

# Death in quarantine

## A haibun-monologue

*He* is not quite like the hooded, dark-robed figure in Ingmar Bergman's *Wood Painting*, nor does he look like a modern monster hero with bulging biceps who has just emerged from one of my pre-teen daughter's countless computer games.

No matter how desperately I'm trying to outsmart him in this sneaky black and white game of manoeuvring between maybe-infected tube handrails and properly masked copy-paste faces in the shopping mall, he always seems to find a way of following in my footsteps wherever I go. He's last year's song haunting from the birdless balconies of the bare chestnut branches, he's there in the colourless fragrance of the first plum flowers. He's hiding in the detergent-smelling silence of the park, in the unheard rattle of my childhood's rusty swing. He's sitting on a green slide wrapped up with duct tapes like a strange birthday present, on the lonely plastic tricycle left in the locked playground. He's wearing the veils of the Northern Lights, the stripes of kitten behind a netted loggia. He's that last syllable of our recorded and live-streamed time, a halo of rime frost on the blooming trees, and maybe he's the delayed March itself, disguised as naked hawthorn twigs.

One day I might be able to look at the pictures of my deepest buried memories without hearing his playful voiceover talking from the pages of the family photo album, but until he gives me a stalemate, I will never be quite sure if he can give me an answer to the very question even the Knight harped on in vain.

last chess game

instead of a sickle

*he* carries a crown