contains a soft laugh. I lift the box of penne and pour it into the turbulent water. They begin to stir with deft hands, toned for this labor. “Can you wash the tomatoes?” they ask. I was already holding them, two tomatoes, ripe and red. “How should I cut them?” I ask. I know already, I just want to hear them speak again. “In half first, break the skin with the tip of the knife, then pull slowly around the circumference. In quarters after, then edge around the seeds, not too hard. Then the skin side to the board, slice smooth and tight, along the length first. The other direction next, squared.” I cut my finger in a daydream, but if there was blood I did not see it. “Are you still smiling?”

1:100 Porch

Sundays are porch days here, Mom sits there, Dad sits there, Child runs up and down the steps anyway so it doesn't matter if there's not another chair. Sundays are days for God and days for porches. Child runs between Mom and Dad because Child does not yet understand God. God is powerful; it is easier to understand this while sitting. Child would not be able to choose between chairs, anyway, so it doesn't matter. God gave chairs, God gave porches, God gave Sundays. Sundays are not porch days everywhere, Child learns. God gave Sundays but Sundays are not porch days everywhere. There is a chair there and there but there are not chairs everywhere. There is a porch here but there are not porches everywhere. God visits porches on Sundays. Child pulls up another chair.

1:1500 Balcony

Eternal summer shall not fade. Waning moons only mock the sun in brief and futile dark. The balcony plays in long shadows in the day, in soft silhouettes in the night. It stages love, an actor in its own performance. A threesome with two others. A foursome with three others. A sad romance for one. I fit on its tongue extended in languid tension. I fit with you if my breath can cloud the night in your mind. You fit with me if your hair can trace my cheekbones. It is dark but the sun still burns our shadows into yesterday's emulsion. The stage records our touch. We will be gone by morning.

1:5 Ceiling

Once there was a girl named Cecil who was taller than the ceiling. She had to walk with her shoulders hunched over to avoid dragging her scalp across white plaster. Sometimes she would forget and sometimes her hair dye would paint the sky. Her middle name was Alice and I always thought that was an interesting coincidence because Alice is the only other girl I know who did not fit in a room. Cecil did not like being where she did not fit. Those who did fit thought Cecil didn't belong. Once the girl named Cecil was so upset by this predicament of not fitting that she went into a very small room just to prove herself belonging. She sat down in the center of the room and crossed her legs and closed her eyes. Some nasty neighborhood boys came in behind her and when her eyes were closed blew a horn and stomped their feet and clapped their hands and gave her such a fright that she jumped and hit her head so hard on the low ceiling that she fell immediately back down, with eyes closed, again, forever.

1:10 Stair

The stair was the last thing standing after the storm. When the rest of the house has been picked up by the wind, debris delivered to the surroundings like an exchange of raw materials, the stair stood as a sole monument to the home that once was. In that moment think I saw an angel. Per body descending the stair, nude but without sex or gender, only bare humanity which in that moment was more than human. Per flesh was the fresh ash of last week's field burn, wings of a phoenix. But then I closed my eyes and the angel perself was gone. A sledgehammer went into the side of the stairs; men were toppling per monument; there was no time to wait before building again.