

**Walkups: Documentaries and Commentary
A Series of Prose Poems**

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A Thesis

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of

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ABSTRACT

Walkups

Lance Blomgren

Walkups is a series of linked narrative prose poems set in various Montreal apartments. Titled after the outdoor "walkup" staircases typical of Montreal's row-house architecture, these pieces take the reader on a tour of some of the city's apartments, providing glimpses into the ways in which our designed living spaces influence our attitudes and perceptions: the building blocks (indeed, architecture) of our notions of self. Composed as a series of poetic documentaries, *Walkups* presents detailed, voyeuristic snapshots of the goings-on and mundane dramas that people enact within their private spaces.

for Gene and Hanne
thanks to YP, MB, CC, JM, AB and RA

WALKUPS

We were seeing the future and we knew it for sure. I saw people walking around in it without knowing it, because they were still thinking in the past, in references of the past. But all you had to do was know you were in the future, and that's what put you there. The mystery was gone, but the amazement was just beginning.

- Brian Boigon, *Newsline*, September/October 1991

**Stay Calm. Keep Calm.
Let the room outgrow the walls.**

- Arto Lindsay

#4—345 Lachapelle

Up the front stairs over the entrance of the hardware store and past the bicycles on the second floor landing. In through the front doors, the stained glass, past the mailboxes and recycling bins, the ashtray, buzzer and intercom system. Unlock the inner door then move through the portico, the thick smell of cleanser, across the carpeted lobby, tiled floor and into the stairwell where the wall-sized mirror suspends your blur in its field of view for two full steps. Quiet past the landlord's suite on the first floor, the woman who opens her door whenever she hears a noise in the hall, the sound of muffled television and follow the corridor past the storage closet, the window overlooking the courtyard. The door is at the end of the hall on the right. It is brown, like all the other doors, with a spyhole in the middle. You press your eye to the hole before knocking.

3444 Coloniale

Footsteps on the roof send the cat diving under the bed. Who's there? His head snaps from the pillow, sending a wad of gum flying from his mouth onto the blanket. The afternoon sagged, pulling him down to the soundtrack of wasps drowning in the greasy sinkpuddle. Now, with furry eyes, he can just see down the hallway and into the kitchen: the table, the small pile of dishes on the counter. Pale overcastness and suspended dust, air like jello, and the line "what are referred to as blunt objects in forensics" tripping over itself in his head, the image of the two doctors in the Apt. D'Amour, side-by-side on identical stretchers, wrist deep in the abdomen of the other. In the kitchen a man with overalls holds the fridge door open with his hip, pouring himself a glass of orange juice. Overhead, someone's pounding the roof with a sledgehammer and, still in bed, the recently-roused napper can smell a faint hint of catshit rising from under the mattress. "We're here for the renovations," shouts the man from the kitchen. He makes a gesture of salutation with his glass. "Anything we can help you with just ask?" Can you please get the hell out of my apartment, asks the man in bed. "Talk to the landlord. I just work here."

5574 St. Laurent

A bottle of wine lying naked on the table. Bread crumbs and an ashtray full of bonbon wrappers. Upstairs someone is playing a trumpet. The others point and laugh at the first person that gets up to leave, pulls on her jacket. "One cheek short of an ass," they chant. "You're one cheek short of an ass."

2120 Clark

She's certain she set her alarm. Her baby's diapers are so full of oopsie that she wonders how long she has slept. The eyes of the puppies have opened and the three little monsters are wagging with delight under the weight of the mother-dog's sagging teats. The room is not as white as it had been painted, and the mailbox is overflowing with newspaper flyers. Across the street, the old cathedral has been entirely demolished, leaving only a vacant, muddy lot where a long line of well-dressed people shift uneasily in the rain, waiting to pile into their tour-bus. She notices something moving across the room, a black line winding its way along the kitchen wall, over the counter and into the next room. A trail of black insects that leads from the small hole in the back screen door, down the hall through the apartment, and out the narrow gap under the front door. In the cupboard, her can of Raid is completely empty. She winds the grandfather clock in the hallway. The phone stops ringing just long enough to hear the toaster pop in the other room.

(Apt. D'Amours)

The ceiling in the office is damp although it never rains. And I'm on the top floor.

The weather is cold, but less cold than I would have thought. The building is clean and quiet, as promised. The kitchen is small and cramped, but the dining room opens onto a large front room, a panoramic view of the intersection. The bedroom's cozy, enough space for a body to rest. But that dripping water, refrigerator noise, roomtone. I can't get around to unpacking. Still no mail.

10 Ontario West

Upon entering an apartment for the first time, the visitor allows his mind to walk through the rooms ahead of him, scan the layout. He wonders what the view from the balcony will provide, what the kitchen is like, the contents of the fridge; he guesses what books he'll find on the shelves, the style of furniture, the artwork and decorations. Every apartment is a variety of vital anatomic constituents (organs) arranged in different configurations along a recognizable axis (skeleton) which, like dogs, allow for a great range of differences within the same basic classification. "Can a Doberman have sex a beagle?" "Only if they get along." The first-time visitor ponders the possible discerning features this new place might possess. goes searching for the differences which give the space its definition. The first-time visitor reads the architecture for clues.

This is not the case with 10 Ontario. Studio Living, says the billboard. Here, the apartment searches for you. Long before you arrive this wide-open space has been anticipating your visit. At any time here you can dress formally, pick fights, eat lamb, seduce, take a nap under the table, be a Roman. You look for the signs that would normally reveal the story of a space, give it contrast or depth, but find nothing. You move around the space, step across the buckling floorboards, gaze at the busy street from the massive windows, inspect the utility closets and cupboards, cutlery and houseplants, snoop under the bathroom sink, check out the photos and decorations.

The apartment eludes you. Instead, it comes at you from all sides, searches out your fears and desires. There's a rickety chair you'd be nervous sitting in. There's a vomitorium in the back where you are able to purge, keep the feast going, or simply unload the visceral sourness of your day. Here, the space reads you. It adjusts itself moment by moment to complement the state of your own emotions.

12 Orleans

It's not for everyone, mind you. It's unusual and Mediterranean. But it honestly takes no time at all to prepare. Convenience. Basically any combination of grains, and root-like, onion-like vegetables will start you off. Cracked wheat, bulgur, rice of all sorts. Leeks. even garlic. As you can see, this time I'm using couscous and Spanish onions.

Steep the couscous in an equal amount of boiling water and let simmer until the moisture's all absorbed. Just like rice. Should be fluffy and light, never mushy. One cup yields about four portions. Can you pass me one of those wooden spoons? When it has stopped steaming, add a handful of black currants, a finely chopped onion, Italian parsley, half a cup of imported Niçoise black olives, a small tablespoon of good quality olive oil, and sprinkle of salt to taste. I also used a plump clove of garlic. Don't forget the freshly ground black pepper.

As the couscous cools, place six juicy, sliced oranges in another bowl. Sweetness is the necessity here. You want to cut the oranges into large, crosswise pieces so they soak in their own juices. Release the flavour. See all that liquid? How about passing the red wine vinegar? A splatter does the trick. A funny expression since there's no trickwork about it. And now the oregano. Stir lightly. It's best if you can chill the bowl in the fridge for a few minutes. Excuse me. Why don't you set the table? This is a small kitchen and all I need to do is scoop the oranges onto the couscous. Just take a

seat. Dinner's almost ready and the salad can't just sit around. Once the oranges begin tasting like onions, the charm of the whole thing is lost.

5170 Durocher

Family photographs reveal something mysterious and unspoken. The siblings never really know what to say to each other. In this one, the two brothers are sitting on the chesterfield squinting. Wrapping paper everywhere. If this were a film their lips would be moving and they'd be talking at the same time. They'd be up to their necks in giftwrap. Already the face of the youngest is the face of someone with something to hide. There are small wrinkles around his eyes that he's proud of. This photo records the moment when the idea struck him. *If only there was a dictionary that would tell me how to act.* He's holding his breath. The walls seem to be squeezing in around him.

(Apt. D'Amours)

An apartment for professionals. A month to month lease: rent paid the first of the month. No exceptions. Garbage day is Tuesday, recycling on Friday. No loud music or barbecues. Small parties and get-togethers are allowed with previous permission by management. No laundry after ten at night. All pets must be fixed and quiet. The balconies are not to be used for storage and no laundry-lines are permitted. Management will water the plants in the hallway and in the winter keep the front walkway free of snow. It is the tenant's responsibility to keep the back staircases clear. Management will not be held responsible for any accidents or deaths that occur on the premises.

6296 Casgrain

The setting sun reflects off the landlord-gray brick apartment. You climb three flights of stairs past a steel barrel of aluminum cyanide and the remaining feathers of a dried-out pigeon. This is where your love of a good joke has gotten you: you live here now. You laugh/cough into your hand as you pass the next-door neighbour on the upstairs landing. He's suntanning in an overly baggy pair of shorts. "Hey, have you seen my cat?" You make a facial gesture meant to imply gentle concern as you speak. "He's been missing a couple of days." The word from the rental agency is that the neighbour hasn't adapted too well socially but is really quite pleasant, which is a polite way of letting you know his eviction notice is in the mail and he should be altogether avoided. Saying what is meant is becoming less and less possible in this environment. He dries his forehead with the t-shirt you'd hung on the clothesline the night before and you decide to drop this line of conversation. Besides, you are suddenly at a loss to accurately comprehend the image of his scrotum joined wetly to his thigh ("a leather hacky-sack soaked in engine grease" you'll write later) and would rather not dwell on it. Besides, he's telling you that "what the doctors call shock is really just the physical, bodily realization that worst possible scenario isn't quite as bad as originally thought," and you take this as a good time to leave. "I'll let you know if I see your cat," he assures, as you unlock your apartment and step inside. Standing there, you can suddenly feel the inner workings of your abdomen. You might say your heart is racing, but you know it's just your stomach, slumped over, lying absolutely still.

6296 Ste. Dominique

The rooms are wide open and chilly, but it never seems cold. There is nothing to be said, so the two of them say nothing. The balcony is growing a layer of snow and all sound is slowly being sucked out of the air. This could be Stalingrad, 1944, but it's not. There's a smell of beer and bread. No cabbage. On the couch they doze into each other like pillows.

(Apt. D'Amours)

Woke up late to the sound of my own breathing. In the trailing moments of my dream I lifted the toilet lid to discover a cockroach log-rolling for its life on a stray turd. I kept trying to flush them down, but the water pressure was so low they kept floating back to the surface. Through the window I could see a Hydro-Québec worker climbing an electrical pole to fiddle with the wires. In certain positions as he was working, the man's shadow fell across my bed. At these moments I could see his face, see that he was whistling.

The biology graduate student upstairs had pulled the livingroom curtains so the daylight wouldn't interfere with the fact that her power had been disconnected. Earlier I had found her note under my door: Blackout Brunch—Dress Warm, Jane, #308, but there was no food and certainly no other guests. Thick warm air. Running along one wall of her livingroom was a massive gray metal table that looked like it might have come from an automobile assembly line. The surface was covered with textbooks, flasks and beakers, and dozens of jars filled with beautiful biological specimens. She showed me one of her favourites: a thin yellowish leaf with a remarkable likeness to an adult human hand. As I leaned over the table, I noticed her skin smelled like rubber bands. "So a horse walks into a pub, and sits down at the bar," she said. I nodded for her continue. "So the bartender walks over to him and says 'why the long face?' Later, she asked me if I had any candles I could spare until

the bank cleared her research grant cheque. When I returned with the candles, her door was closed and I could hear her moving around inside. I knocked a few times, waited, then left the candles outside her door. On the way back downstairs, for no particular reason, I suddenly thought of Charlie Gardner in Victoria, lying naked in his bathtub, a little pink facecloth barely covering his privates.

#1—1949 St. Joseph East

Semi-sous basement. The motion detector in the alley trips the spotlight with any passing cat, lighting the bedroom through the gray filter of the curtain. This means it's no longer dusk. But there's never any cats—she lets the curtain drop. I can tell I'm being watched. She traverses a large pile of laundry with one long stride, then hops onto the bed from three feet out to avoid the surrounding mess: the towel and books, underwear and shirts. She lowers her weight onto the long reclining lump under the sheet, feels it stir. "How does he know where you live?" he asks from beneath the cover.

"When's the last time you had a tan?" The only word that comes to mind is "alabaster." her arms exiting from that robe, stirring pasta. He flips through a magazine as he sits at the table. Apparently, Franz Kafka had made the publisher of *The Metamorphosis* promise to never print an illustration of Gregor Samsa on the book-sleeve. Kafka believed an actual image of the insect would belittle the imaginative power of the reader. The kitchen window is at ground-level, and the man imagines that from the outside his head looks like it's sticking up from the ground as he sits there. But now the window's fogged over. He closes the magazine and stands up, moves in next to her. To catch any of the action, you'd have to be inside.

5746 Clark

You in your shorts

Make clear the tragedy

Of our loss of fur.

Artificial respiration.

Knees taking all that breeze.

#2-383 Edouard-Charles

Seventy-three steps from one end to the other. What is called a “shotgun apartment” in New Orleans or “typical immigrant housing” by the city planning office. Indeed, one bullet, traveling straight down the long hallway, is really all it would take. He wanders from room to room, allowing his footsteps to add up. *Are you taking your medication? Have you forgotten your keys?* He stands absolutely still behind the front door as someone rings the buzzer six times before finally giving up. The cat is purring at his feet. On a nail in the back closet, the last tenant left a yellow baseball cap and there are long-distance calls to Rotterdam on the phone bill. Jetlag. Resting against the wall in the bedroom, his thick blue winter coat has taken on the shape of someone asleep in an airplane seat, huddled uncomfortably against the window. The kitchen spins on its axis. From his position on the hallway floor there’s no way he can see the TV, but he can hear it. Captain Picard is asking for all power to the deflector shields. The Enterprise is about to enter a wormhole.

An apartment in the village

The onions, the garlic, the slices of lemon. The beef still steaming on the plate.

Winter was setting in and the dinner-guest felt as if he was eating to bundle himself up from the inside. “Imagine actually ingesting a sweater?” he speculates aloud, and the others at the table make faces, look at each other and laugh. They clink wineglasses. He notices his eyebrows are getting damp, that he’s breaking out in a sweat. “I swear this food’s reconstructing itself in my stomach.” More laughter.

(Apt. D'Amours)

Later in bed and I hereby make the resolution not to get up until winter is over. Polar bears can nap for more than a month on the sustenance provided by a single elk. You can see the distinct shape of a large rodent gradually shrink to nothing as it passes through the body of a sleeping snake. Rabbit ears. Finger puppets. Fish-hooks baited with chunks of egg, Campbell River, and Michael's story about swallowing a piece of bacon tied to a string then pulling it up pull im ea tw ate r me at wat erm eat wate rm e atw a ter m eat m ea t wat er m e out of a bag. Goddamn it. Beside the toilet now. The two doctors who live downstairs are evidently fixing late-night BLTs, the smell of it coming through the floorboards, making my stomach swim. All employees should wash their hands after eating, no matter what profession. You are what you eat, after all. Not to mention where you've been. I can smell the inside of my nostrils. I pull and pull, but the sweater won't come off.

#5—2896 St. Hubert

The concierge's footsteps can be heard in the stairwell. On TV the woman sipping coffee is beginning to take on a certain three-dimensional tangibility. In the hallway, someone's unlocking a door, while next door someone else barks with irritation into a telephone. The woman's sipping from a large white cup and flips through the magazine open on the table in front of her—enjoying a nice quiet moment. Yesterday the window wouldn't open; today the TV won't turn off. It's only eight o'clock in the evening. The ice cream's melting down the stick. Somehow a junebug the size of a kiwi has gotten through the window screen and every few minutes the smoke detector beeps a warning about low batteries. Water rushing in the pipes. The concierge's footsteps echo in the stairwell long after he's gone. The woman on TV smiles into the room: "A vacation in every sip." She puts down her coffee cup. keeps reading.

340 Ottawa

This Way Out. Condemned. High Voltage. Trucks Only. Telephone. Wet Paint. Don't
Cross Police Line. Flammable. Closed for Renovations. Authorized Personnel Only.
No Parking. Off Limits. Quiet. Emergency Exit. New Management. Watch Your Step.
Hardhat Zone. No Smoking. No Trespassing. Use Ashtrays Provided. For Sale.
Information. Danger. Do Not Enter. Stand Back. Falling Icicles. Private Property. Out
of Order. Back in Five. Do Not Disturb. Pay Here.

3134 St. Zotique East

The children pluck the ants from the cupboard under the sink. The system is established. First into the waitingroom of a small yogurt container of water, then one by one dipped into the cooling wax of a large candle with a pair of tweezers. Back in the water of a second container, the wax solidifies around the bodies of the insects, forming a stiff white cast. Next they are set to dry on a clean rag, lined up for inspection. The examiner is the girl with the magnifying glass. Touching the end of a red-hot paperclip to the wax blobs, she lifts them from the line-up and inspects the convulsing creature with the lens. "Your chances of recovery are quite promising," she whispers to some. "I've got some bad news," to others. What a job this is! The medics lay the wounded in bottlecaps while the bodies of the deceased are piled onto wedges of kleenex. Over at the funeral home the ants are laid to rest in matchbox coffins, given last rites. Some children weep from the pews. The director of the funeral home gives his brief condolences from a sofa cushion in the corner. The musicians play the Funeral March on instruments too tiny to hear.

(Apt. D'Amours)

Comfortable with its own uncluttered dreariness, this sort of apartment building marks a return to the popular vernacular of architectural modesty. Stylishly bleak, but not imposing, these apartments represent a return to the city—a neo urbanity—to celebrate in all its dubious offerings. The doctors downstairs, as well as Mr. Green, the financial advisor on the fourth floor, and even the retired politician and his wife, are all part of this movement. As Mr. Green told me in the elevator: "To participate in joy of alienation and misunderstanding that only the city can provide. I suppose all of us here at the Apt. D'Amours must share an understanding of this to some degree." Constructed as a humble apartment complex for people of modest means, this building and many others like it have been completely overhauled and now provide a semi-fashionable refuge for financially comfortable people seeking an alternative to condominium city living.

78 Villeneuve East

As with many first-floor dwellings, this apartment has no balconies and very little direct sunlight. But it does have a large light-shaft, a vertical tunnel built into the centre of the building itself. One hundred years ago, the city planing office took the problem of light-deprivation into consideration and instigated the mandatory construction of these shafts so all rooms would receive at least a little light, if no view. Here, the bedroom, bathroom and kitchen all face out onto the light-shaft: a large octagonal tunnel, almost a courtyard. A ten foot jump to the bottom. There are tufts of grass poking through the concrete and a mesh wire barrier over the top to keep pigeons out. The last tenant got evicted for having a barbecue in the tunnel. The light is gray; throughout the day, this grayness gives these rooms the feeling of being stuck permanently in the late afternoon. Sometimes in the middle of winter, the residents wish they had a little more light, a balcony perhaps, or a suite on one of the higher floors. The days are short and the apartment never seems to have a daytime at all. Sometimes they get restless, pace the length of the apartment. Sometimes they open the kitchen door to let in more light, stand there shivering.

6645 St. Urbain

She returns tired from the Y. She had her own swimming lane for a change. Her face is still hot and she's sweating. In the hallway the door of #8 is open and as she passes she can see that the suite is filled with TVs, covered over in sheets. The tenant appears in the doorway. He is wearing a stupid hat and hasn't shaved in days. "Where were you?" he asks. "Swimming." She can smell the chlorine lifting from herself as she speaks. She smiles and tries to pass, but his face gets in the way. "Why are you wearing that?" He looks like he is choking on himself; he has something to say, but can't get it out. She passes by, shuffling quickly down to #11, leaving him in the doorway—safe in an earthquake. He's still standing there as she opens the door.

(Apt. D'Amours)

Went by that bastard Baby Larry's apartment today to re-claim the yellow arborite table he bought, but never paid me for. He wasn't home so his roommate let me in. She was a little upset as I began to clear off the table, but offered no resistance. The apartment is a split-level cave; the doorways are so narrow I had to dismantle the legs to pull it into the hallway, get it down the stairs. Good to have a dinner table again. I invited Jane over for dinner on Tuesday. There are large gaps around the window frame, a constant draught. Must remember to plastic the glass before it gets too cold.

5433 Waverly

Two men standing in a small office, whispering. “I remember when I got my first job,” said one to the other. “I was completely shocked to discover there were no beds or sleeping rooms provided for employees on the premises. I thought, where the hell do you nap during your lunch break?” The other man was nodding his head, scratching his jowls. A few minutes passed. “Did I ever tell you about the plans for my dreamhome?” the first man continued. “I want every room to be carpeted with wall-to-wall mattress. That would be so amazing.”

(Apt. D'Amours)

The swell of morning traffic. Five thousand kilometers from here in a room like this one, we used to doze until noon listening to the radio. The paint was blue, the paint was yellow, the paint was abalone satin from the past. I suck my sheets thinking of you. I climb out of bed I think: Don't hurt me. I make myself a sandwich I think: Don't hurt me. Living alone plays tricks on your mind. If not this place, than another. Don't kill me. Every morning I wake up one minute before the alarm goes off. All of this is too well planned to be a disaster.

266 Fairmount West

No one realizes that every time Mayor Pierre Borque becomes sexually excited, a young man in Mile End becomes aroused at the same time. It happens that a small number of people are born with super-sensory olfactory lobes. Borque is late for a morning meeting and forgets to take a shower; across town the man's erectile tissue begins to swell for no apparent reason. "Forget about justifying your work," the man says, shifting positions in his desk chair. The other man sitting on the sofa across from him unleashes an exaggerated nod. "You just got to trust it." The first man draws bunnies, the second writes about people who have lost their sense of smell. *I can see you being invisible*. At a health club, Mayor Borque is working up a sweat playing squash. The man at the desk commences a flurry of sketching. The other man thinks he heard the balcony door click open, then he thinks he didn't.

7856 Iberville

A comfortable blanket of second-hand smoke and a layer of burnt toast. The kind of smell you associate with your grandma's guest bed and her Lysol sprays. Electric heaters creaking away. You suppose it's within the realm of possibility that this carpet was once red. Ten years ago there was a fireplace along this wall, the man tells you, but eventually the soot became so thick the chimney simply closed up. Bad lungs, indeed. The man discharges a yellow laugh into his handkerchief and leads you down the hallway and into the bathroom. "The damnedest thing." He flicks on the light. He gives you the hush signal: two knuckles pressed against his lips, squishing out the colour. Whitenoise like a gas leak or looped exhaling. "Can you hear it?" It's hard to tell at first. sssssssssss. The toilet's gurgling and, even when he's holding his breath in silence, the man's got a nose-whistle. You cup your ear. Then, beneath the hiss, a low hum emerges, a cat purring perhaps, then something sharp like teeth cracking into an apple, leaves rustling, then the distinct sound of a car struggling to start, the tapping of a pencil. And then, beneath that, some syllables, wet lips, sounds becoming words: ssssssstopssssssssmmmmokinnnngggssssss. You find your head nodding. "I told you, I told you." Beside you the man is shaking, his smile pushing tears out of his eyes. You try to follow the voice but lose it in the ambient rush of the man's wheeze. "Does this mean I have to give up my Gauloises?"

(Apt. D'Amours)

Beside my glasses a hill of pocket change, a sculpture of polypropylene, some postage stamps. Windex boot sock hair oil skin brown red off white, fragments of insignificance. "I could love you tomorrow and most probably will." Already each moment is decelerating, losing its speed, and everything seems predictable and expected. Already I am stumbling down the furniture, nursing my paper cuts in the month of November remembering Mr. Webster's talking bathroom, smoke stained walls...

4863 Hôtel-de-Ville

Squatting with each leg on a side of the bathtub, she rubs her crotch up and down the length of his face in long slow strokes as he sits submerged in the tub. She's still in her underwear and he can feel the wet heat of her body coming through the thin fabric, the dogmatic outline of her labia. The water is getting cold. He can feel his arms goosepimple, his skin pull into itself. The next-door neighbour is pounding out a fast, ceaseless rhythm on the wall and the bathwater ripples in unison. Is that voice really saying "get a womb?" His mouth presses into the wet cotton, stretching the material as his tongue traces meticulous patterns in the folds of her cunt, tries to push inside. He finds himself underwater. Her pantied crotch is pressed firmly against his mouth and his soapy finger is tickling her bum in an ever-tightening spiral motion. Looking up at her through the blur of the bathwater he can see her bite a knuckle in a poor attempt to stifle her screaming laughter, but even underwater their combined cacophony has completely blocked out the sound of the angry neighbour. They'll probably have to move again, of course. They've been warned. His tongue gets around the elastic of her underwear and suddenly everything's blue. *Tabula Rasa*. Already he can see the angry face of the landlord, the eviction notice taped to his door.

4345 Boyer

You are fearless. You have the know-how to turn your apprehension into virtue. Not too long ago you would have been queasy with nervousness in this situation. You had trouble accepting things for what they really were. You would drain the battery trying to start the empty car, so to speak. Sheer repetition has made you natural. Your moves are fluid and confident. You are looking forward for it to begin. You look terrific and feel great. Here goes.

(Apts. D'Amours)

Dear Mr. Blomgren:

We at Eccentric Spaces magazine have been aware of your work for some time. At a recent business meeting an idea was thrown out to do a feature about apartment living in Montréal, a city that carries much mystique and curiosity for our readers. Our hope was to develop a piece that would incorporate the past and present histories of many of the city's apartments and apartment dwellers—a lively social documentary. It was also expressed at the meeting that perhaps, because of your familiarity with Montréal, you might be the ideal candidate for such a project. We would leave all creative decisions in your hands, asking only that you try to illuminate the spirit of apartment living for our readers, evoke the massive histories of these spaces. Naturally you will be paid top dollar for your work. Please find enclosed a sample copy of our magazine. I hope this project is of interest to you and that you will get back to us soon with a positive response.

5748 Parc

Late night, listening to CBC 88.5 FM on the floor of her livingroom. Brave New Waves. An extended solo on two windmachines. The two of them are sprawled on different sides of the room, and he wonders if the sexual tension is entirely his own.

She had tried to swipe the old, silver, hand-sized transistor radio from the knickknack store on Duluth. \$35? The salesman caught her when the radio slipped out from under her shirt and landed on the front steps. The sight of the radio had jogged a memory so deep that its very existence—the fact she was even thinking of it now—was proof she would never have thought of this incident again. It had disappeared from her mind and had ceased to exist. But thanks to the radio.... She told the salesman she could picture herself in the greenish room, listening to the morning news as she lay in bed. Bed. Jennifer from grade three laughed on the bed until she passed out: the first and last time she came to visit. The salesman let the radio go for \$20 and a promise never to steal again. The antenna was bent from the fall and the silver plastic a little scuffed, but the radio still had good reception.

He steamrolls himself three times across the room until he nudges up beside her. He can't contain his grin. "Now that is a great song!"

1008 Van Horne

The whole apartment vibrates as the trucks go by outside, shakes when the train passes. Bricks creak. Drops of condensation roll down the walls. It's still dark when the two of them hear the sound of the kids downstairs splashing around in the inflatable pool. The window is open and the fan is making far too much noise for sleep. The air hangs under the weight of itself. On the desk there's a glass of warm juice and an almost-evaporated fishtank with an earwig twisting around in the water like some crazy bait. They're sweating too much to consider getting up, their breath coming too slow. It's almost morning. They hear the sprinklers come on in the park and listen to someone upstairs taking a shower. "What about the elderly?" one of them whispers, unable to laugh. They know it'll end like this. Bloated and itchy, drowning in the warm pool of themselves. In the distance an ambulance siren breaks the silence of the returning heat.

(Apt. D'Amours)

Who's stories are these? "Crazy bait"? Reminds me of Steve, holding out his hand so Monkey can sniff the bandaged wound and him saying "My thumb is fucked up like an old piece of fried chicken." My friend's stories and secrets become verbal ready-mades. Their experiences become my own.

It's raining outside, can't concentrate. I like the way Jane somehow manages to enter a room two seconds behind her smell. Nice effect. The full-spectrum lightbulbs aren't working at all. My skin is getting pasty and my thighs are breaking out in violent acne—all brought on by the changing weather. Early signs of mental chaffing. A large silver pipe snakes from my gas furnace through the apartment. I stand beside it to keep warm. Put my hands in my armpits. I think of heat waves.

67 Dupré

First the television begins to recede, then the bantering voices of the news anchor and the sports-reporter. "You mean it's NOT good to stretch before exercise?" asks the anchor in an exasperated tone. On the chesterfield the teenager nestles his head into the warm lap of his first girlfriend. His t-shirt is riding up his back and she draws pictures on his spine with her fingernail. A house, a dog, a man playing piano, Liberace, stretched triumphant across the keyboard having a hard time containing his teeth gums tightening red pull white face stiff going eyes as he realizes he's underwater

the man in the parking garage has the appearance of a convicted felon, a car-thief perhaps, leather jacket and ball-cap, tinted glasses and pockmarked skin. "Why do girls like to be fingered with this one best" he asks, stroking the knuckle of his middle finger. "Because it's mine." He'd be even creepier if you didn't already know that he was a kind of philosopher-king, sent here to this parking garage to deliver two important pieces of advice: "It's not very important what you do. What is way more important is the state of mind from which you are doing it," he says, and "careful not to lose your wallet." He hands you his business card and runs

pool the
naked girls, slippery as seals, one by one releasing their breath between the blue lips of The Man from Glad who's coughing underwater then realizes he can breathe, laughing, notices a hermit crab scurry on the bottom of the pool up his leg and starts

sweating sprawled there dozing the teenager can feel the rough upholstery of the chesterfield on his skin, the indoor afternoon heat, his girlfriend's hand on his neck, itsy-bitsy crawling up the spout.

4289 St. Emile

Overlooking the terrace of an Italian style café from the vista of her second-story kitchen window. A young girl folds a newspaper flyer into halves. A younger girl wields the scissors, begins snipping. A moment later a chain of hearts emerges. Laundry soap, chicken breasts, a stray lip, some teeth. The two giggle as the hearts flap in the breeze, the chicken meat and lips waving like some sort of flag. Wagging lips and dancing chicken! Wagging lips and dancing chicken! Soon they're in hysterics and the sale items look like they might come flying off the paper as the wind picks up. Then it happens. On the windowsill there's an alarm clock blinking out the wrong time and a limp aloe plant blocking the view. The watcher jumps up to see what's going on. By the time she locates the scene, an unhappy looking man is pulling some soggy newsprint out of his bowl of soup—soap and teeth. The two girls are facing the other way, holding amazingly straight faces.

586b Peel

With your fingers in your ears you can actually believe you're not on this sofa.

Without your fingers, you want to track down the guy who invented telephones and personally rearrange his breathing apparatus. You dry your mouth on your hands and your hands on your pants, murmur "teatowel."

"So although they were right in front of you, you couldn't actually see them?"

"That's right. They were standing in a circle around me, but were giving off a light so blinding it seemed that from under my squint there was nothing there at all."

"You're going to be all right."

"I understood what they were saying, but they were talking so loud I couldn't actually hear them."

"It's been nice talking to you."

I need to get out of here. I can't stand the way they look. The only place I can properly get sick is out-of-doors.

She's telling a story about setting fire to her mailbox to destroy the evidence and hiding the telephone bills and her purse. Her perfume is new luggage smell. Her lips are a blur. You stepped back into the hallway without inhaling or mentioning the word "chemical spill." From the second-story window you watch a car's wheels lock

up like the voice stopping at your lips. And it hits you. The sun's come up hours ago and now the only music is the sound of your ventricles popping as the picnic gets going inside your chest. The relish.

A kid tripping on the edge of the throw-rug.

Who were those people eyebrows pulled over their eyes? They invited me to their party but forgot to draw me a map. There's only so many ways you can piece together an evening. I thought I'd tried them all.

(Apt. D'Amours)

Feeling jumpy. When I woke up this morning, Jane wasn't in bed. Somehow the condom had stayed on. Surprised how strong the room smelled of sweat and stale air, considering I'd been immersed in it. A flickering image: Jane on her hands and knees, checking out her ass in the wall mirror, grinning: "What's the big deal? I don't get it." But her clothes and jacket weren't draped over the armchair at all, there were no dinner dishes on the table. Think, think. Wasn't there something about crêpes together and smoothies? If it wasn't for the lingering scent of formaldehyde it would be possible to believe she hadn't been here at all. No note or message. And in the next room, my computer was humming away, just as I left it.

(Apt. D'Amours)

MONTREAL—In the late hours of the morning, police were called to the residence of M.D.S. Harris, Director of the Phoenix International Life Sciences medical research organization, after an unidentified man broke into Harris' Outremont condominium, near Montreal. According to the police, the man scaled the building's rear security fence, climbed the fire escape, and entered the apartment through the back door without tripping the security alarm. The intruder, claiming to be a former Phoenix test subject, terrorized Harris and his wife for more than three hours until a another resident alerted Police to the excessive noise coming from the Harris suite. "They are usually the quietest people," commented Jan Boucher, The Harris' downstairs neighbour. "I knew something was wrong." The assailant escaped just as police were arriving. Rick Treadwell, Harris' spokesperson, said the family was fine, but still in shock from the incident. The authorities are investigating possible motives for this crime.

2353 Visitation

Explosion of iceflakes on the afternoon air. An ending on the horizon, or starting.
You sit up with a start, scrape the frost from the window with your fingernails.
Footprints on the back balcony, an unseen animal rubbing its back against the bricks
for heat. Edges of approaching darkness. Indoors, snow is filling the fireplace and the
presto-log hisses and crackles with wetness. Just a moment ago your lover's flesh felt
like putty beneath your ass as you straddled him on the couch, cold with the snow you
were melting over his shoulders. There's water's pooled in the small of his back. If he
even breathes the cold water will run down his sides onto the blanket. External
obliques. And across the courtyard, another snowblindness: poinsettias, wintergreen,
discarded Christmas trees. Balconies full of snow. Apartments shut up against the
frost, almost abandoned, except for the rooms where winter creatures enter, seeking
warmth. And your heat too, draining quickly: frozen glances, icy breath, cold
shoulder. The blanket far too thin. Conversation on the verge of shattering. Break it.
Don't.

4163 St. Urbain

“I can’t believe I said that,” he thinks, holding his arms against his chest to keep warm. “That was so stupid. She must hate me.”

6102 Jeanne-Mance

"Hamlet hoped/ the pill would stimulate/ activity/ rather than/ acting." He places his poems right in your path, reading them the way some people drink milkshakes. "The 1st number/ of the Ten Commandments/ was 2,285,513." Delaying the final sip. "Severely rejected testicles/ hurling a huge waterfall/of the eye." You trip over them, bruise yourself on their window-sills, or slip into them like wet pajamas, find yourself drifting in butter. "Listen to this," he says, nudging your arm with his elbow. He clears his throat. "Stupid as he is/ He asked the same question/ As you."

You squeeze past into the next room. In his highchair the baby is staring intently at an old dictionary. It is one foot thick and contains the kind of illustrations that are now reserved for bible pamphlets and educational comics. "As Bobby became older, he began to notice there were certain dissimilarities between his father's body and his own. While his father's chin was furry and covered with whiskers, Bobby's own face remained smooth. Similarly, his father's chest was covered with a thick coat of brown hair, while his own chest remained pink and hairless." The dictionary smells musty and alive, and each page carries the scent of everyone who has opened it, and the baby is entranced by their stories. Right now Dar is doing the dance of the six sailors, and his friend Sara is using the book to see over the heads of the onlookers. "Action Adagio," declares the man, relishing each word as he enters the room. "Asserting that/He hit the ball/Is vigorous activity."

(Apt. D'Amours)

When he told me, I didn't believe him. How do they get the microwave to work while the door's open? "They just jimmy it open with a fork or knife." No way! "Thirty or forty seconds on defrost and you get an instant, delirious fever." Finally I saw it with my own eyes. The elevator was being repaired and the workmen had moved the large potted plant out of their way. I had to squeeze by it to get to the stairs. It was there, just before the stairwell, that I passed #104. The door was open and as I moved past, I could see it all, even in the brief moment they fell into my field of vision. It was Jean the teachers' kids, Marie-Claude and Gus. The two of them were standing on a chair and Marie-Claude had her head in the microwave while Gus manned the controls. I heard Marie-Claude's voice: "Give me thirty." Then Gus' nervous glance caught my own. He nodded and I found myself nodding back.

1420 Beaver Hall

The band is playing music designed for sexual pleasure. The drummer is banging out a rhythm in 9/8 time that synchs the vibrating of your eardrum with the brain waves of the sexual response centre in your head. It hits everyone in the groin at the same time. A man playing billiards sends the cue ball off the table, and someone spills her drink. The dancing begins; the long floorboards flex under the weight of the bass. Everyone looks so sexy in his or her New Years outfits that the man at the back of room can hardly bear it. He needs to photograph this. He pulls his camera out of his bag and sets it on auto timer. 10, 9, 8, 7 At the count of two he throws his camera high in the air and maneuvers to catch it. The shutter snaps just before falling into his hands. To this day you can see the photo on the man's refrigerator. Pairs of legs, skirts, fancy shoes. Not one foot touching the ground.

(Apt. D'Amours)

...there 's something in the water. Hard to keep things straight. A documentary generally moves outwards from the subject, allowing for perspective, depth of field, but here it's all microbiology. Olivia, next door, keeps going in for operations. Everyone I meet has a year-round suntan. Then there are the doctors: their matching SUVs, their hysterical laughter. The building itself seems alive, or, like a virus living through us, those who live here. Thus the architecture of my chest cavity, my hearthearthear theartheartheart: hear the art, earth. I push my fingers into the hole behind the bathtub slowly, with fear and anticipation, then bring them to my nose. Sticky dampness. Two days ago I discovered an old plumbing pipe out back that dispenses toasty knitted winter slippers. I put a pair on and they fit perfectly, as if they were designed specifically for me.

444 Bienville East

His mouth is just another wrinkle on his face.

"Sea birds don't feed their babies as often as land birds do. The babies may get fed once a day or even once every five or ten days. Land birds, such as robins, eat many times each day. In just one day a baby robin may eat ten feet of earthworms."

He's just a head. His beige sweater matches the fabric of his chair identically and it's impossible to make out where his neck begins.

"Most birds do not sing when it is raining very hard. This is also true when there is a strong wind. Birds don't sing much when it is very hot or cold. However, it has been noticed that many birds sing more than usual just before or after a storm."

His words seem pre-inscribed in space ahead of him. His voice plods forward in a mechanical lull that allows one to slip into a meditative state of advanced ambient cognitive thought-processes. In his presence one can sit for hours, entranced by one's own thoughts, without having to actively engage in conversation.

"Don't water your plants when the sun is shining on them. It is better to water them at the beginning or end of the day. Water on the leaves of plants acts as a lens. The water

makes heat from the sun even hotter and, as you know, too much heat burns the leaves."

Think of fingers, teachers, cars, the contents of your wallet. Pleasure, revenge, sleep, people who would kill to be you. Think of rice, rivers, Tropicalia, chicken, hallways, pipes, water, vine.

/

1861 St. Gregoire

Empty oil bottles, newspapers, snow shovels and hose. Scent of gasoline and something brown. Relative economies. In the crawlspace under the floorboards the boy is earning a small fortune sifting through the accumulation of rubbish, searching for the boxes of Christmas lights. "Can't see them Dad." The flashlight is growing weak. Dragging in the dirt behind him, the garbage bag of newspaper and rags powders the air, and the boy can't see the cobwebs until they're already stretched across his face. *More scared of you, more scared of you.* There's this stereo he wants so badly. Beside the back wall there are some paint cans, and beside the paint cans a small clump of fur. Crumpled yellow fur and a few bones. And beside that, the missing boxes. "Runts in every litter," his friend's mother once told him, "need to be put out," and he's backing towards the opening in the darkness, grabbing whatever junk he can on the way. "Couldn't find them." The boy emerges dusty from the hole. He hands over the bag, and then it's on to washing windows, painting the back staircase, to start with. The boy feels his father's glances as they work, eyes on him like lost change in the dirt.

48 Haliburton

Until the orange juice hit the back of his throat, he had no idea how dry his throat actually was. *How can I love you in the shape I'm in?* He stood on the front balcony for awhile to catch his breath, then walked through the apartment to the back balcony. The architect of this building designed each room of the apartment to have its own narrative progression, like a story. Oddly, he placed all the narrative tension at both ends of the apartment, namely the balconies, rather than in the rooms themselves. This was the architect's last building before committing suicide. The inhabitant finds him- or herself drawn to these structures—focal points of light—but at the expense of the rest of the rooms, which are rendered instantly anticlimactic. Coming in off the balcony, the present occupant finds himself strangely bored and disappointed with the interior as if, like a novel, the momentum of the apartment has come to an abrupt halt. Within minutes, he is drawn back to the balconies, the view of Mount Royal, the city's skyline, the passers-by and traffic. It's becoming a problem. The plants by the front window are wilted and dead. The dog is out of water, and sways as it walks. The gun over the mantle remains untouched, never to appear in the story again.

(Apt. D'Amours)

Mme. Lafrenière, the recently divorced woman upstairs, knocked on the door, waking me up. She knocked once, a single sharp rap that stood out in my dream like an expected, predetermined moment and I immediately became aware that I was sleeping and willed myself awake, crawling through improbable levels of slumber to find myself in bed. My ears were still ringing when I opened the door. Her sink was clogged and she wondered if I had a plunger and some Liquid Plumber, which lucky for her I did. I was just getting back to sleep (something about a man who couldn't fall asleep unless his boyfriend was draping his testicles snugly over his eye sockets) when Mme. Lafrenière knocked again. She wasn't able to get the drain open, and wondered if it wouldn't be too much trouble for me to come up and help.

Her apartment is immaculate. Recently renovated. Tiled floors, new countertops, massive refrigerator. Scandinavian design—everything white. Extremely spacious for a two bedroom. It wasn't the sink drain, but the garbarator. I told her she would need a professional plumber, but she insisted I at least try to unclog it. I emptied the Liquid Plumber into the hole, ran some hot water and began plunging. At first, there was no pressure; it seemed as if there was nothing blocking the pipe at all. But after a number of pumps, I could feel the pressure begin to build. I stopped and looked into the pipe. There was a low wet sucking in there—the sound of something viscous and sticky—but nothing to see. I pumped hard a few more times then pulled the plunger

away. The heavy sulphurous odour poured quickly into the room. I looked into the drain, but still couldn't see anything. Mme. Lafrenière passed me a flashlight. It was then that I noticed it: a frothy white liquid not too far down into the pipe. The smell was overpowering. Suddenly I realized the stuff was coming up into the sink. It was thick and gelatinous, like rotting milk, and Mme. Lafrenière was saying "I didn't pour anything down" and the stuff was rising in the sink and I simply panicked. I switched on the garbarator and slammed the plunger over the hole until the sticky clog began to recede, slip its way down the pipe. I continued plunging for another five minutes after it disappeared. I think I might have been a little hard on Mme. Lafrenière when I left, although she was so thankful and apologetic. I'm still going to report her to the manager though. She should be a little more careful with what she puts down the sink.

6287 Ste. Dominique

At any given moment the silver belly of a 747 could be seen flashing in the sky through a lattice of clotheslines. Across the alley the doghouse in the back yard remained empty, covered in snow. A man in a bathrobe came out the sliding back door, rattling some kibble in a metal bowl. "You can't ignore me forever," he yelled. Steam rose from his slippered feet as he stood there, the snow melting around them. A flock of pigeons landed on a clothesline, and from her vantage point behind the curtain the woman could watch them lose their balance in the wind, fall into flight, then circle back up to resume their watch on the wire. In the frozen afternoon brightness she could see the man's skin redden, the dogfood scatter in the snow as his shivering became more pronounced. "Have it your way," he yelled finally, retreating back inside with his bowl, sliding the door shut behind him. Already the pigeons were gray smudges in the snow. Behind the curtain the voyeur straightened up. Deep in her stomach something growled.

(Apts. D'Amours)

Something catches your eye. A question mark crouching in the corner of the room. Something barely visible, insignificant, something you could probably ignore or stamp out of existence. Smaller than your shoe. You shouldn't think about it, pay it any attention—to acknowledge it is to bring it into existence. It's too late. Suddenly there's another question mark, peering up from under the orange armchair, then another. In the livingroom, the questions grow, spin, and divide. They fill the space up like water, spill into the kitchen and run down the hall. Soon you are drowning in questions. This is the way with question marks. At some point you breathe them in.

3442 Ste. Dominique

Her life in fortune cookies and newspaper clippings.

Good things will come your way. Your baby teeth will drop out painlessly. Doors will swing open for your entry. You will consume a thousand pounds of sugar. Patience is your strongest attribute. You will begin to suit your clothes. Your loyalty will be rewarded. The length of your legs will soon be in style. A pleasant surprise waits in store. Your house will survive the earthquake. You will bruise your arm in a boating accident. You will walk the padded road. Pride in your work will yield great rewards. An emotional breakdown will teach you more than you will know. The mole on your stomach is cancerous and will have to be removed immediately. You will be lucky with love. Your parents will die before you. The skin under your chin is starting to droop. Someone will heed your bad advice. People want to be you, you want to be someone else. Your children will die after you. The joys of leisure will be yours. You will become lazy in your old age. Your eyes will slowly cloud over. Almost there. You will fall from an airplane that is about to crash and land on a patch of soft grass.

(Apts. D'Amours)

My face is an imitation of itself. What are you? I ask. What in God's name are you?

Leukemia, the voice answers. I am blood trouble.

4808 Grand Pré

The hot water prickles his scalp for a second, but it feels good. With his goggles on he can see the amount of particulate matter floating in the water. He draws some of the hot liquid between his lips, watches the bubbles ascend to the surface of the tub, then expels the water. He tries again. He sucks the water into his mouth, holds on to it for a moment, then squirts it out underwater. FFFFFFFTTT. Once more. *Now with your lungs.* He isn't sure what to expect. A burning, coughing sensation, a sharp tickle? Nothing. He opens his eyes. He finds that he is able to pass the water in and out of his lungs without any difficulty.

(Apt. D'Amours)

The four movements of a scientific opera: postulation, method, data-collection and conclusion. Four chapters to a novel with an uncertain storyline. I found the notebook under some paper on her bookshelf. Casually hidden. The first thing I do when I'm alone in someone's home is locate his or her diary. So I'm sitting on the chesterfield. Even though the door is locked, and she's not due back for an hour, I keep looking over my shoulder as I read. Dr. Wendover thinks it's the guilt that turns me on, and I think she might be right.

Notebook

"Identifying new species provides a particular challenge to the biologist whose job is to continually track the evolution of an experiment. At what time does This become This, and to what degree is my presence affecting the changes. These are questions fundamental to the pursuit of which we are already so acquainted."

10:48 am #304. 2 double rooms. Steep staircase. Built-in cabinets. Large back storage room unused.

11:35 am #204. 5 ½ small rooms. Two roommates.

11:58 am #406. Renovated as loft space. 16 ft. ceilings. Open concept kitchen designed for socializing.

"The subjects adapt quickly to their surroundings. The space becomes manifest in the subjects' personalities after a short adjustment phase."

"There are no moral phenomena at all, only the moral interpretation of phenomena."

–Nietzsche

8:20 am #3. Basement dwelling. Renovations underway. Tenant has removed the wall between the dining and kitchen areas.

3:30 pm #207. 4 ½ rooms. Small office space off front balcony. New tenant refuses to settle in and unpack.

9:45 am #303. Awaiting re-connection of electricity.

"The surfaces and textures, forms and objects begin to wield influence. The subjects become unable to view their surroundings as neutral. Mild paranoia ensues."

10:10 pm #207. Tenant mistrustful. Refuses surveillance. A curtain has been put up over the entranceway of the office.

"The space ceases to exist. The notion of home becomes stretched and distorted, allowing it to outgrow its nostalgia and comfort."

5162 de la Roche

The activity, reminiscent of Borges' labyrinths, takes place beside the long, brick side-wall of the space. The bricks have become a little loose over time and have lost their surface tension: the wall is buckling. After staring at the surface of the wall for a number of minutes, the viewer notices a number of missing bricks in the structure, an almost percussive pattern of absences. The atmosphere created by these holes is at first one of perceptual discombobulation: the room opens up on itself, giving one the sense that the wall is more of a mirror than a dividing structure. The inhabitants of this apartment are amazed to find themselves on the other side of the wall, become entranced with the psychological confusion that comes with confronting one's own double. *What sort of contraption...?* Sometimes one is so bewitched by the effect that a kind of addiction arises. Other times, this amazement gives way to terror. The inhabitant suddenly realizes that she has been absorbed into a structure that is in fact her own body.

Somewhere in Hochelaga-Maisonneuve

The gardenias shriveled into cacti. The CD player tripped on a circuit, sending the singer into an endless rendition of *Easy Living*. A housefly swallowed its own buzz, and the cat pounced in its sleep. The mirror kicked up dust while the refrigerator turned over like an overheated car, trying to start. Entering the room she switched on the television and upset the electrical field. The night cleared its throat for a second, then fell silent. She had been looking forward to this evening for so long that, once it finally happened, she was unsure as to what her original excitement had been.

486 Beaubien

The infinite flickering of the bathroom light finally becomes noticeable. Somewhere there's a drought, you can feel it on your skin. Somewhere a river's drying up, the speed of light slowing to a trick. For a moment the moths scatter in confusion before disappearing with the walls, sink, bulb, into a new definition of quiet. Sounds of wings brushing your ears like an afterimage flash on the retina. Where's your head at? A moment ago you were looking at yourself in the mirror, thinking of returning to bed. There was soap and warm water. If you strained your ears, you could just make out the rustle of someone tossing around in the bed next door: a dangerous dream perhaps, the kind that is hard to wake from. Now the inside of this room no longer exists and the whole concept of content is an unlikely thing to be thinking about in the dark, as are bodysnatchers. "The spaces between," you hear her mumble through the walls. You can't inhale for the silence. Your breath is taken away.

(Apt. D'Amours)

*You go missing inside yourself the odds are two to three you won't come back.
The hunter knows the value of a fresh kill. He bends over your body and squeezes
your neck. You're too far gone. Or when your skin ignores your body and it's the
bone in your forearm that notices your scratching. There are distractions you stray
into only in retrospect. The television is all static and you realize the cigarette cherry
has been too close to your eyes for too long.*

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APPENDIX A

The Apartments D'Amours

