SLOW DOWN

A story about a student from Bern who studies in Chur and lives there most of the time

Noah H., Chur/Bern 2020
It’s the end of February and I’m staying for two days with my film group in Basel for a school project. The film has the theme “Basel Carnival”.

On the second day of shooting we receive the news that the Basel Carnival has been cancelled. Now I am slowly realising that the corona virus is perhaps worse than I had assumed.
The events come thick and fast and suddenly almost everyone is sitting at home. I find the new everyday life very easy and relaxed.

I watch the birds outside my window.

The weather is already quite warm and I can sit outside on the balcony and follow the lessons on Zoom.

Every Friday at exactly 1:00 p.m. somewhere nearby a person plays a small oboe concert. People stand on their balconies and windows and clap after each song.
Now in the evening I often sit at the table with my flatmate and we do a puzzle. He is an assistant doctor at Chur hospital and tells me what is happening in the hospital at the moment. He is very busy and has to leave the house every day at 6:00 a.m. and often comes back after 8:00 p.m. Meanwhile, I have a pretty easy student life.
At Easter I go back home to my family after a long time. The trains and stations are almost deserted.

Looking out of the train window I see my home village, but it seems strange to me. At first I did not know exactly why. It was so flat. Then I realized that it was the missing church tower that would actually rise from the middle of the village. The tower burned down last Christmas and fell down. It's amazing how much identity of a village in one single building can be.
At home a surprise awaits. My parents got a dog named Sam. He is just some weeks old.

We barbecued outside in the garden. By a distance, of course.
Back in Chur I walk through the City, which is deserted. Suddenly a man comes up to me and asks me if I have a franc for him. He needs one so that he can spend the night in the emergency sleeping quarters. Unfortunately I have no cash with me and so he says goodbye friendly and moves on. In these times it must probably be especially difficult for destitute people. Outside there are hardly any people and if there are, they don’t want to get too close to anyone.
At the end of April the garden centres opened again. I go with my sister to buy some plants for the balcony.

This year, for once, we are not queuing for a roller coaster at Europa Park but for a garden center.
Everything is planted and the balcony finally doesn’t look so boring anymore.
For a long time they have been building a new pedestrian and bicycle bridge near our apartment in Chur. On the balcony I hear the work. It now seems to go into the final phase and the bridge parts are installed over the river. It looks very modern and fits well into the city.
At the end of May, the infection rates are falling and Switzerland is waking up again. For my flatmate there is finally a week’s holiday and for me the exam stress starts.