

The Guest  
by Eric Cecil

I'm in T.'s room, but it's not his room at all. Not as I remember it. This one opens onto an immediate and acute angle: two central walls converging to the point of a divisive wedge.

This odd cleft in the room's center presents the guest with two different options. To the right, the passage narrows into dark and untenanted quarters: something like a crawlspace, an empty pantry, a closet. The left side gives onto a large window. Faint light issues from its frame, burnishing the discolored slats of a wooden floor. Similar timber panels the adjoining walls. Small, triangular planters adorn the upper reaches, their shallow cups flaming with the fronds of knotted ferns.

I follow their growth to the window at the back of the left passage. Through its scuffed pane, I see a sun that's high, but withered, obscure: low clouds bruise and mute its glow. The gnawed silhouette of a city is visible in the near distance.

The view is unfamiliar. The apartment. I don't know where I am. Don't know whose home I'm visiting, or why. I stare at the skyline, trying to determine my location, when the door opens behind me.

It closes before I can see who's entered. I can only glimpse a dim figure sliding into the room's right side. Their heavy steps percuss the floor behind its slanted wall, sounding out the blind depths of the cramped and empty space. When, presumably, they reach the back of the passage, they pause, as if waiting.

I wait with them. I anticipate the tone of a familiar voice: T.'s low twang, maybe, but when I call his name, there's no response. There's only the drawing of shallow breath.

As I lean into the dividing wall, the sun sweats beads of moisture from the hanging ferns.