

# Shorb St. ORION MARTIN

It is exactly the kind of house spotted at the top of a semi-distant hill while you are maybe on a hike on a neighboring but houseless hill. You know how you got to the top of the hill you're on but it's unclear how you'd get up to that house. The house is huge and flat, you wouldn't be able to see it from "sea-level."

The house is not, however, huge and flat on a hill. It is huge and flat and at relative sea-level, taking up an entire city block in the middle-ish/southwest corner of a say 10 square block residential area surrounded on all sides by major commercial thoroughfares populated almost exclusively by delicious restaurants.

Almost no one calls it The House, it's generally referred to as The Compound, even by friends. It was originally individual units, one and two bedrooms, four to six units wrapped around a small dry courtyard. The courtyards are roofless but it's nearly impossible to see any distinguishing external landmarks from inside one. Most courtyards connect via covered corridors. Concrete floors and walls and filthy plastic roofs with hard to place and no one waters but they keep growing semi-tropical plants, vines, and leaves that stick to things. The place can be like a real maze man since some of these courtyards have one corridor and some have more. Some of the courtyards are intersections and some are dead-ends. The corridors are narrow and tend to build up bumpers of dry-leaves, it can be difficult to use a leaf-blower in such a cramped space. About a year after we moved in, we color coded all of the courtyards and corridors. It felt a little sacrilegious but people were getting lost in a legitimately dangerous way.

The sinks are also color coded, meticulous blends of porcelain in tropical dark green and school bus yellow, pepto-bismol blue, etc., chrome biomorphic faucets twisting towards the sun and then gracefully and kind of dejectedly drooping back towards the drain.

There are no dishes piled up in the yellow sink despite its capacity for them and its capacity to contain them in a way unoffensive to their surroundings. Despite the fact that I use the yellow sink most, that it is my favorite sink in the entire place. Despite the fact that the large recessed window above the sink is filled to the brim with tiny figurines and cacti, Happy Meal knick knacks and beads found in the desert, not by me. The sink remains clean at all times, which is not true of certain lesser sinks on site.

I was going to say that I'm lonely but I'm not. I text a lot. None of my truly close friendships have suffered for occupying the liquid crystal window of my phone. That said, I mostly see the people who work here. We have good parties, but I mostly leave the property for lunch.

When I take out the trash, I still fantasize about a witch hiding in one of the bins. That's why it's so heavy, etc. Our trash cans are huge now, they're dumpsters. When I was a kid, the plastic trashcan- on-wheels was roughly the size of a single hiding witch.

It's become a thing. I can't tell you how many witch tchotchkes people give me now. I became particularly depressed when someone gave me a little model of a witch riding on a maulstick like it was her broom. Someone made it for me and it's actually great and very clever but it was a little close to home, made me feel predictable. Therein lies the conflict, I guess, since these days I relish a certain predictability or schedule. My moisturization regimen has become an intricate parodic tracing of my body, a caricature.

I have all of my employees sign complex NDAs. It's a spoiler alert thing. They don't have to keep anything we do at work secret, they have to not reveal anything about the shows I'm watching until I'm caught up on all the episodes. In the same contract, it stipulates that during any given television season there are particular shows which anyone who works at the house has to watch, it should be considered part of their job to follow these shows. I don't drug test people and I offer health insurance, I'm pretty hands off and trusting as a manager, all I ask is that you watch the shows and not spoil them for me. Is there a TV in every room? Discretely.

Yours,

Shorb Gourmet

(As told to Sam Davis, March, 2015/30)