*“Feast in the Time of Plague” by Aleksandr Pushkin*

*“Love in the Time of Cholera” by Gabriel García Márquez*

*“Motherhood in the Time of Corona” by me*

I

When the lock down because of pandemic started in March, I was already in the 5th month of my pregnancy. I was preparing to move to Prague with my husband, but since the borders had been closed up, we had to stay in Baku for a while. There were two challenges for me during the pandemic time: 1) to wear a mask, 2) to be locked at home.

The baby in my womb was already creating difficulties to breathe by squeezing my diaphragm, consequently wearing a mask made me to suffocate even more. But in the first days of quarantine I was obediently wear a mask, particularly when I was visiting the most convenient places for virus such as hospitals. This obedience ended up with losing my consciousness twice due to suffocation in hospital during routine check-ups.

My fear of wearing a mask became worse than the fear to get a virus. Therefore I had decided to stay at home rather than to go out in a mask. At first, this seemed as a good idea. I was planning to read the books which I had stored, finish the staffs which I had procrastinated before. I didn't have any necessity even to go to the market because my husband was buying the products we needed. Thus after staying at home 2 weeks, I went to the local market to buy milk, and suddenly it became so difficult for me to handle 15-20 meters that when I reached the elevator of the building on my way back I started to cry. I was crying either because of the pain in my legs, which had swelled due to pregnancy, or because of the inner fear. For a moment it seemed to me that I would never be able to go back to my normal active life. Since that day I made myself to go out for a walk at least in those days when it was permissible.

I came back home from the hospital three days after the baby was born. Some my relatives came to visit me and my baby on that day. It was the first time I had such a feeling of joy and anger at the same time. I was appreciating those who came to visit me and the baby at home, but on the other hand, I was angry that they did not take into account the pandemic situation. Now I think that maybe the reason for my anger was my postpartum hormones. Because except those few days, I have never been very much afraid of being infected. Usually I was calm and understanding that it is impossible to avoid the infection 100 percent. My husband, who was going out to work every day, could bring the virus by himself or in in the products which had been touched by thousands of people hands and breath in the markets.

The second wave of pandemic I have met here in Prague. Usually we have locked at home however we have to often go to the market to shop. Although I wear a mask, it is impossible to put a mask on a 3-month-old kid. The only thing that I can do is trying to avoid overthinking about the virus.

II

It was the time of the first wave of pandemic when I came back home from the hospital three days after the baby was born. Some my relatives came to visit me and my baby on that day. It was the first time I had such a feeling of joy and anger at the same time. I was appreciating those who came to visit me and the baby at home, but on the other hand, I was angry that they did not take into account the pandemic situation.

Each time when some of them was coming close to my baby or picking her up, I was forcing myself not to snatch her from their hand and run away. This desire to escape made me feel also shameful for my anger. The aching wound of the surgery in my abdomen started to hurt me even more. At the same time I was feeling headache from brainstorming about what I would do if my baby got infected. Because I was clenching my teeth and expressing an artificial smile, since not to show disrespect to my guests, the pain spread from my head to my cheeks. Whole my body was became a lump of pain and desperation.

There were various conspiracy rumors about the non-existence of the virus in those days. Of course, my relatives, who came together at my home, used the chance to discuss the popular topic of the agenda. Suddenly we discovered that the only one who had been influenced by these rumors was my brother. Thus each of my relatives started to convince my brother in existence of the virus through various horrible facts on it. The detailed explanation of the infection together with appalling facts on those who got infected terrified me even more. On that moment I thought that my brother is also the only one who was sincere since he was denying the existence of the virus he did not see any problem to visit us. But other ones ... I had been disappointed by whole my family and relatives. Despite the fact that they knew that virus is real they did not hesitate to come to my home and even deliciously discuss the details of the infection. My anger and embarrassment for this anger lasted whole day, and few days more after the guests left us. Except those few days, I have never been very much afraid of being infected. Usually I am trying to avoid overthinking about the virus. Since not overthinking makes me feel safer. Or maybe it is a fear of a fear... I am afraid of feel constant fear, to become hypochondriac rather than of the virus itself. Or maybe I can really assess my incapability to avoid the virus which makes me to not panic and let the life go on without additional stress.