Dream Death

**Soon, Everything Must Erupt**

I am on my way down to the harbour as usual. I have always loved the sea and harbours. Along the old Shipyard, I customarily observe the distressing remains of the once-blooming activity: a rusty vessel still standing on the slipway. Every year, there is less left of it. However, the Russian name is still vaguely visible: *Валериановна.*

When I was younger, I found a Russian alphabet in the library, so I know the ship was once called Valerianovna. That's a good name.

I wish I owned a rowboat myself. I would have named it Valerianovna. It would have been made of wood so it wouldn't rust. I would have painted it with golden enamel every year and rowed it out to the fjord every single day the weather was decent.

I'll never get a rowboat, and I wouldn’t be allowed onto the fjord with it, so it's all the same anyway.

As I approach the boat bridges, an oystercatcher flies almost straight over my head, chirp-chirping. A sharp, harsh sound that immediately sent me 16 years back in time.

It is strange that I should remember it so well. Even though I was only six, March 12, 2020, lives vividly in my memory. I often think about the day when everything changed.

Rósa, my best and only friend, and I had gone to the boat bridges even though we usually were not allowed to go on our own. But the adults did nothing but sit inside and talk about Covid and how everyone had to hurry back home to the Faroe Islands.

I still did not understand that I might not be allowed to visit my mum that summer. For my six-year-old self, there was ages before the summer, and sickness meant a cold.

Rósa was too scared to board the boat; I told her she couldn't be scared. Her family owned the boat.

I don’t remember where I got the idea, but you come up with so much when you are young. It was probably dangerous, but I didn’t know and just jumped aboard Rosa's family’s boat, Nesið. The door to the cabin was open, and I decided that we should pretend to be sailing to Italy to visit Mum and little brother Ilmari.

We “sailed” for a long time, and when we were finally tired of steering, we pretended that we needed to “turn in” and lay down in a small berth in the back of the boat. Rósa said that she had sometimes slept there when they went out on trips with the boat. We both fit in, shut the small sliding doors and quickly fell asleep, even though the plan was only to fake sleep.

I woke up because someone was talking outside the berth. I did not recognise the voice and, therefore, did not open the doors. Rósa was still asleep.

“They say the disease is serious”, said a man.

“In China, they isolate the sick people and lock them in their houses, just like with the plague during the middle age”, said another. It was Jóan Petur, Rósa’s father. I did not like Rósa’s father, so I did not open the door. I had heard Grandma mention that he wanted to be a politician, so I thought he was supposed to be nice as he wanted to rule over everyone. But he was not nice at all. He barely spoke to Rósa and never spent time with her or her younger brothers. And he did not help out at home like fathers usually do. Dad always did everything at home, like Grandma and Aunty: food, cleaning, reading stories, etc. At ours, it was Aunty Agnas who barely did anything because she was always at work, which doctors are. Rósa’s dad was home a lot more than Agnas but would just sit and watch TV or sit by the computer and tell everyone to be quiet. He would never read to her or take her on walks.

Even when I was little, I was aware of this. Jóan Petur Ísanskarð was always a rotten egg. How could you have such a sweet daughter when you are such a cold coward?

Most of what the men talked about I did not understand, but they did speak about this new disease in a way that scared me. I remember one sentence so clearly:

“If necessary, the country should be completely locked!”

Outside, I heard an oystercatcher chirp and wondered if we should go to the St. Gregory Day celebration on Vaglið, but I dared not move. In a way, I felt like it was not just the country that was locked but also this tiny door I lay behind. I could not escape.

Twelve years later, the disaster hit on the same day.

To this day, I can’t bear hearing oystercatchers chirp. They remind me of countries that I cannot visit. Of dad.. mum, and my three siblings in Italy, who I have not seen in real life since 2024. My brother was six years old then, and my baby sister Tuuliki had just been born. I have never seen Aria. Oystercatcher chirps remind me of all I have lost: my family, youth and hopes.

All that’s left is anger! I feel so much anger inside, like a volcano building up magma for centuries.

Soon, everything must erupt!

**BANNED [**BÆND**] adjective**

I nearly ran all the way to Valla. The bus had left without me.

When I entered through the door, Valla was standing in the hallway and had already dressed herself. The other seven children had already been picked up. Now that so few children needed care and nurseries had been shut down, only private child-minders were left. As a woman, you would lose points if you did not take care of your own children. If you picked them up late, you would lose even more points. You could just have avoided having illegitimate children and asking the authorities impertinent questions. Just do like all the other women – obey!

Valla’s eyes sparkled when she reached her arms up toward me. Before Valla, I did not know that eyes could speak so clearly, but these past three wordless years have taught me to understand a different language.

“Mum, I am glad you arrived. I have missed you so much. I did not know when you would arrive! No one played with me again today, but I have drawn this for you”, spoke the eyes and the drawing that I received in my hands.

I squeezed the little warm body against mine. How could you miss someone so much when you had just been away for a few hours?

Often, I asked one of the boys to go and pick up Valla so that she would not be the last to leave daycare, but Havstein was at work, and Heimir had his guitar lesson today. Thank God for guitar lessons; it was one of the few moments where Heimir could daydream about an ordinary world where people could play music together and for others. Three youths and a teacher played music together; it was the only place they could play. Others believed that the music on the radio ought to be enough. Anything else was a waste of time. Heimir had been able to experience so little. So much less than Finn and I had experienced when we were fifteen, when the world still existed, the world outside of these small locked islands.

I slowly strolled home with Valla, letting her enjoy the walk. However, on the inside, I longed to run home to check the paper note in my pocket. When I told her I had a pastry in my pocket, Valla agreed that we better run home. We could not eat it outside on the public highway because I ought to have thrown it away.

There were 20 names on the list, from number 21 to number 40. The length of the whole list was impossible to work out; there was no page number on the paper. Magni Bergfalk was number 33 on the list under “traitors”, where at least half were to be “banned” to make room for more.

My whole body shivered on the inside, but I did not want Valla to notice. I had told her to draw at the living room table whilst I sat in the bedroom, but I knew how sensitive she was. She noticed everything. Again and again, she would come into the bedroom to show me her drawings, hug me, and then return to the living room.

I recognised most of the names on the list. They were journalists, opposing politicians, people of cultures, and others who simply liked to debate rather sharply on social media. Several came from non-Faroese ethnic backgrounds or homosexuals. 12 out of the 20 were all publicly defined as dead and buried. Of the other eight, a brave woman, Lina Solveigsdóttir, had tried to escape on a small open boat but was taken. I did not know much about the other seven.

Two were just missing; they were believed to have drowned when the stolen boat they tried to escape the country capsised outside the island of Nólsoy.

The others I had not heard mentioned.

The list only included a number, name and date. Next to Magni's name stood the date 12th March 2032 – the day he disappeared, not the day they said he died, which was almost a month later.

The fact that Magni was number 33 on the list told me that there were several documents like this because many had been accused of treason after the 12th of March, 2032. They said that prisons were not necessary anymore. But it was never announced that these so-called traitors were condemned to Angel-watch, to have an Angel standing over them day and night to record everything they did and said. How many people must they have imprisoned?

Later that evening, while sitting and gazing at Valla's sleepy green eyes, Magni’s eyes, I knew there was no more time to waste. I had to contact the three: Thilda, Magni's mother; Agnas, his sister; and Lilli, his older daughter. They had all loved him as much as I, but I had not dared try to contact them before. I was worried about what would happen to Valla if the authorities found out that she was the daughter of a traitor. Currently, she was allowed to attend daycare with the other kids and received a bit of extra help because she was disabled, but most likely, those rights would be stripped from her if anyone knew about Magni and me. There was an actual risk that they would take Valla away from me. But I could not hide forever. If Magni was alive, I needed help finding him.

If there was any truth in what those scoundrels in the presidential office had said, the people on the list were still alive. It was unnecessary to execute dead people.

Magni LIVED, and the other three needed to know this. Together, we could maybe do something.

Later, when it was quiet in our little apartment, Valla lay on my lap, and the boys slept in the living room. I felt restless.

The dictionary said:

**ban**

[ ban ]

*verb (used with object),***banned,**ban·ning.

to prohibit, forbid, or bar;

**banned [**BÆND**]**

(about animals that cause trouble or are a nuisance) presented or said to be unlawful, *the cow should be banned; the dogs were banned;* (human) *you should be banned.*

In the synonym dictionary, it only said:

**ban**

check *kill*, *put down*

I lay tossing and turning in bed. Valla slept safely and, for once, did not notice my unrest.

Intentionally, they had not used the dirty word: *execute.* But they were more than willing to let it happen. To take a life from people who had done nothing wrong except disagree with them. People who dared ask questions – the right questions – or who had had enough and wanted to leave.

Ban – like rabid dogs. They did not think differently about human life. Their hunger for power had ended their humanity. When you are never held responsible for evil actions, you think you have the right to do them. They are no longer seen as evil but as righteous actions.

It all started so innocently. It was to protect each other – against the diseases – THE PANDEMIC. The word itself had sounded so scary.

**A pandemic – from pandæmonium**

*1* home of the devil, hell

*2* great unrest, chaos

It was as if the diseases were not something comprehensible or scientific but, instead, something religious and intangible, so they were obligated to use all kinds of tricks to overpower it.

Control, control, control has been the mantra from day one. “We have control over the situation”, “We need to take care of each other”, “We need to control ourselves and trust each other. We must not lose control.”

It had sounded wise:

Of course, we needed to take care of the old and weak.

Of course, we needed to wash our hands and cough into our sleeves

Of course, we needed to be tested, vaccinated and wear a mask.

Of course, we needed to travel less to avoid spreading the infection.

Of course, others should not come into our country and bring the infection.

Of course, we needed to stop travelling to live a life free of infection here.

Of course, the boundaries needed to be closed entirely.

Of course, the mapping of infection spread needed optimising. No one did it as well as the Angels.

Of course, the Angels should protect us everywhere. Parents were so pleased to know that their children were always safe.

Of course, people should not wander around outside at night.

The nightlife was unsafe, and the Angels did not see well at night.

Of course, blackouts and curfews were necessary.

Of course, we needed to accept the Points system; it was for our own safety.

Of course, the election could not happen – not during a Pandemic!

Of course, there is no way back now...

Everything was so painfully logical.

At last, I put my arms around Valla's warm small body and fell asleep.

**The Sun is Our Enemy**

We are now a little way through the walk down towards the reservoir in Havnadalur. The windmills are still visible, so we feel safe. It is still dark, but no one knows how well the security cameras can detect in the dark, probably better than the Angels.

Lilli was 13 years old the last time she was legally allowed to walk in the fields. Now she is 22. I don't know if she has kept the law, but she can't have broken it often. Otherwise, she would have been taken by now.

From the east, there is now a really weak streak of light.

“Come on, we have to walk faster”, blurted Agnas. “If we don't cross Lambafelli before there is more light, the surveillance cameras will easily spot us.”

We speed up. It is no longer possible to enjoy the moment. Just walk as fast as possible. It becomes easier and easier to see where to tread.

Too easy

Knowing that the sun is now our enemy is a reason to weep.