

Legs
by Eric Cecil

The walls of the corridor flutter with improbable shadows. Doors show in the spaces between. I peer into each, searching for an exit, an elevator. I find neither. Every door gives onto an airway dangling with serpentine wires. Somewhere from above or below, fans gust with heavy exhaust, rustling the disused cables like so many vines.

Stairs climb and leap at the end of the hall. I'm on them and up them as suddenly as they appear, standing before yet another doorway. This one leads to the expanse of a large room: a wide, cavernous loft, its center heaving with an enormous junkpile. In the confusion of this mass, I glimpse the splintered ends of a broken desk, old blouses twisted into hapless ropes, lined paper splayed and strewn and crawling with illegible scribbles. A rolling chair, the asterisk of its base spinning like a slow propeller, rests upside-down upon the crest of the derelict heap. A bare bulb illuminates all from above.

The room's deeper reaches retreat into darkness. Here, I expect to see the sharp angle of a corner, the flat certainty of a wall. I see only black: a nothing so deep that it pulses. I grab the frame of a wire rack that leans from the mound of debris and follow its path. Hands grasping its crooked shelves, I stumble from one rack to another, and another still. Each is as high as the side of a building. All contort into the tentative outline of a maze.

The maze tapers into something of an entryway. I pause at the edge of its silhouette, noting a pair of legs that extend from beneath a low shelf. The legs are stiff, slender, clothed in pressed slacks. Black oxfords, shined to reflect what little light remains, adorn the feet. The shelving and its shadows obscure the figure's upper torso.

A voice calls from under the shelf. Its timbre is low and feral: incongruous with the narrow limbs, which remain still.

You're not supposed to be in here, it says.

I'm sorry.

Don't be. I'm not supposed to be here, either.

Elsewhere, the unseen fans continue thrumming in their vacant shafts.