

A sailor's last trip to the sea.

He was sitting in his usual seat, by the big window where he could see the waterfall he used to watch when he was a kid living there. His son had built a summer house on the grounds of his childhood home, and it made him so proud. He was silent watching all the family members fill the room to eat his favourite cake and pancakes. It was not every day you turned 76 years old. He sat there feeling the warmth of his coffee cup, it was his favourite cup because his grandson had made it for him and feeling the warmth in his heart for his children who threw him this feast. Later they would go sailing with him. He was an old sailor who missed the good old days and even though he never mentioned it his children knew how much the sea and his years as a sailor meant to him. He was excited since he hadn't gone sailing for quite some time. He was sick. His excitement grew when his favourite song started playing through the chattering of the crowd. "*Blue Ridge Mountains, Shenandoah River.*" John Denver sang. He wanted to sing along but didn't want anyone to notice. His daughter approached and gently asked "are you ready dad?" His sons were walking outside together, lightly chatting, with a speaker in between them. John Denver was still playing. He wondered how the brothers were so alike yet so different. The weather was still and the temperature just above 13 degrees Celsius. He remembered the summers when he lived here; almost every day went like this until autumn when the northern winds came and then in winter the snow came. And it was never just a little bit of snow, it came in huge amounts. They used to hide in the large stacks of snow, jump into them from the roof of the herring factory or ride the sleds down the hill beneath the houses. He smiled to himself. His children were walking towards the port and his granddaughters too. The rest of the guests went to the shore to watch. He wanted to tell them that this wasn't such big of a deal and that they could stay at the house eating cakes and drink coffee from paper cups. He didn't like the attention. In the boat they went and put on their life jackets. It was an unwritten rule that he got the captain's life jacket, a dark green one with pockets. He was like a real Icelandic fisherman just without the orange rain boots, jacket and hat. His son turned the motor on and the smell of gasoline filled his wits. He had missed this so much. As they sailed from the port he sat still and enjoyed the wind in his face and hair. The smell of the ocean was his comfort. Most of all he wanted to grab the good old fishing rod and catch a few. But his children's intentions were different. They sailed to the old pier that once was whole but broke when a ship crashed into it many years back. It was now just a little piece of wood close to the shore. His grandson had swum back and forth the year before and the children sometimes grabbed a kayak and sailed to the pier to climb up on it and jump in to the sea. It was a wish of his to go up there and have his picture taken. Most of all he wanted to join the kids and jump in or create a raft with them like he used to do as a child and sail on it to the pier. His children helped him get up on the pier along with the speaker and themselves. The smell of seaweed grew stronger, and he caught a glimpse of a bird's nest at the far end of the pier. He was now looking over his town. The town he grew up in. The town where he was born. The town he met his best friend. The town where he had his first kiss. The town where his great grandmother died in. The town his son built a house on the ground of his home. It was always home. He teared up. He never teared up, but he did now. "*Almost heaven,*" the song was playing again, and that first line summed up all his feelings at that moment. He listened to the song and breathed the summer air. "*Life's old there, older than the trees, younger than the mountains blowing like a breeze.*" His children opened the blue jar, and each took a handful of what was in it. "*Country roads, take me home.*" And they threw his ashes into the ocean. "*To the place where I belong.*" As they did, the old fisherman cherished his final journey to the sea. "*Take me home, country roads.*"

To my dear grandfather