

## **Routine Maintenance**

Throughout the house there's always one lightbulb that needs fixing. Tonight, it's the spare bedroom, and although it's a long time since we've welcomed visitors – a guy we'd met in a European bar, who arrived unexpectedly with a work permit, a young son, and an entourage of stray dogs – this little box of darkness tilts the house, the street, and the whole restless city, dangerously out of kilter. I have no stepladder, so I mount a tottering ziggurat built from the books I've yet to read, and perform the neat operation, hand raised like the Statue of Liberty or The Light of the World. In the 100 watt warmth, I see that the dogs are still here, observing me shiftily from the mismatched flotsam of forgotten furniture, like schoolboys caught behind the bike sheds with cigarettes and smutty magazines. I of course have questions, but dogs are dogs and never give straight answers, and I hear the door click closed behind me as every eye avoids the skeletons – one large, one small – laid out like Pharaohs on the cheap Ikea futon.