

Vanda's wandering

Once upon a time there was a panda named Vanda. As you might assume, Vanda was not really active animal species. On the contrary, she liked to take a nap or five during the day, of course after proper amount of bamboo. She was sleeping a lot. In fact, sleeping was her favourite activity to do. She could even sleep for two months without waking up.

Today Vanda woke up after a quite light nap (only 4 months). She had a very weird dream where people were wearing a strange piece of fabric on their faces, were greeting with an elbow and were baking sourdough bread (a lot of sourdough bread). For a moment Vanda got terrified that she would be sick too, but as she woke with no piece of fabric on her face, she was relieved. Although she was healthy and lazy as usually, something was wrong. She couldn't sleep anymore! And that really scared her. She tried every single option found on the internet, like reading a goodnight story to herself, counting sheep, counting wolfs, cats, mice, bamboos... She counted everything she could. She even tried meditation, but nothing worked. Vanda couldn't sleep anymore. So, she gave up trying and followed her usual routine – making her favourite pancakes with bamboo sirup, bamboo sprouts and a bamboo cream, but only a tiny bit as she has to keep an eye on her weight. After this light breakfast she had no idea what to do. Normally she didn't even get to the part after breakfast. She always fell asleep before spraying a pan with bamboo oil.

After a while Vanda made her decision - let's explore the city! As I have only mentioned Vanda, you might presume she has no friends. Surprisingly, she has one. Well, better said she HAD one. Who would like to have a friend who sleeps 24/7? Panda Miranda lived in the centre far away from Vanda's home, approximately 10 minutes by feet. She was the only friend Vanda had left so, she decided to visit her.

As soon as she left her house, she noticed that something was different, but it took her a while until she figured out what it was. She was completely alone. There was not a single soul in the street. She thought maybe they had gone shopping or maybe they were celebrating something big. By the way, Vanda didn't celebrate holidays. She couldn't remember dates so she gave up.

After ten minutes she was all sweaty and tired but not tired enough to sleep so she kept walking. After a while she finally saw someone. Hooray! No zombie apocalypse! Vanda wanted to ask the person what is going on so she started this abnormally difficult activity called running. When the person saw Vanda running, he started running too and I can totally understand. Let's be honest, who wouldn't start if they saw a giant panda running in a weird way towards them? The poor human was yelling at Vanda: „Stop! Don't you dare come closer!., Vanda stopped immediately and looked surprised. People love pandas, they are cute, fat and fluffy. „What's wrong? You don't see I'm panda? My name is Vanda. Okay...I admit, I might be slightly bigger but that is only fat, don't worry, yelled Vanda back and took a deep breath., Yes. I know that you are a panda. But those are almost 2 metres distance. You can't approach people that close in these days, said the human. „Really? And why is that, asked Vanda incomprehensibly., Are you kidding me? Everyone is talking about it and it's in every news, said the person but with a little bit of anger in his voice. „Ah, of course, my bad, I forgot to turn on my plasma TV hanging on the bamboo, Sorry., said Vanda with a little irony and walked away.

After fifteen minutes she finally got to the main street. Even there were only a few people acting weird. Wow. I must have slept a decade. What kind of a style is this? They were wearing the same face masks as in her dream, but each one in different size and colour. The one that a tall brown hair woman was wearing even looked like old T-shirt. Some people also wore gloves. Can you imagine? I think they had big argument before as they kept a quite big distance between them.

Down the main street there was Miranda's house. Vanda could see it from afar. Well, you can't miss a big house painted with bright yellow colour right?

On her way she saw a few more weird things. For example a big billboard with even bigger sign that said: „HANDS – DISTANCE – FACE MASK!, Is everyone dreaming about a face mask? Then another saying: „PROTECT ELDERS.,

When she got to Miranda's place, she was even more confused and Miranda was too after seeing her panda friend walking, standing and not sleeping. Vanda almost didn't recognize Miranda as she was also wearing a face mask. She wanted to give her a big bear hug, but Miranda stepped back immediately. „Vanda?? What are you doing down here? And where is your face mask?, asked

Miranda. „It’s nice to see you my dear friend. I don’t know how to begin. I kind of fell asleep, but only for about 4 months? You can see my dark circles under eyes right? And now...What is this? Apocalypse?, laughed Vanda, but until she noticed Miranda’s face expression. „Actually Vanda, yes. But we call it pandemic, explained Miranda. „Pandemic? So it does have something to do with pandas? Now I understand why that human was so scared, replied Vanda, who didn’t understand anything. „No, no ,no. Nothing panda-like. Pandemic of a virus called coronavirus. It’s almost everywhere in the world, said Miranda. Vanda felt sick. Her heart started beating rapidly, but not as much as during running of course. „Okay. Come inside and I will explain everything, but first I must measure your temperature and ask you few questions. Don’t worry. Here, Miranda pointed at tiny liquid near the entrance. „Clean your paws please and put this face mask on,. Vanda did as she was told. The soap smelled really nice. She put the face mask on and she thought like she might die, because of lack of oxygen. Miranda noticed her concern and comforted her, that face masks are totally safe and don’t cause hypoxia. „Do you have any symptoms similar to flu or difficulty breathing? Have you been in contact with anyone having these symptoms?, asked Miranda. Vanda shook her head. Miranda smiled and welcomed her: „Come in, but please, keep the distance between us. The virus can be transmitted during close contact between us. That’s way we need to follow the rule HANDS-DISTANCE-FACE MASK. Also, elder people and immunodeficient people are more endangered, so please don’t visit your grandma, explained Miranda., Vanda was focusing on every single word her friend was saying. She finally understood the whole situation behind the door. „How serious is the situation?, asked Vanda in despair. „Well dear, I won’t lie. Situation is serious. Virus spreads rapidly and many people got sick. We don’t have a cure yet, but with a help of many skilful doctors and professionals I believe we can get the situation under control. It might not be in week or month, but it will happen if we will obey the rules. If you can, stay at home, use a face mask and sanitize your hand. Go to the shop or a doctor if you need, but please...NO PARTIES VANDA! You can’t invite people now, warned Miranda. Vanda didn’t know what a party is, maybe it has something to do with food. „Okay. No parties, no shopping. But can I visit you?, asked Vanda. Miranda shook her head. „I’m sorry. But you know Skype? We can see each other and talk to each other from our homes, said Miranda. „What?? You mean I don’t have to move? I can lie in bed and talk to you? Why do I know nothing about this clever thing?, Vanda was amazed. „Yes. It is very helpful, even in

school. Kids are sitting at home, teacher is sitting at home and it's almost the same as in the school, but better. You know, you can be in the class in pyjamas with messy hair and nobody cares. How cool is that?, Vanda couldn't believe her ears. She has to go home as soon as possible and download Skype so she can connect with each of her friends (okay, only Miranda, but she still needs to go home because she is very hungry).

Vanda thanked Miranda for every information, put her new face mask on and stepped in the changed world.

Laura Vilmošová, sekunda, 2020/2021