

# HELIOSCOPE

presents

*etherhouse*

Preliminary Treatment (WIP)

hello@helioscope.media

*etherhouse* is an exploration of the experience of grief in the 21st century. As our lives move increasingly online, our death rituals are transformed. *etherhouse* aims to explore both the physical silence and the digital noise that accompany the death of a loved one.

As the guest prepares to enter *etherhouse*, an attendant gives them a key and instructs them to remove their shoes when they enter the apartment. They unlock the door and cross the threshold into a modest apartment's entrance hallway, shutting the door behind them. A woman's jacket hangs on the coat rack and a pair of women's shoes sit by the door. There is an umbrella in the umbrella stand and pieces of mail addressed to Katie Dallow lie on a long table against the wall.

The guest walks through the hallway and passes into a living room with a small dining area and an attached kitchen. The apartment is thoroughly lived in; it feels as if its resident only just left. Dirty dishes are piled in the sink, invitations and photos adorn the fridge, a wall calendar lists upcoming events, and a book lies open on the coffee table next to a half empty mug of tea. As the guest explores the apartment, their location triggers projections within the space as well as social media updates pushed to their smart phone. They see in memoriam social media posts on their phone as friends share memories of the deceased--Katie Dallow, a young woman with whom the guest had been intimately close--as well as projected "memories" of their relationship within the space, triggered by the guest's proximity to objects with memories attached to them. As the guest explores their physical location, the story of their life with the deceased unfurls around them.

The guest moves from the living room into the bedroom, which appears sparser, as if time has gone by and the home is now closer to being cleared out in order to be rented by a new tenant. The room is cleaner, with fewer personal effects on display. As the guest approaches the vanity mirror, a projection is triggered showing the deceased brushing her hair in the mirror. At the same time, the social media feed is updated with a post showing a photo of the vanity, letting the deceased's friends know that this item is for sale. As the guest approaches the bed, the deceased's sleeping form is projected onto the surface but, as the guest attempts to move closer to the figure, it disintegrates and disappears.

The guest opens the door of a closet and, passing through clothing, emerges into an exterior scene--a city street at evening, around Christmas time. Walking by a shop window, the guest sees their own reflection in the glass alongside the deceased, who is talking animatedly at the guest's side. A social media update shows a "memory"--a photo of her posted two years prior, in that very spot. The guest opens the door of the shop and finds themselves in the bathroom of the deceased's apartment.

Sunlight streams through the window of the bathroom. The shower curtain is closed and the guest hears the sound of the water running, as well as the sound of the deceased's voice on the other side of the curtain, singing. The guest opens the shower curtain and finds themselves suddenly transported to a coniferous forest at dusk. Birds sing as the waning sunlight streams

through overhead branches. The scent of the forest is potent. The guest moves forward through the forest, encountering memories both in projection and on their personal device. They approach a mighty waterfall, which roars loudly before them. As the guest approaches the waterfall, displayed through projection on mist, the waters part, allowing the guest to pass through.

On the other side of the waterfall, the guest finds themselves transported back to the deceased's living room, only to find the space transformed. The house is alive--music is playing and cooking smells fill the apartment, which is warmly decorated. The deceased comes running out of the kitchen towards the guest with a smile on her face, but she's not merely a projection--she's here in the apartment with the guest. She gives the guest a warm hug and brings them into the apartment, greeting them enthusiastically. She runs back into the kitchen to get the guest something to drink and disappears. At the same moment, the cooking smells dissipate, the lighting shifts from a warm glow to stark white, and the apartment loses all its life and individuality. The apartment is empty now--ready to be rented.

As the guest passes from the living room into the hallway, they see a note from the realtor sitting on the hall table asking them to leave the keys on the table and lock the door on their way out. The guest finds their shoes waiting for them by the door. They put on their shoes, lock the door, and exit.