

Facade

Sarah Gillett

The fingers exploring my insides are soft and chubby. It is always a shock, the violence that they bring to play. From the quiet comfort of my half-light stillness I am wrenched apart, prised so far open that I know I will never close properly again. A knee crushes the fragile wall between my kitchen and living room. I am tipped over, face downwards, losing my interiors in the deep swirling pile of a monstrous expanse of blue carpet, the crumple of a dining room chair barely audible over the breathy concentration of destruction as I am rolled onto my back. My doorside moans, hanging limply off my hinges.

I study the ceiling of the room I am in, hoping to learn something new. There is a plaster rose above the triangular lampshade; the shadow of leaves rustling across coral wallpaper. I almost smile. It is my nursery, scaled up to obscene proportions. Even the patch of mould is in the right place.

They learn by poking, bashing, removal. The fingers curl through my empty window frames, hot tight wheezes filling the master bedroom, yellow hair blocking my view. They pull down my curtains. They pick at my power sockets, drool sliming my balustrades. They scrabble at my fitted avocado bathroom with a crayon and my mirror buckles in repulsion at their snotty nostrils. They throw my baby downstairs and stir it around with the remains of the chandelier. They stamp on the cradle.

I summon the last of my energy and splinter my floors. I concertina the staircase, clap my remaining partitions together, and slam the avocado bathroom into the pudgy cheeks. I do not wait till the silence of surprise is over. Rocking my roof back and forth, I pivot myself upright. I vibrate above the blue carpet, taking one last look at the street outside, the big houses all identical to me. I rescrew my hinges and drag the two sides of my facade together across the buffeted air, pull partition walls across my window frames and door, fix them in place with shards from the chandelier. I web hessian and velour across cracks. In my dark sloping stillness the choking sobs recede, the kicks and punches do no harm.

I stop. I am impenetrable now. I will not open again. Not until my baby is ready.