

## **Sea hero, Con man & Spy**

Country: Denmark

Category: Short Form

**Title: Søhelt, Svindler & Spion**

Company: Library of Copenhagen

Author, producer, director, sound engineer: Claus Vittus

Language: Danish

Length: 9:35

## SUMMARY

"Sea hero, Con man & Spy" is an episode-podcast with so far 11 episodes, and it will probably have 18 episodes. It is of duration between 9 and 12 minutes. It is based on Jorgen Jorgensens works: A Shred of Autobiography (1835) and Historical Account of a Revolution (1809) (British Library). The podcast is produced for kids (7-12 years) and their parents/grandparents in order to introduce podcast and radio-stories for a younger audience and to promote desire to read books. The podcast is distributed for free (together with five other podcast-series produced by Copenhagen Libraries <https://bibliotek.kk.dk/lyd>) on platforms like Spotify, Podbean, Itunes, Apple a.o. All of it is accompanied with a website: <https://bibliotek.kk.dk/section/soehelte-paa-vilde-veje> THIS EPISODE: "Sea hero, Con man & Spy" - Episode 11 - Dog day King. Jørgen has come to Iceland with some English merchants who want to trade with the Icelanders. The Danish governor on the island did not want the English to be allowed to buy or sell anything. Jørgen had seen that the Icelanders were starving because there had been no ships with food for a long time. And Jørgen thought that the Danish governor did not take the Icelanders into consideration. "Of course I could not tamely submit to be sent back after a fruitless errand and to deprive a whole population of the support..." he writes. So he imprisons the governor and declares himself King.

**THIS EPISODE:** "Sea hero, Con man & Spy" - Episode 11 - Dog day King.

( music – old time violin)

Iceland is an island – a lonely island in the great Atlantic Ocean.

A lonely island full of volcanoes. And sheep. And fish and whales in the sea around the island.

No trees and no fields. Most of it is lava rock

People - not a lot - have lived on the island for many years, but there are - also - not a lot who just drops by to visit.

However, the Danes came many hundreds of years ago and stated that now Iceland is Danish - just like Greenland and the Faroe Islands.

But this day - a summer day in 1809 – change is going to come.

Jørgen - he is Dane but even though - has decided to give the Icelanders their freedom

(Music – keyboard)

In his own way – a quiet and innocent revolution, as he later writes in his diary.

But also a short one.

This is the story of the two months when Jørgen was King of Iceland.

(Music – harmonica)

You are listening to a podcast story about fantastic life of Jørgen Jürgensen.

Made for Copenhagen Libraries by me – Claus Vittus

(Sound – birds & churchbells)

It is Sunday – people in the capital Reykavik are on their way home from church –

Jørgen is sitting at a table in one of the finest houses in town.

He just did something terrible. He himself is a little surprised by it.

Together with some English sailors, he has unlawfully entered the house of the Danish governor - the one who at this time decides everything in Iceland - the governor was lying on his sofa, when Jørgen entered with a pistol in each hand.

In clear and distinct Danish, he said: You are under arrest and will be taken to our ship, where we will place you under arrest.

Now the governor is in jail on the ship .

(Music – violins)

Jørgen is sitting in the governor's house and must find out what will happen next.

Just to remind you of what happened:

Jørgen came to Iceland with English merchants who wanted to trade with the Icelanders. They had a lot of goods necessary to the icelanders and they also want to buy fish, tallow that the Icelanders have. Jørgen is there because he speaks both English and Danish and is a good mate to have on a sailing ship.

The Danish governor on the island wasn't positive, and he did not want the English to be allowed to buy or sell anything. It is a Danish island and only Danish merchantships can come here, he said.

Jørgen had seen that the Icelanders were starving because there hadn't been any ships with food for a long time. He thought that the Danish governor did not take the Icelanders into consideration.

*"Of course I could not tamely submit to be sent back after a fruitless errand and to deprive a whole population of the support..."*

, he writes down in the story, the book he later publishes about his days as king of Iceland.

(Music – violins building up)

That's why he has the governor imprisoned, so the Icelanders can be allowed to buy the supply brought in by the English - potatoes, ham, grain and wine.

But when Jørgen is sitting at the table in the governor's nice house, it dawns on him that now there is no one who decides on the island - the governor is a sort of king's man, and he's in jail.

So Jørgen is King.

- Though I have no practice in that, he writes in his diary.

But he goes to the task of making new rules and laws with enthusiasm.

And he remembers to write it all down, so that he can later publish a book about his time as King.

He does a proper job as lawmaker, even though he is basically an unschooled seaman 29 years old.

The first law he writes down is:

*Iceland is free and independent from Denmark.*

The Icelanders were happy about it. After all, they were afraid that another Dane had just arrived who wanted to decide everything for his own wellbeing.

(Music – levels down)(feedback from crowd)

Back home in Denmark, the real King and his men were hardly happy, but they didn't know anything of what was going hundreds of miles away.

One of the other new laws is that icelanders do not have to pay taxes to the Danish king. And if they owe something to the Danes, they don't have to pay it either.

Another popular legislation. Jørgen sits in his new office in the governor's fine house and continues to come up with these kinds of popular laws.

(Music building up)

Food prices are reduced - now food should only cost half as much.

In the hospitals, there were also problems that had to be solved. Those who had to help with the births - the midwives - were only paid very poorly and there was a lack of doctors. Jørgen raises the salary.

(Sound of accountant)

Jørgen has to fix a lot and make it work. Some must be paid, others pay less for food and all get rid of half the tax – the money they would otherwise hand over to Denmark. Jørgen have difficulty in getting the accounts to balance. Money in, money out.

It was hard to be King and to make all the people happy.

(Sound of school)

Then there were the problems at school. There were only two schools on the island, and one was just for children under 10 years of age and at the other school the

children were sick all the time because they didn't get enough to eat, and because the school was old and leaky and cold.

Something had to be done about it immediately – the children were sent home so that the school could be repaired, and that was another expense.

(Upbeat music with congas & clarinet)

The Icelanders were not used to all that. They were used to the Danes taking all the money, and the Icelanders starving and having a miserable time.

It was then in the early 1800s - today they are doing well and are free and liberated and Denmark no longer decides. But they still learn Danish at school.

And the tale of Jørgen is wellknown because it was he who started the fight for freedom and independence.

They call him the Dog Days King because the two months when Jørgen was King of Iceland - The two hottest months of the year - are called the dog days and Iceland's national poet Einar Mar Gudmundsson has written a novel about him – this is Einar Mar – listen to how good Danish he speaks:

*(Einar Mar Gudmundsson): Jørgen, we call the Dog Days King (pronounced in Icelandic) is a kind of myth and legend. After all, he is not afraid of the authorities, and we consider him a kind of revolutionary. He is a funny episode in our history, but when you study the story deeper you see that he was so much more.*

Incidentally, Jørgen also had a flag made for the Icelanders, since they only had the Danish red-white flag back then in 1809. Jørgen's flag is blue with three white fish on it, and that flag is used by some in Iceland today 2023. The same people that established a political party called the Pirate Party and they have achieved representation at the Icelandic parliament.

*(Einar Mar Gudmundsson): Those who have formed the Pirate Party, they acknowledge the influence of Jørgen, and they have the flag that Jørgen made. They raise it as a signal that now are new times.*

(Upbeat music with congas & clarinet)

Jørgen's time as king of Iceland unfortunately only lasted for two months. You will hear more about that in the next episode. Stay tuned

## Original source:

Historical Account of a revolution on the island of Iceland (1809) (Original manuscripts are kept in The British Library)

A Shred of an autobiography (First published in Ross's Hobart town almanack 1835)

**About the author/producer:** Claus Vittus is a prizewinning radio- & podcastproducer formerly from the national Danish radio D.R. (1985-2019) and now producing for the public service podcast of the national libraries (2020-2023). Has participated in Marulic in 2016, where he got the idea for the story of Jorgen Jorgenson.

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