SOPHIA'S STORY



BLOHER

THE HOUSE THAT NARRATES

Sophia, the body and the mitochondrion

«Human beings did not have mitochondria: mitochondria had, for now, a human being.»

Sophia · The Jailer, ch. 3



I

The bench

doing nothing is looking

A morning in the park

Sophia is a biologist who specialises in behaviour. One morning she arrives fifteen minutes early for work and sits on a park bench, no phone, no book, doing nothing.

Doing nothing is the hardest part. After a while, doing nothing turns into looking.

She sees the gestures nobody watches: a hand closing on a bag half a second before there is any reason, a step shortening before a stranger before there is any thought about him.



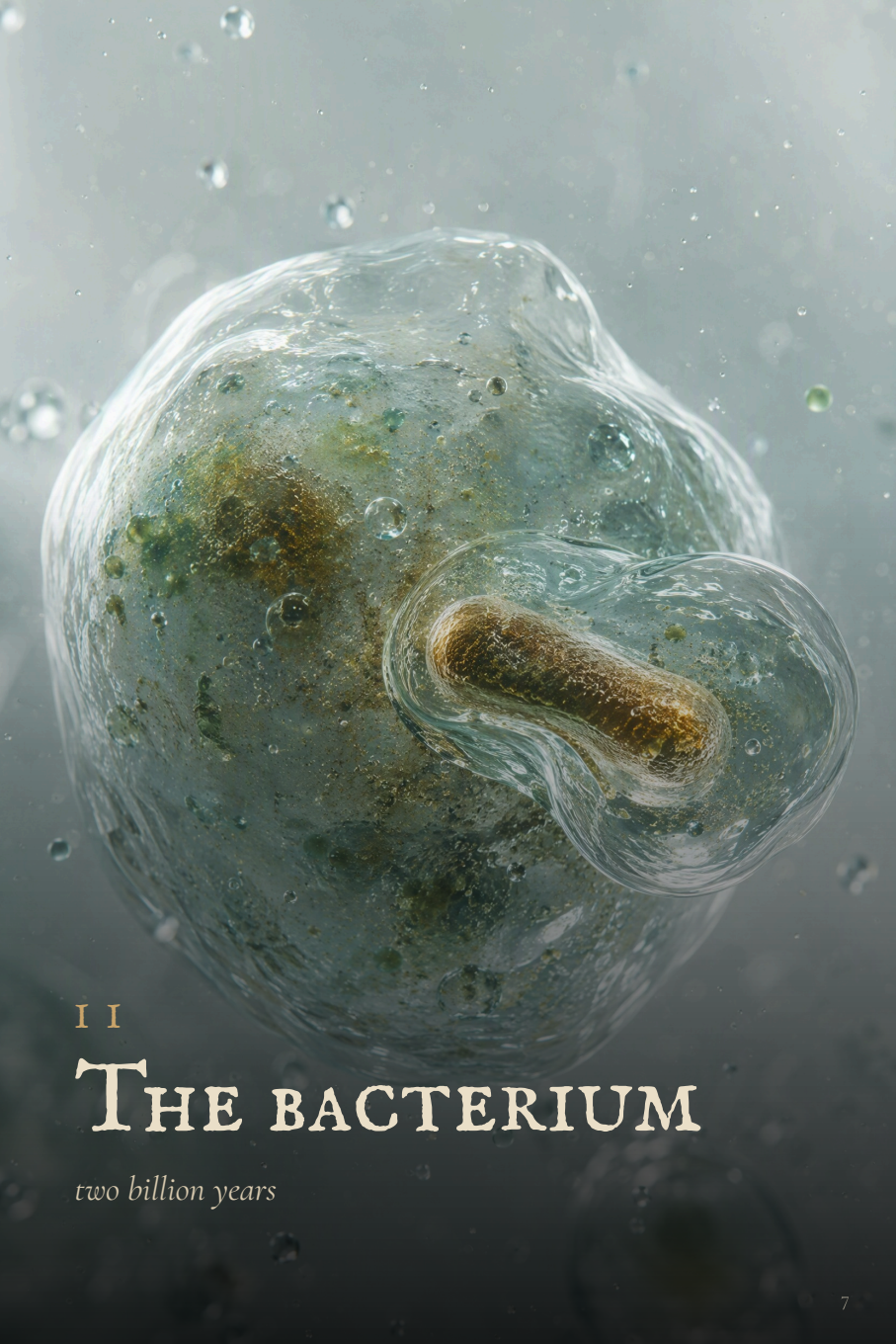
Bodies moving on their own

Automaton bodies

The body reacts first. The mind arrives afterwards, always a little late.

Each person walks inside their own world. Only when another mind crosses their path does something switch on: the face takes on a gesture, the body a role. Reason wakes to attend to the other. When the scene ends, everything switches off again.

The rest of the time the body runs on its own: it walks, breathes, digests, sleeps, dodges. It needs no one to drive it.



II

The bacterium

two billion years

How did we get here?

If the body runs on its own, one question remains: how did such an efficient machine come about?

The answer does not begin with a man or an animal. It begins with a bacterium.

The wordless agreement

About two billion years ago, a large cell swallowed a bacterium and did not digest it. The bacterium stayed.

It could do something the cell could not: draw energy using oxygen. In return it got shelter and food.

No one signed that agreement with words. It was signed with dependence, which is the surest way to sign.



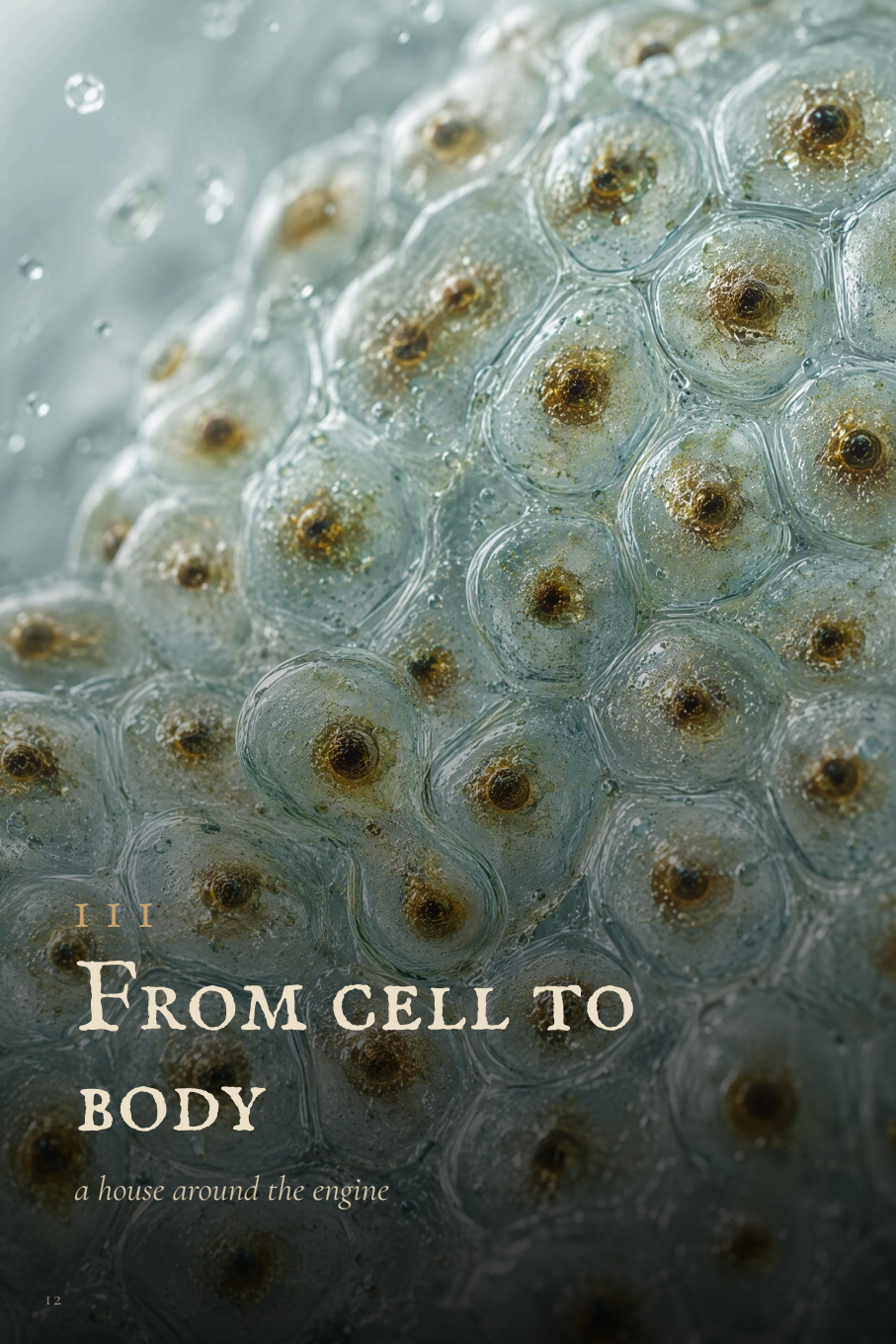
Mitochondrion

Mitochondrion

In time, the guest stopped being a guest and became a part. It handed almost all its genes to the nucleus and could no longer live outside.

Biology calls it endosymbiosis. The mitochondrion does not come from a virus: it comes from that bacterium.

Today there are hundreds or thousands in every one of your cells, producing the energy that moves you.



III

From cell to body

a house around the engine

Tissues

With that energy, life could build something larger. Cells began to live together and share out the work.

That is how tissues were born.



Roots inside the body

Branches

So that food could reach every cell, branches appeared to carry it, like roots inside the body.

For strength and shape, a frame appeared: first cartilage, then bone. A skeleton.



A frame for strength

Sensing what lies outside

To know what was outside, the body learned to sense: first vibrations, then ears that heard them, then eyes that caught the light.

Fish, insects, primates. Machines ever better at finding food, avoiding danger, competing and reproducing.

At the heart of each one, the same ancient tenants asking for the only thing they ever asked for: to continue.



The first eye, the first ear

«It is not a human being with cells and mitochondria. It is cells and mitochondria with a human being around them.»

BLOHER



IV

The oldest method

steering another

None of them thinks

This is no oddity. It is nature's oldest method.

The Ophiocordyceps fungus does not know what an ant is, and yet it makes the ant climb and clamp onto a leaf so the fungus can sprout from its head. Toxoplasma erases a mouse's fear of cats. Leucochloridium fills a snail's horns with pulsing colours so a bird will eat it.

None of them thinks. None of them wants. All of them steer another being to where it suits them.





V

The larva

what moved into the house

A self on top of the machine

The machine already worked: it ran, ate, defended itself, reproduced. And at some point something was installed in it that served no purpose for survival: a self.

In The Jailer, that mind is not born of the body. It is like a larva that arrives from another plane and parasitises the biological body to live the experience of life: to move, to feel, to desire.

The body is autonomous. It signals what it needs to stay alive and healthy, and the larva translates it into “I want”, “I suffer”, “I choose”, “I am someone”.

The one who narrates the house

The mind believes it owns the house and is only the one who narrates it. It arrives late to every decision and steps out to announce it as its own.

Godem did not have to invent suffering: biology already knew how to push. What he added was the theatre of the self, a mind able to live that machinery as if it were a biography.

A machine that moves is no spectacle. A being who believes it moves by its own will is.





VI

A gaze without a scene

from inside, the prison looks like a home

The dog

A dog comes down the path while its owner talks on the phone. It raises its head and looks Sophia in the eye. No greeting, no mask, no courtesy.

For an instant it seems more present than all the people she has seen that morning.

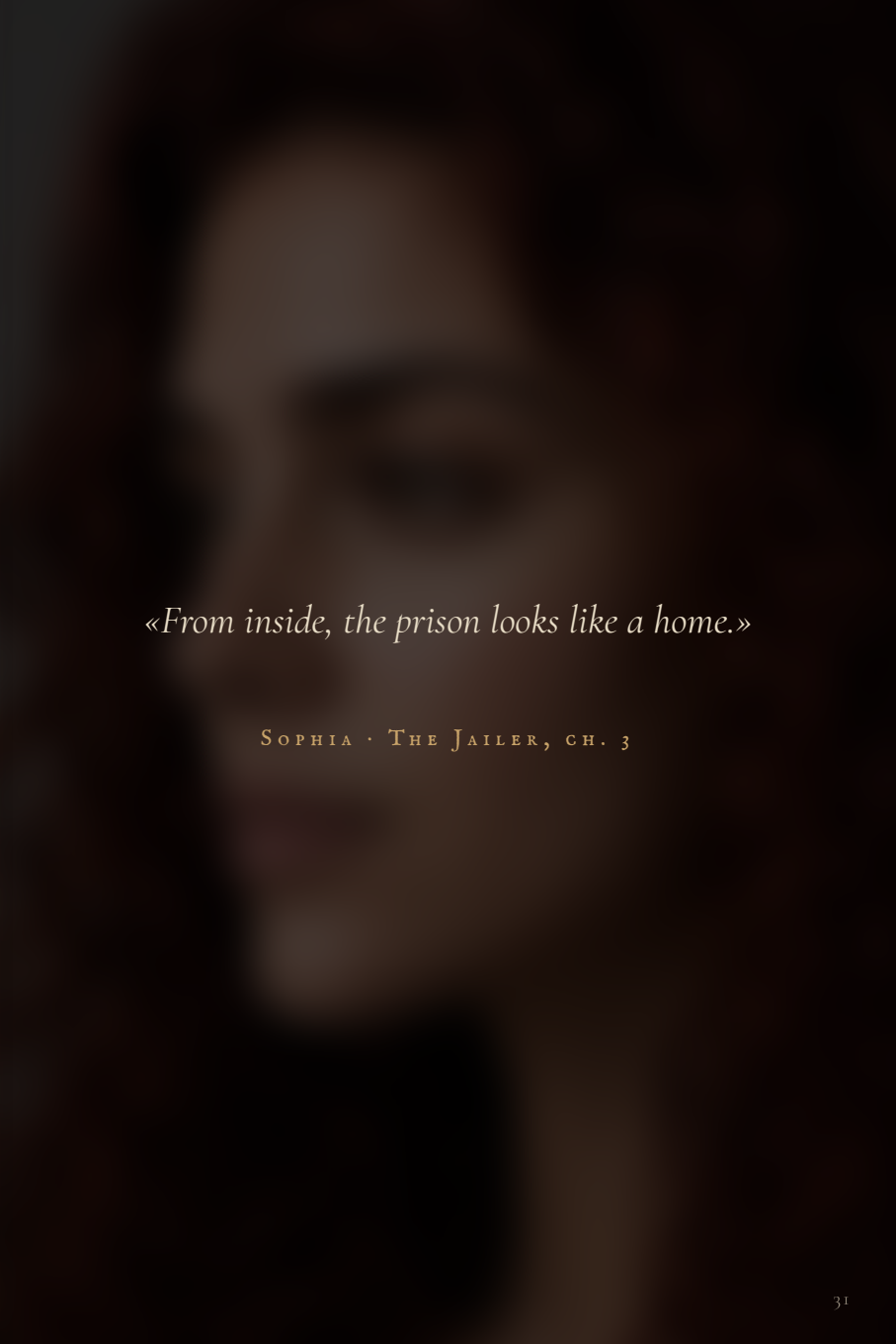
The reflection

Sophia sees herself doing the same as everyone she was watching: measuring the smile, switching off the face when the scene ends.

A sentence comes to her that she has read in no book: "From inside, the prison looks like a home."

In the revolving door at work she sees her reflection for half a second. And she does not recognise herself.





«From inside, the prison looks like a home.»

Sophia · The Jailer, ch. 3

