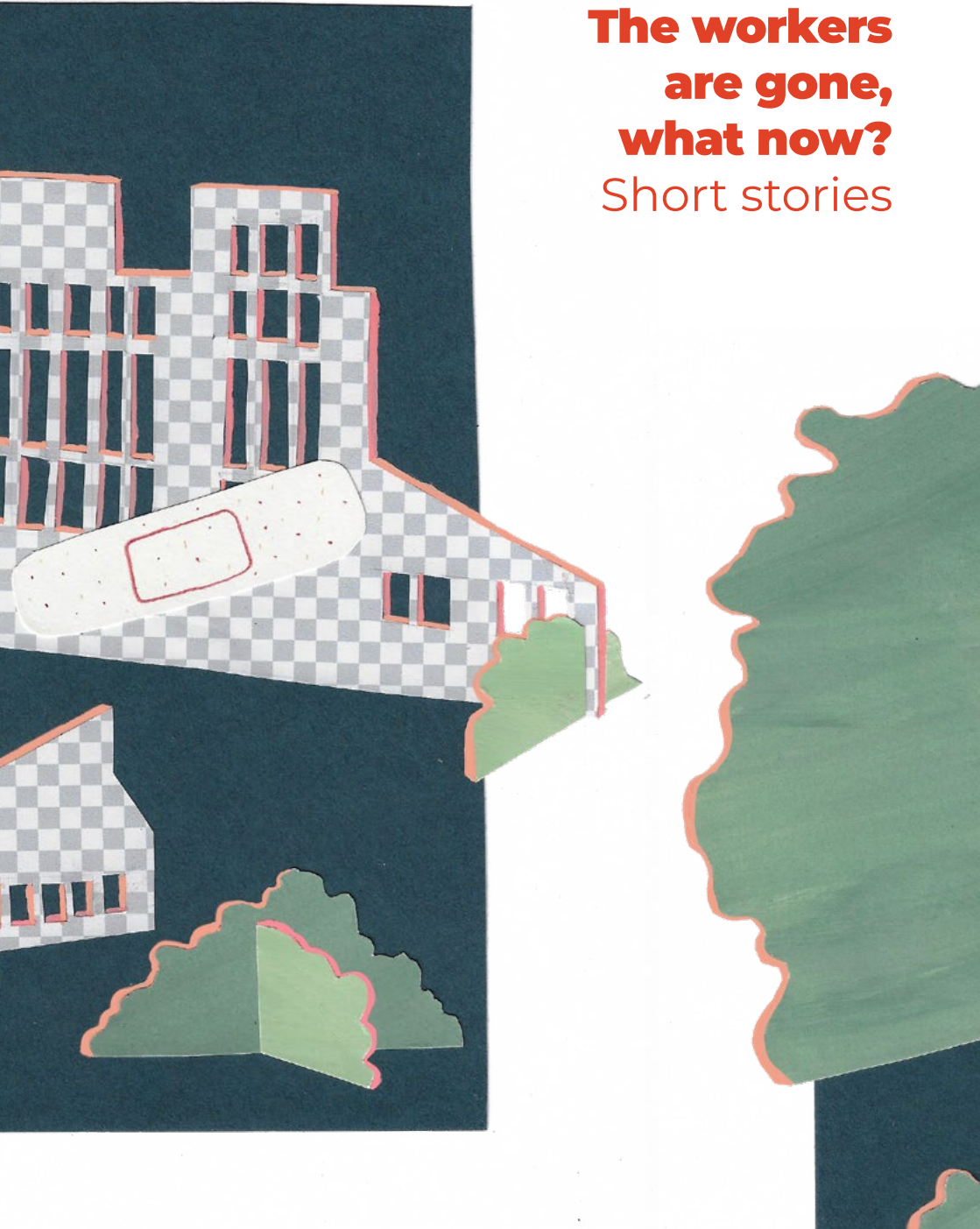


**The workers  
are gone,  
what now?**  
Short stories



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Short stories



# Introduction

In the 20th century, the industry dramatically changed Maribor, developed it, gave it its characteristic appearance, and determined the way of life of its people. As a result, its collapse pushed it to the brink of survival during the transition period. How do younger generations of Maribor residents experience the local industrial heritage? Is it a thing of the past or maybe the future? When the workers leave the factory, what remains?

These are just some of the questions posed by the RESCUE project, in the framework of which we conducted creative writing and visual thinking workshops in April and May 2021 intended for students of Maribor's secondary schools. RESCUE is a small-scale cooperation project co-financed by the Creative Europe Program of the European Union. As part of the project, partners from Italy, Germany, Slovenia, and Austria researched the history of disused industrial sites with high school students. In the X-OP association, we prepared workshops, the purpose of which was to get to know the industrial heritage and its importance for the region and its inhabitants.

Intending to concentrate on the content of the industrial past, such as the importance of machinery and production processes, architecture, workers' history, and possible plans to revitalize former industrial spaces in the future, we all collaborated; mentors artists Maja Hodošček and Toni Soprano Meneglejte, performer Barbara Polajnar, art historian Simon Žlahtič and prose writer Tomo Podstenšek, and participants, students Katja Cafuta, Maja Horvat, Robin Marn, and Ivana Rataj. Content-focused discussion with mentors served as a conceptual framework for further workshops. Tomo Podstenšek presented creative writing methods to participants - visual and language tools, research work, and formal features of a short story, which served as a primary form of expression. With pleasure, we present this booklet, in which we collected five short stories, written during the workshops. The collection is rounded off by a short story by Tomo Podstenšek, and the illustrations are the creation of the young artist Janja Kosi.

## Wound

### Katja Cafuta

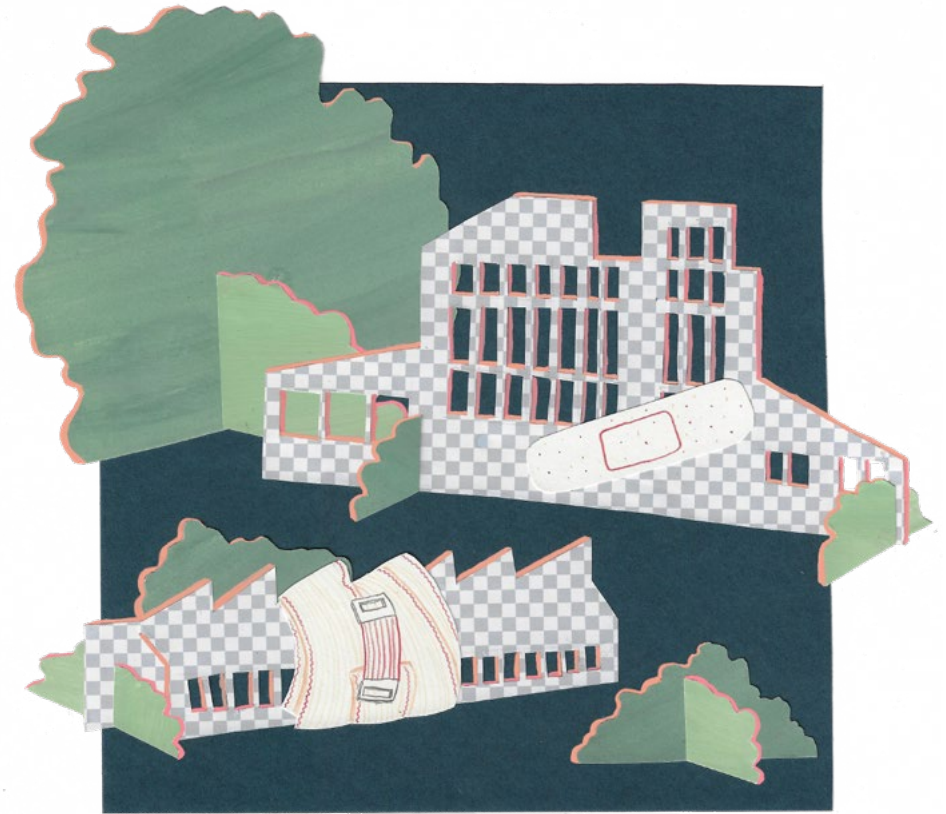
I was walking up the stairs, towards the director's office, when I suddenly heard: "HELP !!!" I was running faster than ever, and when I arrived in the hall, I saw a bunch of people talking in panic. I barely made my way through the crowd and saw a puddle of blood on the ground ... and at the exact moment I saw the pale Marica, I turned and ran to the secretary.

The secretary was talking to her mother. They were chatting about what was better for breakfast, real coffee or instant. I snatched the phone from her hands and called first aid.

*Now that I think back, I may have reacted in panic. It was the first accident at work that happened to me after the first two months of work.*

I don't know why the ambulance was taking so long, so I took matters into my own hands. I found a first aid kit and helped worker Marica, who pierced her finger instead of leather for the seats. First, I cleaned the wound, used homemade brandy, which one of the workers carefully hid under the machine, took a cotton ball, disinfected the wound, and then carefully wrapped it. Marica cried out loud and felt sorry for herself. Blood ran down the machine, and the co-workers quickly wiped it away. In Tam, we helped each other if something happened to someone, and we always stuck together. As a production manager, I also sometimes defended some of the workers

with the boss, and they returned the favor when I needed them. Sometimes I walk past TAM to remember the good and bad moments we experienced. The windows are broken, and the entrance is walled up, but I have a feeling that despite the fact that the factory is falling apart and there is no more plaster, it still smells the same and that the walls tell stories that only those who knew this building, when she was still beautiful, can hear. Sadly, I can't help this building as much as I could Marica.



# Everyone turns away from a faded graffiti

Robin Marn

A boy hurried through the dim, dark, and damp streets late at night. He was stuck in the darkness. Now and then, he looked back nervously, the pendants on his black backpack squeaking every time. There was nothing to be heard but his footsteps, the quiet sobs, and the distant rumble of the train.

He wandered deeper and deeper towards the dark part of the city until he came to a large dark red factory, the facade of which had been peeling for years. The massive, rusty iron door was full of dents but still locked, so he stopped in front of one of the almost entirely shattered windows. He eavesdropped, and when he was sure there was no one near, he slowly, embarrassedly climbed through the window. In the building, you could think about your options, maybe even spend the night ...

He gripped the wooden, rotting frame with his hands and jumped onto the shelf. His nose was overwhelmed with the smell of moisture and mold. He jumped to the other side. But as soon as his feet parted from the shelf, in the dim light, he noticed the green glass lying on the floor. He tried to avoid it and landed badly and twisted his right ankle.

His body clenched, his teeth chattered, and he remained completely silent. The glass reminded him of home; he remem-

bered school. Again, he saw the backs of his classmates sitting in the front row, the orange walls, the nurse's face, the doll on which she had shown artificial respiration/mouth-to-mouth. Commitments. He pulled a crumpled cardigan from his backpack and wrapped it around his aching joint. It worked, though barely, and so he was able to slowly pick himself up and limp to a nearby wall, the surface of which was the least popular among spiders.

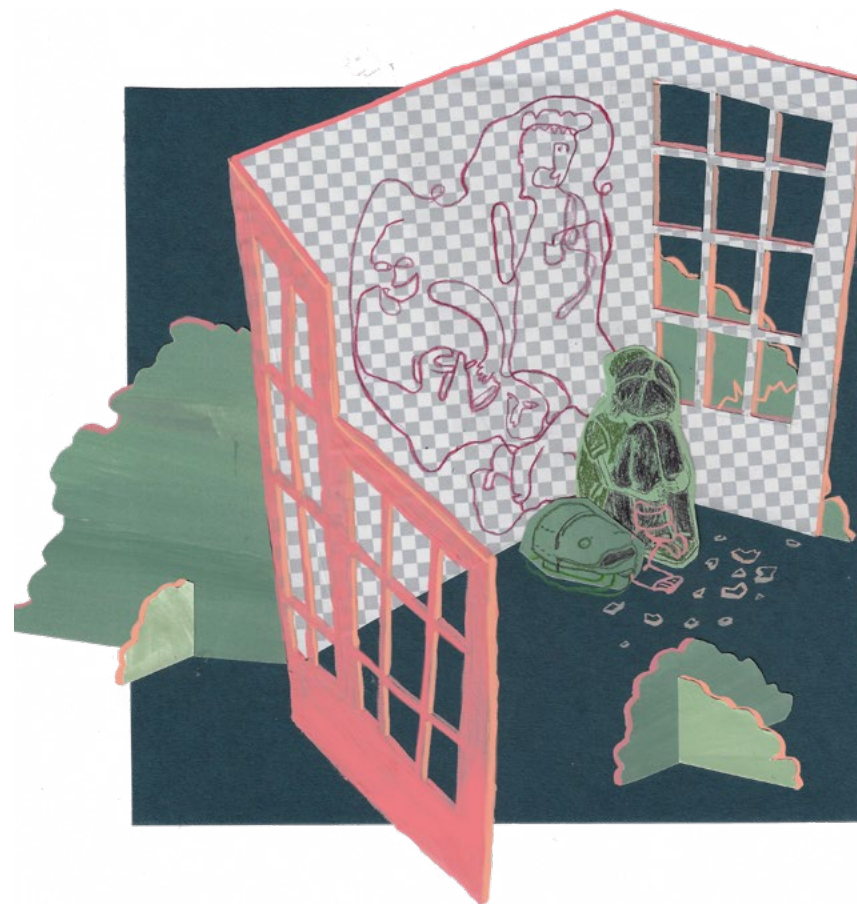
He exhaled loudly and began to think. It would be best to visit a hospital, see nurses again who don't take anyone's pain too seriously and comfort you at a time like this. He heard the pen of doctors scribbling the names of various drugs on his referral, while his father, if he showed up at all, stared absently out the window... He winced. If he goes to the hospital, he will have to go home again in one way or another if he doesn't visit another Center for Social Work or two before that. He will have to help himself, hold his hand if he is afraid. The thought pattern he was creating was expanding and expanding, but with each answer to the question, more questions arose.

Maybe I could spend the night with Gregor? We haven't hung out for a long time, but still... He avoids the graffiti they had

painted together on the ceiling of the city train station as much as he can. He'd rather sink into the ground through the cold, dirty factory floor and stop thinking.

But his brain continues to overthink. He might still be able to convince doctors, or the police, or social workers. Or anyone. Before his eyes shone the smiling face of a chemistry professor, Mr. Rupnik, an old stranger on the street with overweight bags, a salesman in Spar. He couldn't take it anymore. It seemed to him that his brain is about to explode. He noticed how much his hands were shaking. He needed a way to release all those thoughts; he didn't want to cry. Again, he saw the frowning face of his father leaning over him. His fist slammed silently against the wall, leaving some plaster and cobwebs on it.

He needed his paint, he required his valve, the dusty and empty walls were calling to him, but he had nothing. He remembered Gregor and his kind mother again, who had prepared an extra snack for him for an elementary school trip to Piran. No. He is entirely alone, with no sprays, no brushes, no pencils. Even a half-empty black felt-tip pen lying in the top drawer of my home desk would cheer him up.



## Gunpowder, cocaine, ash

### Maja Horvat

Today I am owned by the mafia.

At first, however, I produced bullets and pistols, but five years later, I was shut because it was the end of the war, and I was no longer needed. Then, a year later, foreign men settled in my dusty premises. They brought white powder and bags with them. I was happy with the new crowd, but it was much more unknown to me than the previous one.

At first, I couldn't understand why white bags and money were exchanged right on my premises, but I was still happy, as I had been very lonely for the last year, I missed the sound of people. Their work schedule seemed strange to me, as they came at uneven, evening hours and there were mostly just waiting for people to pick up the white powder in the bags. From their unobtrusive clothing and rabbit-like behavior, which they think will now be picked up by an eagle, I inferred their performance is mysterious. Nevertheless, I was happy to be a part of something interesting until I figured out what this powder does to people.

The most regular person to meet men selling white powder was Pedro.

Pedro was a middle-aged man, tall and skinny like a straw. His hair was always dirty and messy, and he wore a black perforated jacket and jeans that hadn't been washed in years. He

was cursing all the time and talking to invisible people.

I even thought he was talking to me once. He explained to me about his family who died while he was working in America. He told me about his daughter's smile, about his son's enthusiasm for football, and his teary eyes when he showed him tickets to a football game one morning. He also talked about his wife. She was a beautiful woman; her eyes were as green as the most beautiful emerald; her hair was so long and silky that you could think Aphrodite was alive. He told me he would never forget her smile that could light up any room. After that, there was silence between us. Pedro's face started to cringe, and his eyes were getting smaller and smaller, his face was as pale as that white powder they were making inside me. But as quickly as this mimicry appeared, it disappeared. Then he left, and we didn't talk anymore.

At first, he came every month, then every week, then every day. One rainy day, when all the leaves had already turned yellow, and the birds were flying to warmer places, it was all over. I remember it like it was yesterday. Men in dark blue clothes and guns in their hands broke my door with strong blows of some elongated object. I was overwhelmed by a sense of anger. I started throwing my loose bricks into them, but it didn't help.

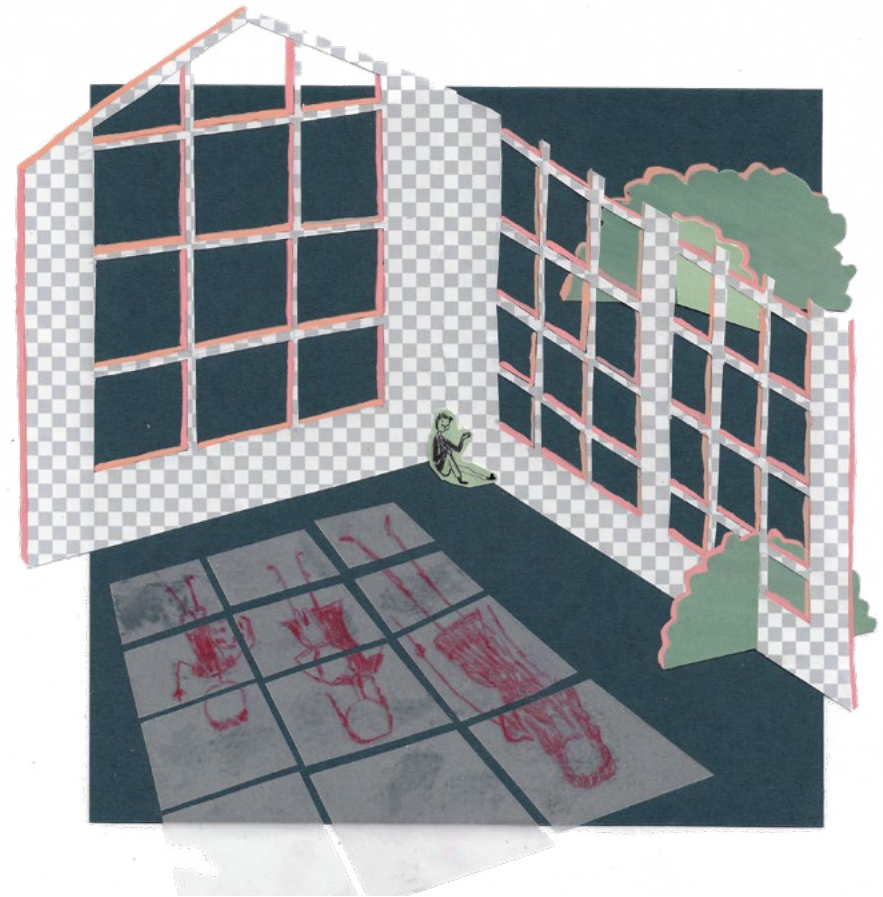


Then, finally, the screaming began, and it echoed all over my walls. The screaming lasted for hours. Then that stuffy silence I had experienced too many times before followed. No more laughing, quiet speech, processing white powder, nothing. There was silence for several days; only the sound of children returning to school could distract me for a short time as they passed me.

One sunny day, however, I saw my friend Pedro again. He looked pale as a wall, his eyes red and out of focus, but his way of walking was most noticeable. First, he limped, well, more like dragging his leg behind him. Then, as he reached my door, he rolled to the floor and never got up again.

Now that he was closer, I could see him more clearly. His cheeks were drained, his eyes like those of a dead fish, and his clothes already torn. As they felt my fear at that moment, the windows opened. There was no response at first, and then he smiled at me. His smile was the complete opposite of his appearance. He was shining like the sun, full of pure joy. But the smile didn't last long. Slowly his eyes began to close, and panic began to seize me. All my walls started to shake, my windows opened, but there was nothing I could do. Slowly, his eyes began to close until they closed completely. Then he didn't move anymore. The trembling stopped, followed by a deadly silence.

Again, I was left alone.



# Abandonment

Maja Horvat

Oh, dear God, how I miss people! There was a lot of joy in me when I was still operating because I was not by myself. Every day some men came. They always came at sunrise and left at sunset. It's been like that for a while. Then, one cloudy morning, a little man came and said something to my manager, and his eyes widened, and he went back to my room with his head down. After that, my rooms became quieter and emptier. I was alone.

So I was for several moons. Ivy began to grow on the walls, flowers began to penetrate the floor, the roof started to crumble, the rooms became grayer and grayer, and the windows were even walled up. Of course, one could say that I could wish it was the same as before, but I gave up on that a long time ago. For many years I longed for change, for a kind of miracle, but it never happened. Today, the only sound I can still hear is the dog barking at people as they walk past its fence.

Sometimes I wonder if I want anything else at all.

When they built me, I was so ambitious. I aspired to become a school, then a hospital, then a store, and so on. When they finished me off and began painting the walls, I found out I would be a factory. That's when I wondered what kind of factory I would be, a manufacturer of clothes, tablets, or even

diapers. My rooms were so beautiful, burgundy red at the time. I had dark brown tables and chairs on the first floor and some kind of soap-making machines downstairs.

Today I am no longer as ambitious as I used to be; I no longer have the will. I am falling apart and wandering into oblivion.

I notice how cracks are forming in my walls, how the roof is almost gone, how I have more and more broken windows that have not yet been walled up, and how day by day I hear less and less of that dog that once supported me, so I didn't feel completely lonely.

Sometimes I wish it was different, but it is as it is.

All I want now is to fall apart. But until then, this situation will go on. But it doesn't bother me; I can still enjoy the sun, which helps the flowers to sprout in my cracked ground, and thus gives me hope that maybe after I finally fall apart, I will have a better life than such a flower.

# I remember the singing

Robin Marn

Sometimes. How much weight this word carries for me today. When I was young, I sighed at such and similar expressions of the older workers, and a slight whistle blew through my premises. But now I understand them. I, too, miss the times that are long gone.

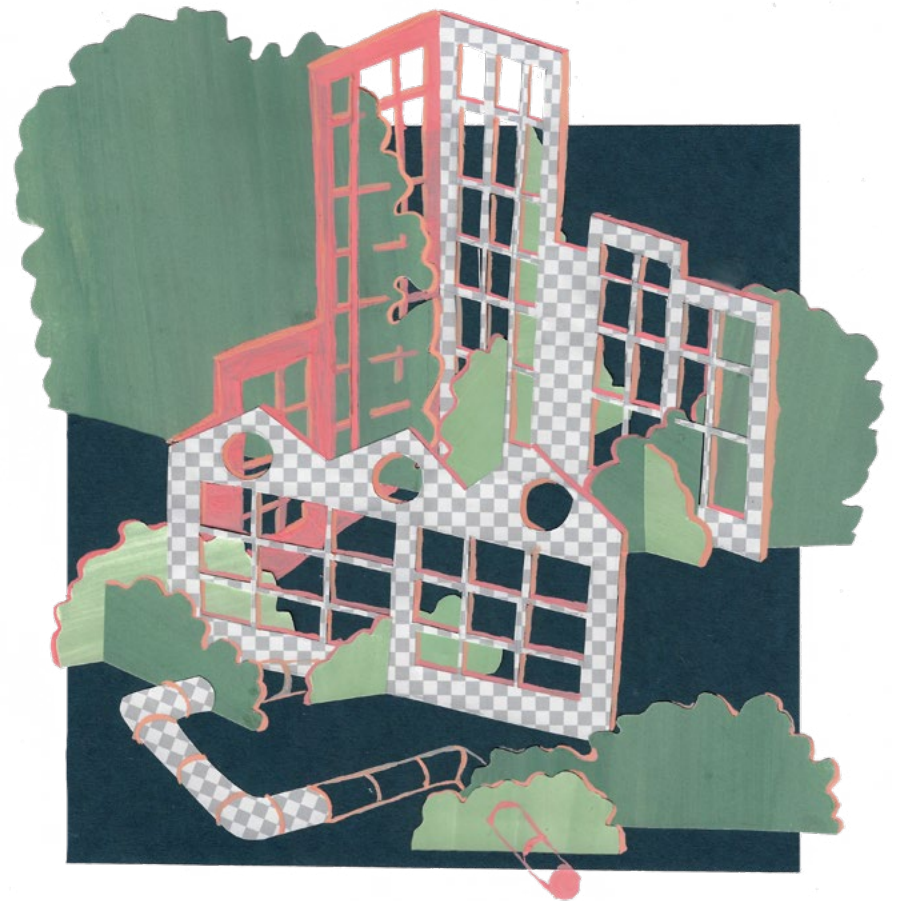
I wasn't always in as bad a condition as I am today. People produced clothes in me, and these days I can be happy if, by chance, some old, torn coat happens to be on my floor. I can already hear the words of the diligent seamstresses who would bend over them if they were still here with me: "Bad material!" one would frown, and the other would remark with a smile, "Bad cut, even Cinderella's mice knew better." Twenty years ago, I miraculously saw a piece of velvet pants again that someone had thrown out of my broken window, but they didn't stay pretty for long. Namely, I don't have a roof, just wooden beams that weren't protected from the rain. Thus, they were of use only to mice, who are my only company today. After the last workers said goodbye with a blue hat and a quilted robe in their hands, different people settled in me. As they wrapped themselves in blankets along my walls at night (if they only had them), I was saddened that I couldn't help them anymore. I tried to bend, break, flex to protect them from rain and wind, but it didn't help. My only consolation was

that at least I hear stories that have been muttered from time to time. Once upon a time, a woman with gray strands in her black hair even sang to me! A lonely, broken melody bounced off the empty faded walls, awakening the marchers' spirits and from the ones sung by the workers to make their time pass faster. Oh, how I enjoyed those tunes! But even people like that woman stopped coming when they walled up my windows with gray, cracked bricks. So I can no longer see the few passers-by.

But it can't always stay that way! Even after years when the company sold too little, there came a time when workers and bosses cheered with a glass of home-grown fruit liquor almost every week with laughter. The more I thought (and believe me, I had a tremendous amount of time), the more I realized that I basically don't miss work. I just want people, a good mood, a song! Arts. There is some graffiti on my walls here and there, created by some frustrated person, but I have never been so lucky that someone painted something on me and showed me something new and beautiful.

I could be a museum and look for the strokes of my old friends in the pictures hung on my walls. Perhaps, however, I would prefer a gallery that, in addition to imaginary faces and white shirts, would look at pictures and think respectable, intelligent

thoughts. Most of all, it would be a hall so that it could host a choir every night. But this dream will never come true for me because I was not built for it. I am not as tall, expensive, and artful as real halls. I don't have the equipment to amplify the singers' voices and the mighty doors that would warmly welcome ladies and gentlemen in black dresses. So I can only hope to be open to people in any way and at least for a moment hear the songs they carry in their hearts. But maybe someone will some day listen to me too?



## One of these days

### Tomo Podstenšek

At first, he thought he just looked a little bit similar. He saw him from behind, so he couldn't really tell; it could be him, but it could also be somebody else. He was a bit bigger and had grey hair, already quite thinned at the crown. But the height was exactly right, and the prominent ears as well ...

The man suddenly turned around and Bojan had no time to hide behind a pallet of cans. He moved in close to the shelves and tensely observed the broad-shouldered figure that was walking toward him with determined steps. He held his breath and waited to see what would happen. The man stopped right in front of him, so close that he could smell his aftershave – some unknown, surely elite brand, not the cheap sugar broth that old men usually pour over themselves in huge amounts to hide the smell of their own bodies, their decay and approaching death.

Bojan looked down at his dark blue tie, tied around his broad, bull-like neck. From the corner of his eye, he could see the man's right hand slowly rising, its back crisscrossed with bulging blue veins, the skin covered with age spots.

"Excuse me", said a known voice, and since Bojan still hasn't moved, it grudgingly repeated: "Excuse me, could you..."

The hand reached past Bojan's head, the tie swunged, the fat fingers with hairy ankles touched the shelf and a moment later

threw a small spice jar into the shopping basket. Then the man turned around and headed for the cash register.

Bojan finally let out the air he was holding in and breathed normally again.

\*

He didn't recognize him! Of course he didn't, how could he, he can barely recognize himself when he accidentally looks in the mirror while brushing his teeth in the morning. Twenty-five years is a long time and besides, Miklavčič has no reason at all to think about him or look for his features on strangers' faces. Anyway, Miklavčič has aged a lot, too; the wrinkles on his face expanded and got deeper, he began to lose his hair, his shoulders slumped and he gained some weight around his waist. But the sneaky look in his eyes and the cunning smile – those hadn't changed. Bojan couldn't understand how he could have ever trusted that man.

Sometimes he pondered what he'd tell him, if he met him somewhere. Of course, he never expected that to actually happen. Miklavčič was a big shot now and Bojan was sure that their paths would never cross again. And then he runs into him in a boring, ordinary supermarket!

He made a little turn around the store in order not to attract any attention and went toward the register only after that. He peeked at Miklavčič's shopping basket: some sliced prosciutto, a bottle of good wine, some fancy cheese with walnuts and a weird name, and dried coriander. Nothing special, actually, but out of all of those things, Bojan could only afford the spice

without a second thought – and even then, he wouldn't really know what to do with it.

\*

Luckily, his old junker started on the first try, and the black Audi with tinted windows couldn't escape. But now, after a few weeks of stalking, Bojan already knew very well where Miklavčič was going at this hour anyway; like most people, he had quite a predictable daily routine.

Bojan parked at the side of the road and watched the back of the car disappear into the opened jaws of the underground garage, where he couldn't follow him. He looked up at the glass office building and guessed which windows belong to Miklavčič's office. A couple of days ago, he read on the front sign that Miklavčič's company was located on the twelfth floor, but the strict look on the security guard's face kept him from trying to go anywhere further than the lobby.

He miscounted the floors twice and had to start over. The sun reflected off the glass surface and blinded him, forcing him to squint. It crossed his mind, out of the blue, that a terrorist airplane had cut into a different, much bigger, and much more important American skyscraper twenty years ago.

\*

He had plenty of time – Miklavčič never finished before three in the afternoon and it made no sense to spend the following

couple of hours in the stinky car without air-conditioning. He decided to drive to the old industrial area on the outskirts he hadn't visited in ages.

During the first years after the factory closed, he used to come here almost every day. He would wake up at dawn even without the annoying alarm-clock, with nothing to do in his empty apartment. He would observe through the tall, steel fence, how the grass has started to grow through the cracks in asphalt and concrete; how the glass panes of more and more windows have been broken; how the gutters and the tin roof have rusted, and how the plaster has begun to fade, peeling and falling off the walls. In time, his visits became scarcer, he couldn't bear to keep helplessly watching everything relentlessly fall apart.

Now, he was still far away when a loud buzzing surprised him. As he came closer, he saw a couple of construction vehicles biting into the body of the factory building from several sides. The old steel fence wasn't there anymore and the gatehouse at the entrance – where they had tiresomely lined them up after their shifts and searched them to make sure nobody took anything home in their bags – was also torn down. A couple of heaps of greyish soil, mixed with construction materials, now occupied the place where it used to stand. The main administration building was left untouched for now, but the closest production hall – if he remembers correctly, it was called hall C; he had always worked at a whole different end of the facility – was being torn down in that very moment. There was already a big gaping hole in its wall.

"Hey, what are you doing?!", he yelled to the operator. At first,

they couldn't hear him over the noise. Only after Bojan had stood in front of the backhoe, widely waving both of his arms, did the operator turn the engine off and look at him, puzzled. "What's happening here? Who told you to do this?"

"The boss", said the worker.

"Cut the crap, tell me immediately what company you're from and what's going to be done here!"

"It's all written there", the worker reluctantly pointed his finger to the project board, which was installed next to the orange safety net at the end of the construction site. "I just do what I'm told. If they say dig, I dig, if they say demolish, I demolish." "But you can't just demolish our factory..." said Bojan with a raised voice, and then immediately stopped talking and apologetically waved his hand.

The engine roared again and the backhoe tore another row of bricks.

Bojan looked away. It was pointless, it didn't matter anymore and it was way too late anyway. Besides, the factory was never actually *theirs*, all of them were just stupid enough to believe the story about employee share ownership. Well, not all of them – Miklavčič and those like him knew even then how things stood, and when privatization came, they knew how to be in the right place at the right time, as people like to say ... He glanced at the project board at the end of the construction site and realized they wanted to build a shopping mall on the factory grounds. Of course, what else! He was too tired to get upset.

\*

They could have at least told them honestly how things are, instead of lying and promising that it'll get better soon. Miklavčič was the worst when it came to that. He was the one who approached him to help convince other co-workers to stick by and sacrifice themselves just a bit longer; to voluntarily give up their bonuses for lunch and night shifts, to accept salary cuts, to take unpaid leave, to sign statements giving up their severance ... All that to keep the company going. When they first started letting people go – promising that they'd take them back in a month, two at most, once the crisis passes – some even volunteered! Bojan was one of those and on that occasion Miklavčič firmly shook his hand, patted him on the shoulder, and whispered into his ear that he'd never forget it, that Bojan could expect a raise and a promotion once he came back to his workplace.

He later read in the paper that the company had already been completely lost at that time and that the management kept it open just to get subsidies from the state for production maintenance, even though unsold stocks were piling up in the warehouses.

\*

Miklavčič stepped out of the building around 1:30 pm and started walking to the restaurant down the street where he usually had his lunch. Bojan followed him at a discreet distance and bought some fried potatoes in a paper bag at a kiosk across the street.

Miklavčič was sitting at a table by the window today and Bojan was able to watch him eat. He couldn't see exactly what was on his plate, but he could see a wine glass with a long stem which Miklavčič occasionally lifted up to his full lips. Red wine should be paired with dark meat, beef probably, maybe a prime cut steak with a snobby French name.

Bojan chewed his greasy and burned potatoes and couldn't believe they both used to eat at the same factory cafeteria. Sure, they sat at different tables, but they had the same food out of the same pots. Some said it tasted horribly, over-cooked and bland, but he didn't agree. How were they supposed to cook for fifteen hundred people with different tastes? Sometimes, you had to add some extra pepper and salt, and it was good ...

\*

It all went to hell in just a couple of years. The company declared bankruptcy, the workers were left on the street, and the management cheaply purchased the rest of the assets and real estate of the company they had ruined. Bojan heard that Miklavčič became, among other things, the owner of the holiday village the company had built for its workers. Bojan vacationed only once in the cottages, because the waiting lists were too long and those with a family and more years of service were prioritized. However, he remembered well the smell of pine trees, the long wooden pier, big saggy breasts of German women from the neighboring camp, the sound of the sea and the night crickets. They say it's all been renovated and it's

now a luxurious holiday resort with yacht slips ...

The people who were involved in these and other shady activities that took place as the factory was going down were later tied up in court for years. Every so often, he'd see Miklavčič on television or read his name in newspaper articles, but in the end, it all came to nothing. Most of the cases became time-barred, and some defendants were acquitted by the court because it was supposedly impossible to prove that they had harmed the company *on purpose*.

Bojan didn't really know much about the law, he only knew that he had never let something that didn't belong to him slide into his pocket on accident.

\*

Sandra was probably right when she kept telling him to forget it all as soon as possible and move on. But she was definitely wrong when she said he just used it as a handy excuse for laziness and incompetence. He wanted to leave it all behind as well, he would've loved that, but his thoughts just kept bouncing back to the same things and the same people.

Not being able to find a proper job anywhere surely didn't help. All the industries were in crisis and thousands of people were being laid off. You couldn't even find a job with a degree, let alone if you were an ordinary worker like him. Everything he knew how to do and was willing to do was all of a sudden accomplished much more efficiently by robots or by the much cheaper hands of workers somewhere in Bulgaria, India, China, and God knows where else ...



Most of his co-workers eventually figured something out. Some people retrained, others opened small businesses, still others moved out of the country or retired early. Well, of course there were also those who fell even lower than him or were even less lucky than him; Srečko became a drunk, Naberšnik hung himself, Cvetka from accounting jumped off a bridge, Brumen died of cancer, and he had once seen Podvratnik begging for money on the bus station. He just got simply stuck. He worked off the book here and there and did some public work, but most of the time he eked out a living on welfare. Sandra had finally had enough of him and left. At first, he held it against her, but now he thought she did the right thing – if he tried to put himself in her shoes, he couldn't think of a single good reason for her to stay with him. When he starts thinking like this, he himself can't even understand what happened to his life. The only thing he feels clearly is when it all began to go down and who is to blame for it.

\*

Miklavčič lives in the suburbs, in a neighborhood composed of older family houses and modern villas. He has a nice house with a big plot of land. Bojan finds it a bit boring, but Miklavčič was never known for his imagination or sense of aesthetics. From what he can see from the street, there is a pool and a tennis court in the backyard and a garage for three cars in the front. He once checked real estate ads for similar properties in the area out of curiosity, and after seeing a seven-digit number, his head got hot, his ears started ringing and he felt a throb-

bing pain in his temples.

The sun is going down and the light turns on in the house. When a female silhouette approaches the window, Bojan quickly takes a step back into the deep shadow of the trees, so she wouldn't notice him. There's no need for fear, the woman simply draws the curtains, disappearing again. Bojan tries to imagine what's going on behind the heavy velvet curtains and what the woman and Miklavčič are doing in this moment. They're probably watching a movie on TV, sipping wine and snacking on little prosciutto, cheese and olive sandwiches. Then they'll dip in the spa bath and maybe make love by candlelight to finish the night ... Or maybe not, maybe she's bored, surfing the internet, while Miklavčič is in his study, working on business matters, doing some paperwork, answering e-mails, checking stock market index fluctuation ... In the end, he has to admit to himself that he has no clue how rich people actually live. He isn't even able to imagine it.

\*

The light in the room has gone off, the house is now dark and quiet. He can only hear the slight buzzing of air-conditioners and distant traffic noise. A black cat runs across the street and disappears through a hole in the hedge. Bojan stands motionless under a tree and stares into the summer night. He's still not completely sure what he'll do about Miklavčič. But he is in no hurry; if he could wait for so many years, he can be patient for a little longer. Yes, he'll think of something ... One of these days, the bastard will finally get what he deserves.

# Biografije

**Katja Cafuta** attends the First Gymnasium Maribor.

**Maja Horvat** is a third-year student at the First Gymnasium Maribor. She enjoys creating and dealing with criminology and art history.

**Robin Marn** attends the Second Gymnasium Maribor. She is interested in art in all its forms. She writes poetry and sometimes prose. She also likes to sing, draw and paint.

**Tomo Podstenšek** (1981) is an established Slovenian prosaist. He writes novels and short stories, as well as children's literature and plays. His short stories have been published in literary magazines in Slovenia, Hungary, Croatia, Austria, Macedonia, Serbia, Poland etc. Many of them were award-winning or broadcast on RTV Slovenija radio shows. His novel *Sodba v imenu ljudstva/The verdict on Behalf of People* (2012) was longlisted for the best Slovenian novel of the year award, Kresnik. In 2017 his novel *Papir, kamen, škarje/Rock, Paper, Scissors* was shortlisted for the same award. In 2018 his book *Ribji krik/The Scream of the Fish* was shortlisted for the

best Slovenian collection of short stories award. Apart from writing, Podstenšek occasionally takes the role of a director of children and adult theatre groups, mentors creative writing workshops, organises different literary events etc. He lives and works in Maribor.

**Janja Kosi** (1994, Maribor) studied painting at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Ljubljana, where she graduated in 2016 and received her master's degree in 2020. She spent part of her studies on a student exchange program at the Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst in Leipzig. She creates in the fields of visual arts, painting, illustration, and animation. So far, she has presented herself in solo exhibitions *Serving Proposal* (Dobra Vaga, Ljubljana 2021), *darling the roof is leaking* (DLUL Gallery, Ljubljana 2019), and in many group exhibitions, including *Art Stays* (Fo.Vi Gallery, Kidričevo, 2021), *EKO8* (UGM-MTT, Maribor 2021), *Temporarily. Until further notice.* (Fotopub, Ljubljana 2020), *EKO8 Launch Days* (UGM-MTT, Maribor 2020), *4WD; Polycentricity of Painting Issues in the Works of Four Authors* (Moderna Gallery, Zagreb 2020), *Another time and place* (Improper Walls, Vienna 2019). In 2020 she received the ALUO award for her master's thesis entitled *Everyday life of heterotopic space / X ° Y'Z " N - A ° B'C " E*. Her practice is characterized by spatial layouts, the interweaving of different media, where you can always sense the painterly note. She is mainly interested in the subjective perception of space and the latter's connection with the concept of place.

# Impressum

## THE WORKERS ARE GONE, WHAT NOW?

### Short Stories

The stories were created at workshops on creative writing and visual depiction (April – May 2021) under the mentorship of prose writer Tomo Podstenšek, artists Maja Hodošček and Toni Soprano Meneglejte, and art historian Simon Žlahtič.

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