The birds stopped singing

*A story about 47-year-old Jack and one of his childhood friends who go to South Asia to get an insight into climate change and a culmination of surprises and bad luck leads the trip into a colossal disaster.*

It is the year 2062, a warm Tuesday in November in Stockholm, Sweden; the weather was fine, and Jack was on his way to work. The grey clouds hung low as the big sun tried to shine through. On the way to work, Jack practiced his presentation, for an organization, there are dealing with climate refugees. The presentation dealt with weather disasters in South Asia and what could be done to reduce those disasters in the future. Jack works as a lecturer and scientist in the field of climate change. Since 2040, when all cars that ran on fossil fuels became illegal in the EU, Jack has researched climate, and least after the refugee crisis in 2045, when more than 100 of thousand refugees from Asia came to just Sweden.

Jack and one of his colleagues and childhood friend Marcus are planning a trip to Thailand, where they will visit a city in crisis and talk to the inhabitants. The trip will last 3 weeks, and the way they get to Rayong (a city in the south of Thailand), is by electric high-speed train that runs up to 900 km/h under the ground through Europe and over the Middle East until they hit Thailand. They decide they will leave the east coast of Sweden in 1,5 months when Christmas and New Year are over.

4th January, the year 2063: Christmas is well over, and jack and Marcus are now sitting on the train on their way through Germany and talking about where they will spend the night when they arrive and planning a trip where they will meet the inhabitants, the culture, research the problems and have time to relax and study climate. Rayong, the city they will visit and live in, has over the past 30 years gone from 70 thousand inhabitants to just a few thousand now. Not only that is terrible, but also the area of the city has decreased by 90% due to rising seas. The city that had previously been an excellent tourist city and not least a beautiful city with the most magnificent nature was now transformed into a kind of war zone where people fled due to threatening natural disasters. “I’m looking forward to it, but at the same time I’m a little nervous - the forces of nature are enormous.” Said Marcus. Jack quickly reassured Marcus and said everything should be fine, if anyone knew what they were doing, it was them. The border between Myanmar and Thailand had now been reached and they were in Bangkok within about 3 hours. From Bangkok, they had to continue with a plong[[1]](#footnote-2) to Rayong. They were now in Rayong. The temperature was 42 degrees and it rained like never before. The happy mood they had, fell drastically when they entered the city. Jack and Marcus sought shelter from the rain under a small shed where there was a bench, where they sat down. People around were stressed and seemed helpless. “We have to walk towards the hotel when the rains stop.” Said Jack despondent. The hotel was 50 meters from the water. After 20 minutes they were now on their way to the hotel, but on the way, they met a guy named Mali who offered them a boat trip where they could talk about the consequences of climate change and the large flow of refugees from the city. They agreed to meet the next day at the beach, where Mali had a boat. In the morning they met Mali at his boat. The weather was “good” today, but the heat surprised Jack and Marcus. It was simply so hot that they had to drink some water all the time. The temperature measured 48 degrees. Mali´s boat was a small dinghy with an outboard motor that could just fit 3 people. “What do you do if the seas continue to rise and the temperature the same?” Jack asked Mali. Mali replied that he had to face fate and flee to Europe, but that he stayed in Rayong as long as it was possible and safe. Mali, Jack, and Marcus started the old dinghy and went out on the water, where they talked about Mali´s job as a fisherman and what it meant to him that the world had changed so much in so short a time. “First of all, I’m sad. I grew up here and I soon lost everything I own. Where does it end? – I don’t know.” Said Mali. After a few hours out on the water, they came back to the beach. Jack and Marcus thanked Mali for his time and story and headed back to the hotel. Marcus wondered where the birds' song had gone. They thought nothing more and went in and had lunch. A window in the room began to creak. The weather had turned stormy. “It is mysterious weather.” Said Marcus. Jack looked out the window and saw that the water had risen violently since they had been out in Mali´s boat. It was late and Jack and Marcus went to sleep. It was 2 am, it was storming and there was noise at the window of the hotel room. Suddenly Jack woke up and woke Marcus, a siren had begun in the city. “We have to get dressed and get away.” Said Jack with horror in his voice. They ran down towards the reception where there was no one, outside they could see people running around confused and screaming. “RUN!” Was shouted. A wave came in towards the land and it got bigger and bigger. The wave approached land and Jack and Marcus ran up a mountain trying to find a place to go to safety. “It’s a tsunami.” Marcus said as they continued to run. The tsunami now hit land and took trees and buildings with it, it was several meters high and came at a high speed. Jack of Marcus had found a notch in the side of a hillside where they had been hiding. The wave now came towards them and washed over them. They were thrown around and Marcus shouted. He had been injured. There was water everywhere, all the trees were floating on the water and electricity poles and houses were totally damaged. Some people lay unconscious and there was suddenly a kind of silence. Only a little noise from the water, otherwise it was quiet. Jack looked at Marcus and saw that his arm was dislocated - it was obvious. Marcus said nothing, he was in a state of shock. “We must go on and find help.” Said Jack. But they couldn't get out of their hole because there was so much water, and it wasn't possible and safe to swim in. “There.” Snorted Marcus. A helicopter flew overhead, Jack immediately started waving his arms up at it. The helicopter that didn't make noise because it was powered by electricity was approaching land and had spotted them. The helicopter had come as close to the land and their hole as it could and there was a rescuer with a stretcher coming down into the water and over towards them. Jack told the rescuer that Marcus was injured and that he should bring him first. After Marcus got into the helicopter jack came shortly after. They were flown to a Bangkok hospital where they were treated. There was chaos in the hospital, so many injured people had arrived, and the doctors were running around. Marcus and Jack were lucky enough to get a room together in the hospital, where they could ring home and journalists and police could come talk with them.

There they lay, two childhood friends and colleagues who had survived a tsunami. A couple of friends who had tried to get an insight into a world, changing due to climate and had to risk their lives for it. Done.

1. An electric vehicle the size of a small car that hovers just above the ground. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)