

# SUMMERTIME PASSACAGLIA

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## Day 1

Daniel checks the death numbers every day, and it's always the first thing he tells me. He used to wish me a good morning, now he informs me about local infection rates. His tone has changed, too; his sentences now end with an exclamation mark, although he hardly ever raises his eyes from the newspaper. The sound of his own voice fascinates him. I don't think he enjoys bad news; he's just amazed that he's reading a newspaper and not a history book. I can't share his excitement. It doesn't feel like I am experiencing anything at all; my days are packed in cotton wool since I've been back home. The hectic departure, my overloaded luggage, the lady from the airport staff who screamed: Run. I was so afraid I wouldn't make it home and now that I'm home, I don't know where to go with me.

## Day 2

I try to keep my brain occupied and use this tremendous amount of free time I'm suddenly facing to improve my long-forgotten French, but really all I want to do is turn my brain off, do my hair and go out. I feel bad for having such self-centred cravings, but it's a voice inside me I am unable to mute. No one told me a pandemic is so quiet that it makes your mind scream. There is much more going on in movies. In reality, there are no bombs, no rapes, no panic. People are just choking, slowly and quietly, in a lazaret that used to be a gym. And from those of us who are spared for the moment, it's only expected to stay at home. "Make yourselves comfortable," the politicians say. "Bake some banana bread!" My grandparents avoid me as if I had the plague and the chancellor tells me to bake banana bread.

## Day 3

When I look out of the window, I see a swarm of white seabirds in the field next to our house. They're just on a quick stopover on their way to the coast. They're moving in flowing, wavelike formations that remind me of water and I envy them. It's a ballet they are performing; a water ballet, and I wish I could dance.

## Day 4

Today was a good day. I've started playing the piano again and I had forgotten how

much I missed it. When I'm playing, thoughts are running through my mind freely, flowing around me like waves, like the birds outside my window. I'm playing Handel's Passacaglia, and my hands know their way by themselves, allowing my mind to float, although I've never entirely mastered the piece. But with the Passacaglia it doesn't matter; it's written in such a way that you can't make out little mistakes. The melody is fragile and light, continuously ascending and falling, with no climax to worry about. The reason I've never learned to play the piece properly is that I always stop before the end and rush to put my thoughts on paper. Sometimes Daniel plays ABBA upstairs - on Spotify, not on an instrument - and it drowns out my Passacaglia.

## Day 5

There's a cherry tree next to our house. It's huge and blooms white in spring. When a breeze comes in and the blossoms swirl through our garden, you'd think it's still snowing. And now it's summer and the white buds have turned into fat red cherries only the birds can eat because they're poisonous. There are too many cherries for too few birds, so most of them hang on the tree until they are all soft and soggy. In these times, leaving the house is dangerous, as red drops frequently shower down from the sky. The ones that don't directly ruin your clothing burst on the ground, making our terrace look like someone died on it.

## Day 6

I can't stand Dan's face anymore. I'm sick of ABBA, and I will never be able to play the Passacaglia like one's supposed to. I'm running out of time, but I'm unable to move. My days are all the same, flying by in slow motion.

## Day 7

Today, I was cycling with Dan and we passed the seabirds resting on the field. Daniel left the road and just drove straight into them causing the whole swarm to scatter into the air. It looked like water splashing when you jump in. Afterwards, I asked him why he did it and he said it just seemed like fun.



**Maya Baumann** is a third-year B.A. student of Comparative Literature at the University of Augsburg. Her studies focus on Italian and anglophone literature. Besides, she writes prose in German and in English and is currently working on a novel. In 2019, her short story Family Romance was selected for the Swabian Prize of Literature for a young author. She plans to pursue a career in the literary field.