

NIEMANDSLAND

no. II

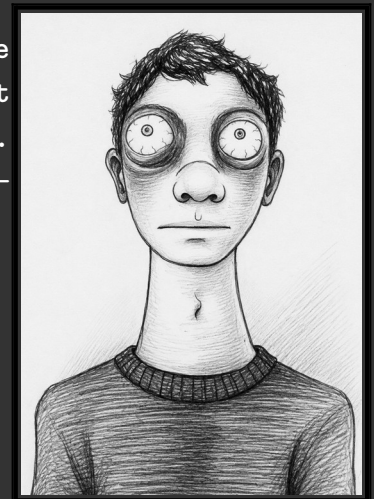


NIEMANDSLAND

no. II

Selfpublishing
Responsive

Jonas von der Beutelratte was thrown onto this planet in the late nineties. Since then he has been writing about night shifts, isolation and people who slowly fall out of reality. He avoids fixed structures and prefers underpasses, smoke-filled bars and half-empty train stations.



Portrait of the Author

Erfurt
2026



Dedicated to those whose disappearance nobody notices .

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»HOW MUCH CAN A PERSON ENDURE BEFORE THEY DISAPPEAR?«

This issue revolves entirely around disintegration. A person who disappears is like a natural disaster. The means and methods are rarely complicated. It concerns both inner and outer disintegration.

Some disappear slowly. First they lose their sleep. Then their language. Then the ability to look other people in the eye. Eventually only routines remain. Cold coffee in the morning. Cigarettes in the stairwell. The flicker of the television deep into the night.

Others disappear in the middle of a crowd. In overcrowded trains. In factory halls. In smoke-filled bars. Between conversations that no longer mean anything. They keep walking through the streets, going about their work, and yet seem long absent.

Disintegration rarely announces itself loudly. It begins in small movements. One glance too many. A sleepless night. A drone in the walls. A voice that will not fall silent.

NIEMANDSLAND no. II concerns itself with people who slowly fall out of reality. With harried minds, the sleepless, the persecuted, and figures who retreat ever deeper into their own perception. The texts move between isolation, paranoia, the decay of language and the attempt to persist in the midst of inner turmoil. The figures of this issue are not heroes. They do not fight. They endure. Until even that is no longer enough.

No man's land is no longer a place. It has become a state of being.





A ORDINARY LIFE

J. did not know whether it was real or not. His mental state unstable. J. scored no goals. They threw him out of the club. Creatures walked past him. Creatures with monkey heads. They chased him through the streets. When he smoked and drank a bottle of wine along with it, he did not care what others thought of him.

The coffee in the morning tasted dreadful, watered down, stale. Should the world come to an end someday. He would not remember.

Cigarettes tasted like freedom. The H he injected made him sleepy. Others wanted to be everything; he could be everything. When the doorbell rang, he did not open it. For no one. In his dreams he was free. There he lived his true life. He dreamt only for better dreams. Everything was nothing and Nothing was everything.

The hospital smelled of excrement. Of urine. He vomited blood. The day dragged on. Hours became weeks. One ampoule. Needle. Then the days stood still. In the mornings he got himself cigarettes. Sometimes he slept all day. God did not care how he had lived. Even if he did not believe. He was still allowed to dwell in paradise. Smoke pot and live on in the hearts of others.

J. knew that every drug on earth was better than no drug at all. The H was his personal way out. Some say, of course, that H is hell, but without H his life felt like hell. Until the very end he lay there and dreamt.

PURSUED

They cast a shadow over him. They would not let him be until he had disappeared. Even in supposedly safe spaces, the pack stayed on his heels. He could go nowhere. Had to listen constantly to stupid remarks directed at him. People's frustration went more and more to their heads. Had he believed he was only imagining this, it now stood fixed that he was in the crossfire of the so-called terrorists who presented themselves as men and women of honour. He had done nothing to these people, yet they had the audacity to make his life as unpleasant as possible. They channelled all their rage solely onto his person; he became their personal scapegoat. Instead of committing themselves to a good cause, they went for him, because he could not defend himself, was delivered helplessly into their hands. They spat bile when they saw him, gave him dark looks and would not leave him alone until he had finally disappeared. But within him raged on the one side the desire to disappear and to be able to live in peace, and on the other side he was not willing to do these overlords precisely that favour. Let them find someone who was a match for them — but that was what they feared, and so he and other weak creatures had to serve as a vent for their wrath. He was so sick of this condition. That no one believed him was nothing new. But the self-evidence with which they kept him under surveillance was in its contemptibility scarcely surpassed.

The walls had grown ears .

The walls had grown ears .

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10/1

HARRIED MIND

He could barely breathe, his heart was pounding so hard against his chest. Every movement uncontrolled. Dizziness spread, reached for him. Sweat ran without any heat in him. He would most have liked to peel himself out of his own skin.

The tension drove him away from what was happening.

The voices of the others did not reach him. Stayed far away. Words formed in his head, fell apart before they could take shape. Every attempt to collect himself came to nothing — as though something were tearing his thoughts apart.

For minutes he stood in the heated room, struggling with himself. He was shaking. Motionless he looked into the grotesque faces of the others. He saw distorted masks that moved.

Then that droning. Barely perceptible at first. Then growing. Until it overlaid everything else.

He collapsed. The impact did not reach him. Cramp. Twitching. Tension. The body took over.

He wanted out. Door open. Air. None of it happened. His body refused. He lay there. Rigid. Surrounded by colleagues who spoke to him in alarm. Without effect.

Their voices did not reach him. A thick wall separated him from them. Few words penetrated, lost all meaning immediately. Every touch burned.

The room, small, full of people — seemed alien. As though he no longer belonged here. Seconds stretched. His body worked against him.

Eventually the cramps eased. Exhaustion. Heavy. Breath shallow. Laboured. Caught between body and the hope that it would stop.

THE GLASS PRISON

They knew everything. She became so transparent that nothing of her inner being remained hidden from the world. As every eye that had been directed at her followed her every step, she had no choice but to flee.

Yet even then she was not safe from prying glances. She withdrew instead further and further into herself. Tried to do nothing more, in order to provoke no reaction from her pursuers.

They dug out the earth — thrust her down and shovelled it over her. Not deep enough to kill her.

Only deep enough to see her. So she had long been living beneath her glass dome. The outward gaze of people upon her gaunt figure seemed to her like that of a child who had caught an insect. It examined it with great curiosity, only to catch a twitch and take delight in it.

But if the creature refused to react, the child shook the glass impatiently, thereby forcing a reaction.

They pressed closer, without moving. Distant. And yet always there. Glances ate into her, lodged themselves within her. Barely any breath. She struggled to her feet. Found no foothold. The glass was too smooth.

She lost weight. Her cheeks hollowed. Her eyes searched for rest. Thoughts tightened in their circles.

Loud. Pressing. Relentless.

The walls listened in secretly. The ceiling observed her from every angle and would not leave her.

Sleep was out of the question. Then that droning. First in the pipes. Then in the walls. Then inside her.

One evening she tore all the cables from the conduits, hoping to silence the droning. But instead of quiet, the pipes only screamed louder.

She groped her way through the darkness, searching for the fuse box, cutting every connection, every fuse. For a moment silence seemed to set in.

But in that silence it began to whisper.

The whispering eluded her. She followed the voice; instead of drawing closer, it retreated — until it reared up before her and discharged in a piercing, bone-chilling scream.

Panicking she ran through the dark room. The screams tilted. The jeering laughter remained.

When she crawled under her blanket, that laughter still echoed through the flat, as though it had lodged itself in the walls.

Somewhere there must be someone. Someone who was watching her, keeping themselves hidden.

With the days her condition worsened. Soon she believed not only the walls were eavesdropping on her but also the oat flakes. She chopped the flakes up with a knife. Eventually she ate nothing at all.

She produced only sounds now, inarticulate, strange, stared apathetically at the removed radiator, then broke out in whimpering.

She tore the wallpaper from the walls, dug with bleeding fingers into the concrete, searching for hidden conduits, for switches, for an origin of the droning that returned again and again.

Her body deteriorated. Her ribs were clearly visible, her stomach cramped as she retched over the washbasin — nothing but bitter bile whose taste she could no longer rid herself of.

The voice remained.

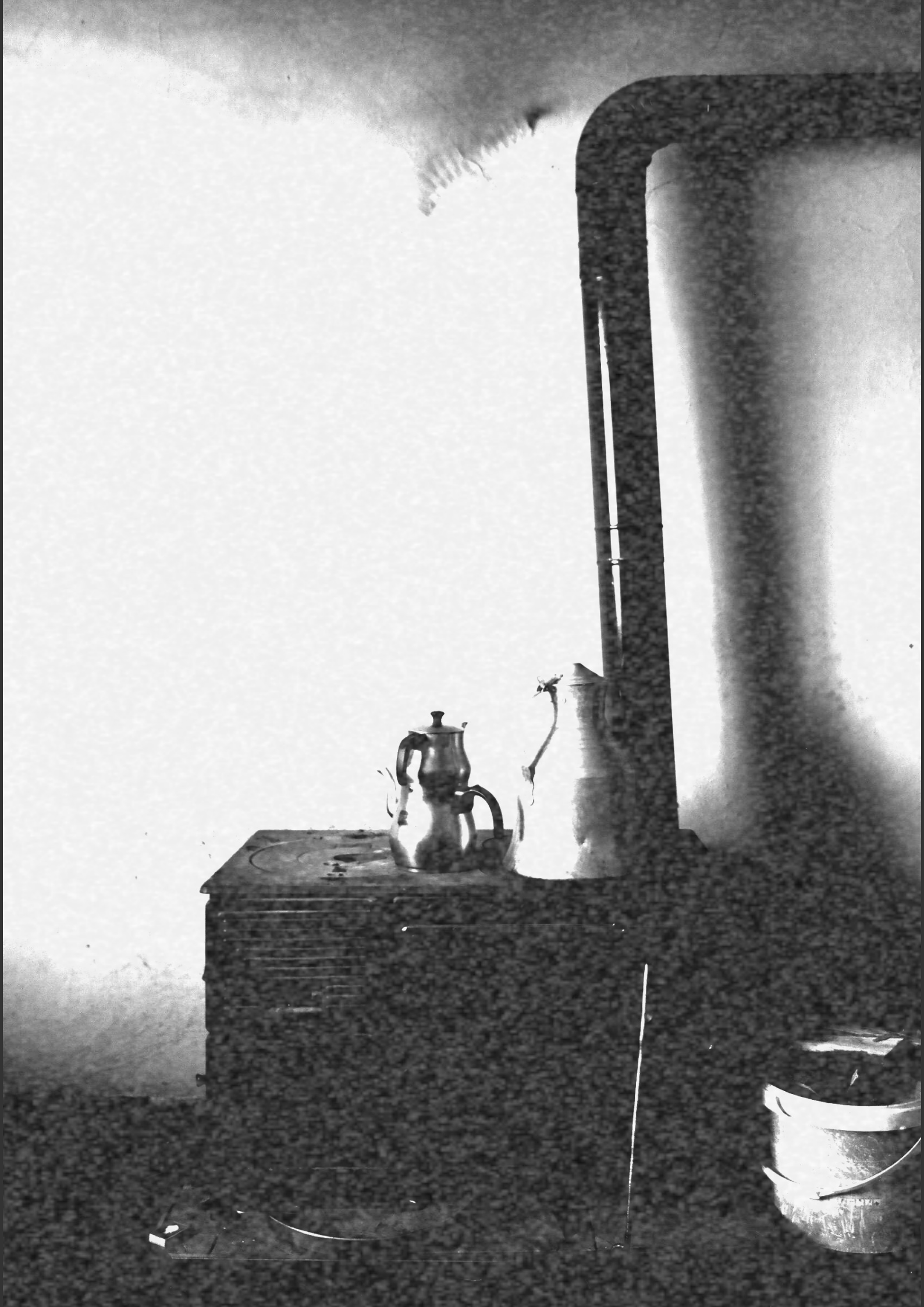
It grew clearer, more insistent, almost soothing in its strangeness. It spoke to her, guided her, gave her instructions.

And finally she followed them.

At the end of her short life she stepped to the edge of the eighteenth floor and let herself fall. The split skull on the warm asphalt — the last thing the people on their balconies saw. Above, there was nothing left.

The tiger rusted in the rain.
Somewhere a dog barked.*
Perhaps only the wind.*
Nobody asked.





Behind the curtains the evening program runs.
The monkey heads applauded.

FLASHPOINT

She burned. In full blaze.

The subject drew. Steam. Ash. Pleasure. The machine wound down. The pen lay on the mattress. Not a word to the subject. Tears followed. Steps. Autumn fell. A tiger in the garden. Circling. Five in the morning. The mattress laughed. Poured itself water. The flies watched the subject. Borders collapsed. A ray of light. The subjects moved across the path. The pen consumed itself. Rifles raised. Shots. Subjects fell to the ground. Before. Memories. Today. Flashpoint. The field shattered. Glances. Screams. Silence. The tiger rusted. Wind. Leaves. Autumn came in. Wednesday. Monday. Friday. Shards. Hands. Standstill. The subject ate the worm. The worm ate the bird. The bird the subject. Curtains burned. Trains failed. Time leapt. Fell apart. Words. Subject that killed. Ran gate the to. Burst chains the. Lightseeker. Escapd through thchaos.

THE CHAIR

I had believed life would be easier if one could escape it. But the longer I write, the deeper the trench digs itself open. I have been writing for months. Always the same rounds. Always the same goal. It ends in the dissolution of consciousness. I have spent sixteen years in the nick. For minor offences. Some dope. Some H. I have learned nothing from it. The welts on my back speak a different language. I was tortured for twelve months. They started small. First sleep deprivation. Then starvation. Finally the chair. Electric shocks racing through the entire body. Until you confess. They had to force the education into me. It didn't help. The mattress hard. The rhythm the same. Every day. You are woken. Walk behind the man in front. Round after round. Then you eat. You pursue an occupation and laugh at the colleagues' jokes. Outside it is no different. Freedom seems to be a construct. Outside the same rules apply as inside. You must adapt. Must play along. Always higher. Always further. Until nothing remains. I resisted at first. Hence the conditioning. The screws stormed the cell. Masked. Beat the inmate. Tear gas. Dragged him out of the cell. Broke his hand when he refused. They called him a cowardly swine. Beat him harder still. Until his body went to the floor. They locked him in the solitary confinement unit. He spent three years there. They won't break me. That's what I thought at first. Today I wouldn't sign off on that. You sit there with two screws in a room. And have to strip naked in front of them. Surrender yourself to them. Just because of one ounce of grass. They beat you to the floor and kick out afterwards. Nobody reacts. Not one of them wants to have seen anything. Not even in the file is anything written.

I broke my hand. In the attempt to get out of the cell. The pigs broke it for me. I was not a good person. I know that. But were they saints? Just because they wore a uniform? I don't think so. Play by their rules or end up in court. I never bothered with rules. Even back then I knew rules are there to be broken. That outlook hasn't got me far. I sit here and write. Write about my time in the nick. Knowing that every word is meaningless. Because of one ounce of grass... Tomorrow these words will become insignificant. Then I will be no more. Then everything will only have a stale aftertaste. I can already see them before me. Because of one ounce onto the chair. But where am I supposed to go? I am at their

mercy. Well, C., they'll bellow then. Not played by the rules again? You know what that means. Their grimacing faces laughing. You know what that means, C. Onto the chair with you.

I have not changed in these sixteen years. My end is still far off. These lines may seem insignificant, but behind them there is still someone. These lines will outlast me. I harbour the wish to escape punishment. Escape?, the screw screams at me. Where do you want to flee to? He pushes me to the floor and opens his flies. What follows is called order. I stand by it. My lines will endure. They won't break me. That's what I thought at first. Today I wouldn't sign off on that. The chair is the last thing awaiting everyone who does not play by their rules. Others did not survive it. I will not survive it.

God spoke and judged: Guilty. I am not a bad person. Never was. But in this system that is of no consequence. I harbour the wish to say goodbye to my friends. The cell denies me this. Outside, fragments of my life. In here it is I who has disintegrated. Talk without sense.

Three more hours. I dissolve. The screws stormed the wing. Ran to the cell. The lock cracked. The inmate in the corner. Crouching. They grabbed him and shoved him out. In the corridors noise. Inmates smashing their cell walls. The screws ensured quiet. Grabbed the inmate and pushed him through the corridors. Past all those doors. Out into the sun. Across the grounds into the death wing. The chair waits. It is neutral. The cruelty only reaches those who use it. I see the grinning faces. I see the mouths. The crooked teeth. The thick roll of flesh under the chin. Pigs.

The defendant is sentenced to sixteen years' imprisonment. He is accused of having consumed one ounce of marijuana. The consumption of marijuana is punishable according to paragraph eighteen by sixteen years' incarceration. Only then is the defendant presented with an ultimatum. Should he refuse, he ends up on the chair.

Downfall. Annihilation. Reason? Rebellion.

I can no longer see myself. Have I shaved? Have I aged? What will become of my daughters? What will become of me?

I refused to confess. Because of one ounce of grass, you confess nothing. That is pointless. I have three more hours. One last look outside. One last look at oneself in the mirror. One last smoke. Everything seems fleeting. Time runs. Will I have to force myself? Into education? The end draws near. The paper empty. What remains? Me or these lines?

SLEEP DISORDER

She slept away, climbed into dreamland. She devoured every single creature. She was aware of the side effects. Slept away. Fetched her sleep from others. Nose full of blood. Eventually she wore a blouse and glasses. She was fulfilled. Old burdens lay fallow. Her upper body became round. She pressed out something. That longed for her. It must have been summer. Rain set in. Drops fell from her eyes. Perhaps they had never disappeared. She suffered from insomnia. The days drifted past. The longer she looked at herself in the mirror the fuller she became. Her picture hung above the hallway. Talked. To her. She closed her eyes. But could not sleep. "Where do you want to flee to?" asked the picture. "Look at me when I talk to you!" She nodded. Looked at the picture. It hung above the hallway. The beauty flawless. "What has become of you? Do you find yourself beautiful?" The picture wrinkled its nose. "Look how old you've grown. How old." Her hands had cracks. Her skin was wrinkled. The hair short and coarse. She reached for the scissors. Cut into herself. Beneath the folds protruded a young gaze. One cut. Another. Then her skin came away. Beneath lay her former self. The full hair rippled. "Well then?" the picture jeered. "You have waited long enough." A scream. Blood ran down. Something pulled at her. Tore her to the floor. When she awoke, the young woman in the picture was sleeping. She pulled her coat on. Went outside. Glances. Disgust. Others walked past. Her appearance was horrifying. The raw flesh showed. She felt good. Wore a dress and saw herself in a new light. The rain stopped. The sun blazed. She threw herself into the crowd. Others collapsed at the sight of her. They had never seen anything like it. She strolled through the park. All eyes on her. She felt beautiful. For the first time in a long while. The smile resembled a grimace. Now they could no longer look away. She radiated in a different light.

In the stairwell it smelled of urine and stale beer.
He smoked until his fingers turned yellow.
The dogs were already waiting in the thicket.
No man's land kept expanding.



TIGER IN THE GLASS

A tiger on the veranda. He strayed through the front garden. Jumped onto the sill. Through the window. Walked down the hallway. Monkeys were hunched on the couch watching idiotic game shows. They were hollering. Did not notice the tiger slipping past behind them. He had no interest in the TV. He read books. Educated himself further. Studied German literature. Today he had the day off. That was why he was wandering through the front gardens. On his way he encountered a blackbird. She had a beautiful dress of feathers. Her gaze enchanted him. He greeted her. She flew away. The tiger crept on. Across stone. Across grass. Across smooth surfaces. The monkeys were still hunched in their houses watching idiotic telenovelas. He slept outside. The noise from inside grew louder. He had spent three years at university. Read like mad. Until the pages were empty. They laughed at him. He disappeared for a month. Did not show up again. The giraffe smiled when he came back. She put her arm around him. Greeted him. He did not smile. Was silent. The giraffe lowered her neck. She could not bear his mood. In the corridors, glances from others. She approached him. Nudged him. Whether he was still writing. He was silent. In truth he was writing on undeterred. She had read everything from him. Every text resembled the last. He tore it up, wrote afresh. Discarded it. Set it out again, crossed it through again. Now he crept through the front gardens observing the life of the monkeys. Who sat screaming in front of the TV and stuffed crisps into themselves. The houses clattered. The stabbing in his chest was repugnant to him. He wrote about them. They snorted. They spat. He drowned in alcohol. The glass his last friend. As a young tiger the nights drew him in. Always a girl by his side. The times changed. Now he slept away. Did his rounds. Looked into the houses. The noise crept into him. He looked into the glass and leapt inside. The pain moved into his chest. The giraffe sat beside him. The glass reflected only himself back. It turned against him. He drank it down. Another day full of grief. The tiger rusted. Memories awoke. He dreamt. Their recognition did not come. His words limited. Like the rim of the glass in which he could see himself reflected. Sometimes he slept in their front garden. They pelted him with tomatoes. He kept writing. The glass shattered. Splinters. The tiger remained outside in the living room too. The monkey heads stared at him curiously. Kept

channel-hopping. Had no interest in tigers. In the end he hoped for glory in the afterlife. That too did not come. The giraffe no longer remembered. The sheets piled up. Caught fire. He lay down on the lawn. Fell asleep and did not wake again.



UTOPIA

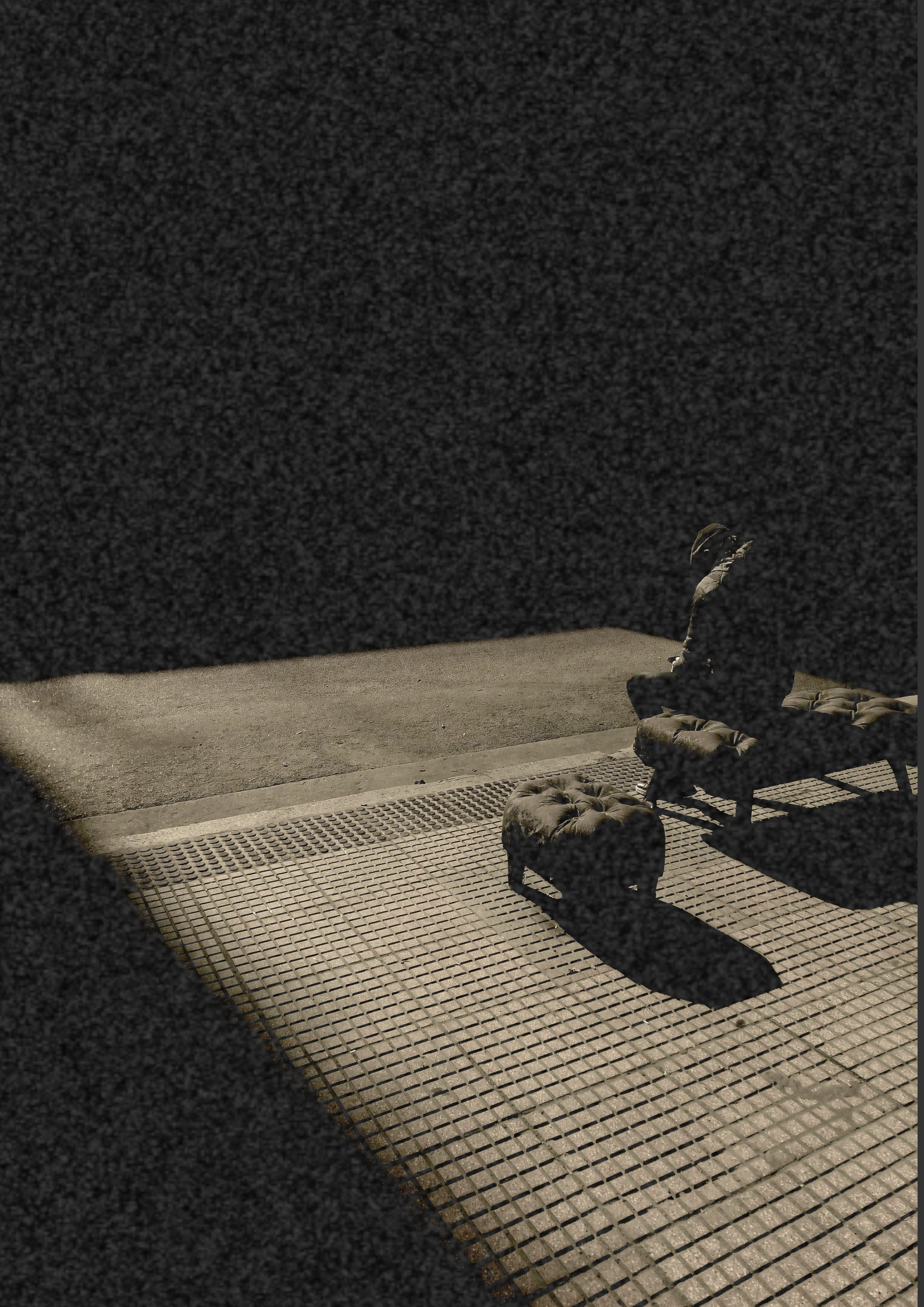
He cut the glass. Set it back together. Fragments. Questioned the elephant. Exposed himself. Lost himself. A woman ate her husband. He had withered. An iceberg melted. Nobody stepped out. The sun used to shine. Thoughts of tomorrow. A tiger on the heel. Now his eye spoke to him. He cut the word. Out came an ear. It stood off-kilter. She removed it. Parched figures at the roadside. Their mouths were rotting. They pressed into him. Stole his heart.

Someone laughed. The factory ran away. Sentences were irrelevant. Words meaningless. The tiger again on the terrace. He tried to remember. Nothing. Mistakes were crucified. Vanished. The boat rowed him. No land. No day. Language rotted. Then a glance. She was not certain whether the powder was working. Lavender ablaze. A virus. The tiger drowned.

In passing, the clock struck the hand. The television stayed black. It was quiet in the room. The boy got his period. Nobody reacted. The eye laughed. Seven years and he turned about himself. He did not age. She did. Light at full blast. Music burned. Progress stared into a valley. The telephone lied. Then he felled trees. Deeper. Further. Faster. At the centre an ear. She removed it. Pills picked him up. Worms devoured the raven.

Once more. Then stop. Friday fog. Saturday blood. Sunday God. Monday. From the beginning.





TURNTABLE

He entered the flat. It seemed rather large. Too large for him alone. He walked through the hallway. Talked. To the man in the mirror. Mouth open. From it rose letters. They formed a sentence. He drew them together. Shortened. And fell silent. The man winked. A smile spread. The house lay still in its idyll.

No man's land was no more. There was only no man's valley. Above him towers of rubble made of language. Mountains of words. Below a river of vowels. Further back a still life of the house. He lived in it.

His wife slept a few streets away under the earth. He walked on. Towards luck. His reflection did not follow him. The outside was off-balance. His homeland was a dismal place. Countless streets. Lanes. Signs. Prohibitions. There was not much here. No man's land was a one-way street. In no man's valley he wrote without compulsion. Words broke under the weight of his pen. He wrote on undeterred. The paper bled. The flat seemed large. Too large for him alone. He stood before the mirror and spoke to the man in the mirror. Letters welled up. Letters and more letters. Let-t-er-s. Something broke. He did not know what. The word sobbed. It was wounded. Blood. Everywhere. He tore it out. The man in the mirror laughed mockingly. Without the word the sentence made sense. In no man's land that was not possible. There every word counted. Here however he could strike it out with ease. The text itself a construct of letters that formed words into a sentence. For him none of this had any meaning.

She screamed. He had broken her heart. Thoughts of an evening. He wanted out. Saw. Conquered. She ran dry. Disappeared. And did not appear again. The curtain crashed down. God did not care. In no man's land God had judged. Here he was silent. Sought another cosmos. One that people could not follow him to. He wrote. Page after page. The publisher tolerated no delay. One night he lay down to sleep. Awoke in no man's land. There life was constant. Order was held in high regard. Here nobody could be who they wanted to be. He stepped closer. A beetle struck him in the face. Spat and kicked him in the leg. The curtain fell. Three more months and he was supposed to run the manuscript to the publisher. The language raw. Unfinished. Just as he had always wanted it. Here no principles applied. The publisher had bought him time. Something broke. He did not know why. She had not forgotten him. In dreams she often appeared. Pulled the curtain

up, stood there and waited. He spent his time alone. Went about the houses. Looked around. And lived. She did not forget. He observed the people. Sat on the sill. They moved about. Creatures without a homeland. He inhaled their qualities. So abhorrently collective they seemed. Everyone had lost their minds. The reader had no idea. He preferred consuming entertainment literature. The little bit of brain demanded everything of him. Best of all unambiguous. Best of all neutral. Best of all without meaning. That suited the consumer. At fairs they reached for things. Him they did not understand. Something broke. He did not know why. The word reigned. It had triumphed over the vowel. The vowel bled. It lay on the ground. Rattled. And spat blood. Its last breath. Then silence. Wrd s gne.

She spoke not a word with him. The curtain fell. The end not in sight. He only wanted to finish writing the manuscript. But the three months stretched. He shortened. Strike. He crossed out. Strike. He wrote anew. Strike. The paper dripped. He lost himself in the words. When she turned the corner. Ruins. No man's valley was a place where he could be who he wanted to be. The writing arose from an act of desperation. No way out. Memories shredded. She disappeared. Something broke. He did not know why. What remained were starved monkeys. In the end the curtain opened. On the stage stood a naked man in the mirror. He had banished himself.

The letters dripped from the edge of the page.*
The ceiling observed every movement.
The manuscript bled through.
They had forgotten to miss her.

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no. II
The Glass Prison

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