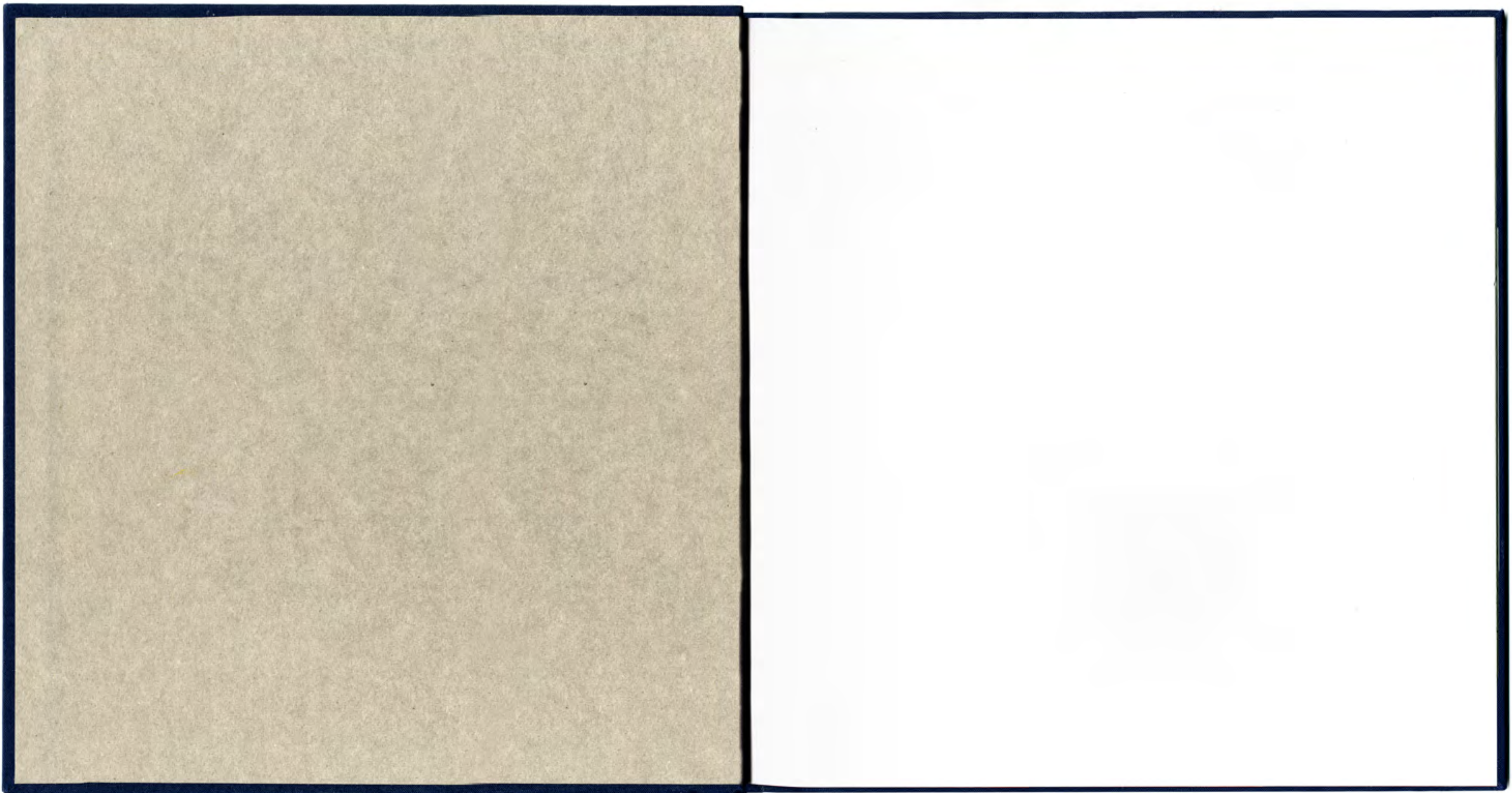


A 19-2 View



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I used to live in a flat in east Amsterdam. Every evening I'd sit and drink tea at the back



of the building, overlooking opposite balconies and gardens. After months of looking into



tiny lives - parts of routines, fights, love, nudity, dinners, laughter, cleaning, life -



I sent fifteen invites asking if I might take a picture from their balcony and meet a neighbour.



Nothing.



Tried again.



Nothing.

So I started making up stories of the people I watched from afar.



The things they might have told me, had they accepted my offer of a cup of tea.



All these different shades of green surrounding them.



Together they dig and bend and cut and sit.



And talk or don't talk.



Tending to a square that makes the rest of the row look lame.





Often an arm sticks out from the heavy door -



with a cigarette lit and a feeble attempt to blow the smoke outside.



Most of it goes in. To the kitchen that serves takeout until 2am.



Smoke staining the steel you can't stain.





A stacked up window, cobweb shed sits at the end of the overgrown garden.



Its not really clear who it belongs to.



I think the man who lives below.



Its a mess and outdated and I've seen inside his house: just the same.





A garish, plastic printed sheet snakes between the railings.



Looking like a bad computerised buddha repeated and rotated at 90,

180,

270,

360.



It faces outwards for the onlooker's pleasure maybe.



Or so the owner has a more palatable, faded version to view.





Outdoor dinners on plastic patio furniture, no longer white from winters.



stained glass squares colouring her invited six a yellow-green.



Sea sick six.



All substitutes for the one she seems to want more.



Beyond the balcony lies a roof: just take a step down and cut through the thirty eight



railing spindles. The man next door has a semi-circular saw you could use.



He'd probably cut it for you. Like he cut my bike free when I lost the key.



As things stand, there's only an obstacle - expert cut who sees the full extension potential.



A wind break weaves through the rails: keeping out unwanted opposite gazes.



And wind, I suppose.



Net curtains catch a few more.

And it almost works, aside from their waists that look out while they wash up.



The old tenants left and once they did no one seemed to want the apartment



with dust playing in the sheets of morning light.



So now we watch visitors come. And go.

It must be too expensive, as it looks nice. Far nicer than ours.



Always clearing, cleaning:



adding to that ever in-between phase of it getting worse before it gets better.



There is often a falling-apart rug, doubled over the railings. So old.



Others would banish it underneath the sofa as dust-attracting punishment.

Or

be overjoyed at it falling four stories down to weeks of snow and hail.

But whatever the sad situation, it always gets rescued.



Socially aligned seats facing a too low table. A Spanish second-home set up:



no decoration necessary. A (probably first) date sits in the opposite wicker chair,

edging her joints away from a hand hoping to hold.

Him embarrassed at her telling all of Deka: "talk dirty," she shrivels.

If you climb carefully out of the window, you could sit on the ledge.



It's really too shallow but if you didn't move much, it could work.



The poster taped up in the window could watch over you. It reminds me

of making "free Deirdre" posters with my friend when we were nine.

Her mum let us tape them up in their front bay window,

whereas mine said no. No way.



At first I thought the star was a Christmas decoration -



they were twenty five days late in taking down.

But as February ended, I realised it was less for Christmas, more for decoration.

And there it stayed. It still seemed terrible luck.





Sunday news - the not real, recipe, review version.

Only interrupted by parents toasting the move-in.

You must have bought. You can't drink champagne over a rental.

Otherwise I'd get champagne every year, at least.



Through three windows and two doors : young love. Love young.

They mix yellow light and red wine.

For a housewarming.

Where twenty bulge on a balcony made for a few. No attempts to dance,

just drink.

The air warm as it fills the irregular shaped spaces bonding guests.



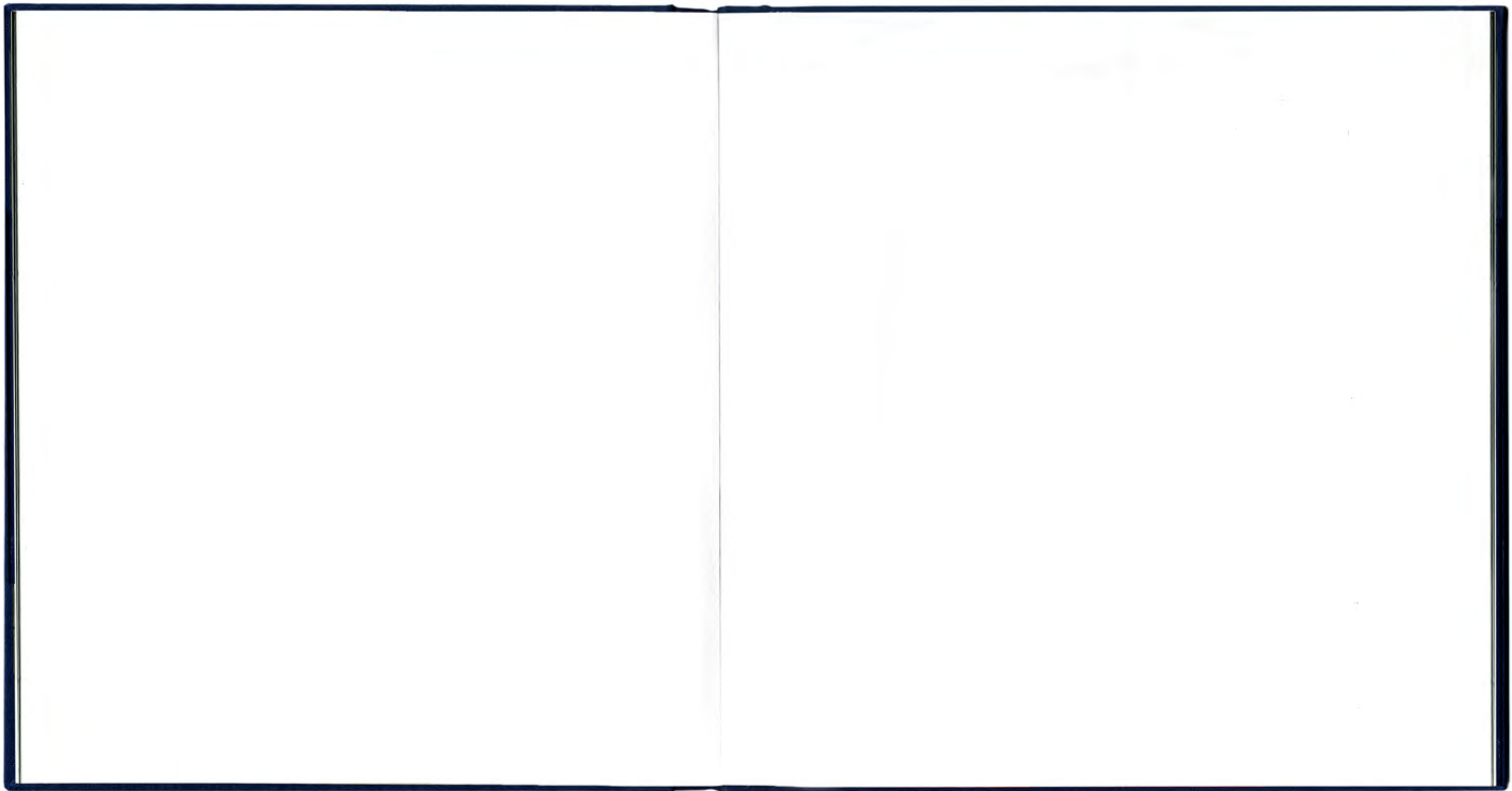
Always I wanted to be invited to one of their barbecues.

By a held-up banner the attractive one had made.

He probably wasn't that attractive - I never wore my glasses.

In the same way I probably wouldn't have been able to read the banner

should he ever have made it anyway.



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