

## Laevin Lerwick harbour

I mind bein a student, an goin back ta college efter da first Christmas holidays. Da boat wis jam packit wi aa da idder students, an you couldna move on da pier fir eens at haid come ta say cheerio. Da Mams an Dads wid be brave an hand you back ta your idder life wi hardly a wurd, fir dey'd learned no ta aks ony mair. Dan da boat poo'ed awa an dey rushed inta der cars, drave oot ta Twageos an lined up on da girss below da Costgaird Buildings. Dat wis your last picter o Lerrick ad da boat geed oot da Sooth Mooth – Mams an Dads waving cheerio.



We never geed inside until we haid paased da toon. We'd watch it slip by, half blyde ta be gittin back ta civilisation but silently wishin fir an idder week ta geeng along aa da hooses you wir too drunk ta geeng tae at New Year. You'd watch da folk ashore – waving – an fir a meenit you wid git ower da embarrassment an wave back. Dan you'd laugh – “damn fool” – an geeng inside wi da rest. You'd aa sit ida bar tryin no ta look oot o da windows, an you'd mak jokes an lay bets on wha'll be da first een ta spew whin we hit da Roost. By ten o'clock, whin Sumburgh Head is joost a speck ida distance, da conversation gradually turns awa fae da affairs at geed on ower da holidays tae whit you'r gaein ta do back at college, an whin da first exam is.

An whin you finally do graduate, da first luxury you treat yourself tae is a plane ticket. You can afford ta geeng in style noo.

But ower da years, somewhaar atween takkin aff at Aberdeen an laandin at Sumburgh, you fin you miss da smell, an da noise, an da fourteen hoors...an you lang fir a piece o da excitement an adventure at you felt whin you wir peerie. So you geeng back ta da boat an noo dir a new generation o parents on da pier – lookin younger dan yours ever did – wha stare at da boat willin it ta stey fir joost a few mair dyas, an wha wave wi da familiar brave smiles as dey face da end o anidder childhood. You geeng oot on deck ta watch da toon an dan suddenly your hert stops. Dere, at da peerie lighthouse at da fit o da Knab, der a crood o fock, aa waving. An joost whin you're about ta raise your airm ta wave back, two giggling laases aside you git dere first. You're left feelin stupid, an lonely. Fir somehow, da fact at someen is dere ta wave – but no at you – is far worse dan lookin at an empty patch o girss. Becaas it's ony dan you realise hoo much time haes passed since someen stod dere fir you. Time at you never even noticed wis dere.

**Grace Barnes.**