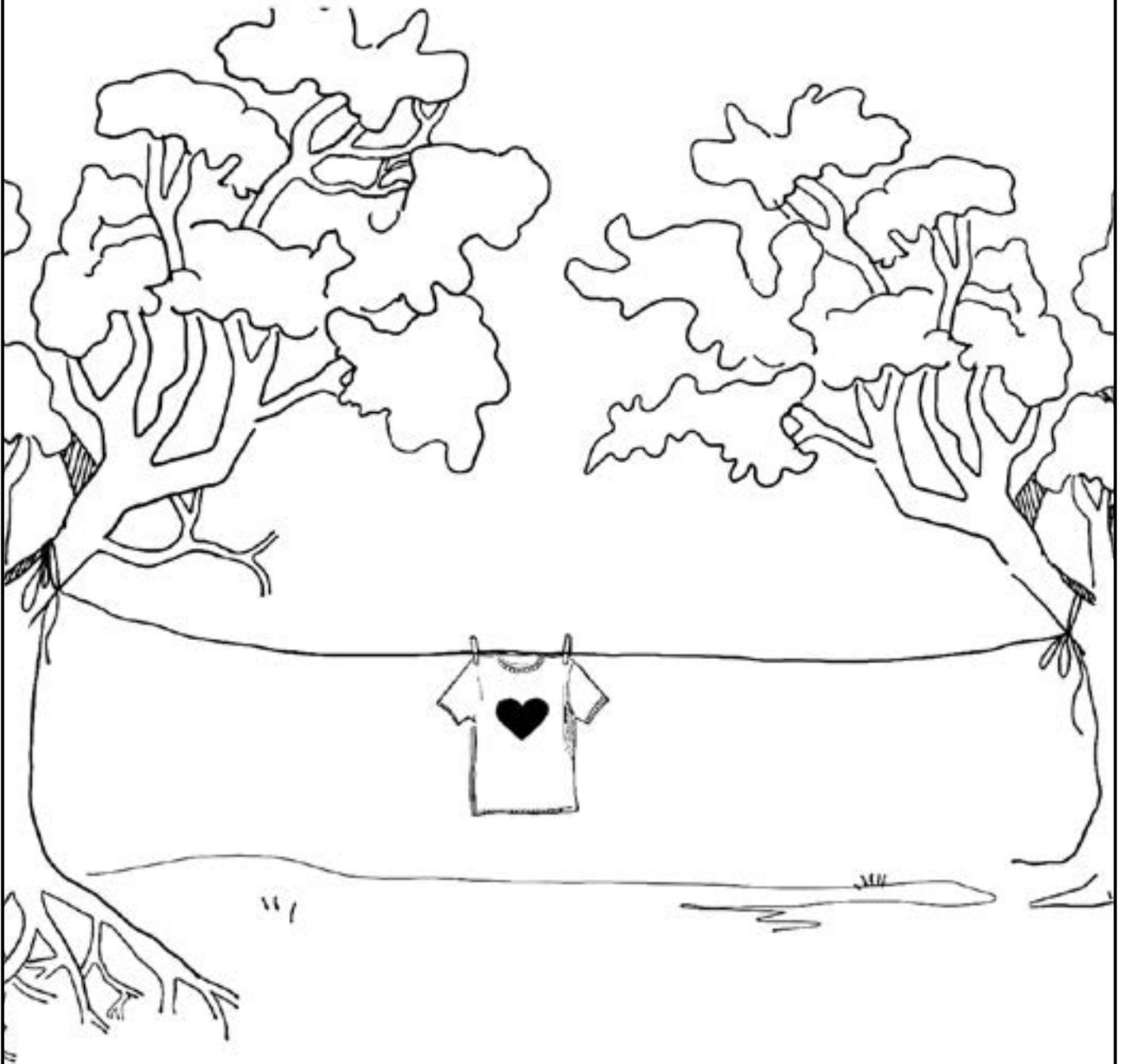


The Covid Diaries

Personal stories from all around the world





The Covid Diaries

Hey you! Welcome to The COVID diaries magazine. In the past weeks we have received immense response from all over the world and we are so grateful for that. Without all the stories it would not be possible to publish this.

It all started in the end of March when we got the assignment to start a project about corona. We had a brainstorm but soon we came to the realisation that we wanted to reconnect to world in a certain way. With almost every country in lockdown, there has been very little social interaction. Where real life international traffic played a big role in spreading the virus, we wanted to use online international traffic to spread stories. We wanted to build connections.

That's how The COVID Diaries came to be.

Within a week we had the first stories coming in, and we were amazed by all the positive response we had gotten so far. Different people, different countries; so different yet they all shared a common situation. Young people, old people, all reminiscing the past life. After posting all the stories on our blog, together with the art made by some very talented artists, we decided it was time to take it to the next level; the COVID Magazine was born.

We hope these stories will inspire you, to hold on, to make the best out of the situation and above all give you the feeling that you are not alone. We are in this together.

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Name: Marlene Acosta

Land: Mexico

Age: 28 Years old



My name is Marlene Acosta, I am 28 years old and I am a Mexican-American architect. In Mexico I live near to Tijuana, the border with California, USA.

Here we have to live in quarantine, but the people in Mexico do not take it seriously. Our current president has been doing a terrible job. He has taken away the budget from the health sector for private initiative, so many people have lost their jobs in the last two years. More than 50% of the people work on their own, so staying at home is not really an option for them. When the virus arrived in our country, our schools got closed, malls just recently closed, the churches are giving their ceremonies online and all concerts and festivals are canceled.

Especially in my city it is weird to live in quarantine. Because of our close relationship to California, it is common to go from country to country, just to grab some food, visit the family, go for a little shopping, work or visit at the doctor. We can't all go there anymore.

"People in Mexico do not take it seriously."

For me, it is a difficult time right now, because I am unemployed. Luckily my parents are helping me, but it is super stressful not to be able to work, to not have any medical services and that nobody receives any help from the government. My brother lives in California and we can only see him through Facetime. Although he can come to Mexico, and I as an American citizen can go to California, but my parents as Mexicans are not allowed to leave the country for probably quite long time.

Also certain products are sold out in stores. It is so sad to see empty stores like the giant of Walmart. I

have friends who are doctors and nurses and work in hospitals.

They have to deal with this situation without respirators, without beds, without medicines, without equipment to protect themselves, and with interns and medical students forced to work in hospitals without any protection or salary. It is all going crazy in here.

I'm happy to tell you all a little bit about my situation in Mexico. It would be great to meet up and talk about it together, so if you'd like to know anything more about my situation, feel free to contact!



Name: Indah

Land: Jakarta, Indonesia

Age: 30 Years old



Indah (30), a housewife, lives in the Covid-19 red zone of Jakarta, Indonesia, with her husband and two young children. My daughter has been learning from home and my husband is working from home for 4 weeks now. We're also following the government advice to stay home, and only venture outside when necessary.

We all know that the best way to fight the coronavirus pandemic is to stay safe at home, but being at home 24/7, and in quarantine for several weeks is not easy. Being homebound with a lot of free time can get super boring. But, we are staying safe at home to laugh, eat, & play together. Families should consider things they can do together, like planning for decluttering, rearranging the furniture, building something together, or movie nights.

My family and I have tried to stay close to our normal routine because of the situation, the days go slow and are long. I am trying to enjoy that I have more spare time than usual, I just need to make sure that I'm not staring at screens all the time. It is tempting for me and especially the kids, to sit in front of our television and phones for two weeks.

Sahda, my daughter loves going on adventures and camping. So, I asked my husband to buy a small tent, we built the tent in our garden, on the 16th day of quarantine.

The weather on that night was really nice, so we spent the whole night playing games, eating and laughing. That was so fun!

"Ramadan in quarantine will be the hardest thing to do."

Me, as a Muslim now facing a "socially distanced" Ramadan.

We most likely won't experience hearing the recitation of the verses of fasting from Surah Baqarah in the days leading up to Ramadan. We're going to miss out on seeing extended family or having iftars with our friends. Ramadan in quarantine will be the hardest thing to do.



Name: Priscilla

Land: Lombardy, Italy

Age: 25 Years old



My name is Priscilla, I am 25 years old and for my study I'm living in Pavia, for 5 years already. Pavia is a small town in Lombardy, Italy. It happened to be that Lombardy became the centre of the COVID virus outbreak. Life here drastically changed, in a short amount of time.

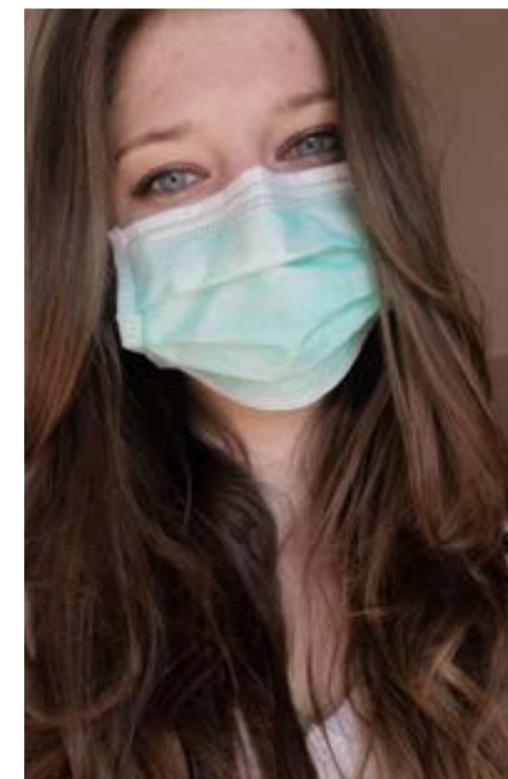
At the end of February the first cases were reported, universities and schools closed, people were advised to work from home as much as possible, but besides that life just kept going on as it normally would. Meanwhile were two months in, and everything is completely shut down. Learning institutions are still closed, there are online classes, online exams. Some students even graduate via Skype. All the shops are closed, same as banks, post offices, bars and restaurants. Some supermarkets are still open, but there are enormous waiting queues and when it's finally your turn, there's barely anything left. People are fighting (properly with 1 meter distance between them) on who gets to take the last toilet paper home. Anyone who wants to go outside, must have a good excuse when they are being stopped by the police. The cops and the army are supervising and controlling the streets. You are allowed to do the groceries two times a week not more, and only one family member. Activities such as going for a run or a bike ride are not allowed anymore, anyone who goes outside must wear gloves and a face mask. Restrictions that are very much needed, because of the tremendous amount of deceased.

"It seemed so far away, it felt so distant, that virus somewhere in China. And then, all of a sudden it was a few kilometers away."

Hospitals are overcrowded, at the IC there's a selection of people with the highest survival rate, the rest of them is being send home to pass away. Morgues are so packed that corpses are being taken out of the "red Zone" by the army, to cities where there's still some space. Burials are being held without family members, with no funeral, like a mass process.

Luckily, there's not only horrifying news. Many of us are working to stay connected with others. For example, many Italians go out on their balconies every night, to sing together. That's guaranteed for the occasional goosebump, teary-eyed moments. Everything seems so unreal, but it is, indeed very much reality. A reality that presumably will last a couple more weeks. The Italian government has announced that the restrictions will not be lifted till at least the 3rd of May. This is the third time that the date is shifted, I doubt that this will be the last time. For the time being and a few weeks after that, my life exists out of sunbathing on the balcony, relaxing spa treatments in my bathroom and culinary takeaway pizza's on the couch.

However, I'm sure there's something positive to learn from all of this. Maybe it is necessary to be bored to death for a while, to come to the realisation how happy we are with the standard activities from our day to day life. To utterly enjoy our days off, the weekend and the people we spend our time with.



Name: Lucinda

Land: Singapore

Age: 27 Years old



My name is Lucinda, I am 27 years old and I'm living in Singapore. I had the pleasure of Hilde reaching out to me, all the way from the Netherlands, with the question if I wanted to share how I felt about the current pandemic. I wrote a few short stories to sum up my musings and a brief experience. Enjoy!

Thoughts

Had the pleasure of @pretkiekjes reaching out to me all the way from the Netherlands to share how I felt about the current pandemic. Just 3 highlights to sum up my musings and a brief experience - read through or flip past ✨

CLOSE CALLS

1. A family member was quarantined and I was moved to an isolation room, swabbed and sent home with hospitalisation leave. (Thankfully, all of us were negative and had no symptoms)
2. We managed to fly to New Zealand before this situation spiralled out of control. We narrowly escaped 2 stay home notices and a lockdown as we booked two of the last four tickets to take us home safely.
3. A covid positive contractor was in the ward I worked in and thankfully, I was wearing PPE as we passed each other.

Name: Narida

Land: Mexico

Age: 27 Years old



In the garden from our rental house, we have green coconuts. It is quite some work to use such a coconut. The outside is very thick and extremely hard, so, there we are; standing outside with a big kitchen knife + rubber mallet. The sweat is pouring and dripping from our bodies, the kitchen knife practically broken, on the edge of despair. Until all of a sudden; that wonderful moment, everything falls into place, and all your hard work is forgotten. The most refreshing coconut water quenches your thirst, the flesh of the coconut makes your fantasies go wild. Ice creams, curry and desserts, all the endless possibilities; coconut party.

"And then I saw it: basically, you can compare us, people, to coconuts. Our exterior layers shaped due to all kinds of expectations, social obligations, hope, fears and so on. But if we break through those layers, by ourselves, we get to the most beautiful, most refreshing part of us: our core, our heart. Our true self, free from all the expectations that we and others have of us. In that moment, the real excitement starts. The whole COVID situation makes it quite impossible to go outside. It's the perfect time to start that challenging journey inwards! With all the time and space for you and only you, the hard work can begin, time to start sweating. A tough process, a provocative workout; the result? A big party in your true self." P.S. We just bought a big machete, makes everything a little bit easier.





Rob Worst , 30 years, The Netherlands



Saar, 16 years, The Netherlands

Name: Stefanie Tuerlinckx

Land: Belgium, Antwerp

Age: 24 Years old



My name is Stefanie Tuerlinckx, a 24 year old who's studying to become a journalist. My parents live in a city called Leuven (Flemish-Brabant, Belgium), but I'm quarantining in Antwerp, together with my boyfriend.

Belgium went in a "light lockdown" on the night of the 14th of March. The restrictions were announced the night before, I cried that night, the nights after that I could barely sleep. I haven't had a good peaceful night of sleep ever since. Some days I can accept the whole situation, other days I'm struggling again. I miss the freedom of going anywhere without worrying about keeping distance from others. For example, I find it horrible to go grocery shopping now, suddenly you're in a small pathway with three others.

What if one of them is infected without me knowing it?

I miss my grandmothers, my parents, my friends. Calling and skyping is nice, but of course, it can't replace seeing and hugging each other. I miss going out in town and drink coffees, spending time in bookstores and going to dinner. In general I miss security, certainty. I also had to postpone my internship, that I have to do to graduate, because universities are closed till at least June.

Above all; I am scared. Scared to get ill, but particularly that my parents or grandmothers will get ill. One of my grandmothers lives in a retirement home, there's no one sick yet, but you keep hearing horrifying stories about retirement homes.

I find it hard to ignore all the messages on the news, because of my study I want to stay up to date. During this lockdown I'm trying to work on my thesis, but that's easier said than done. All routine is gone, a month in, and I'm still finding it very difficult to focus. I am lacking motivation. Luckily I didn't had classes anymore, so I don't have to follow online lessons or have to worry about not passing an exam. Besides everything I am blogging again, and writing articles for StampMedia, a press agency for young adults. I'm also picking up on sports again, following instruction videos on YouTube. I'm using this time to figure out what I want to do after I graduate,

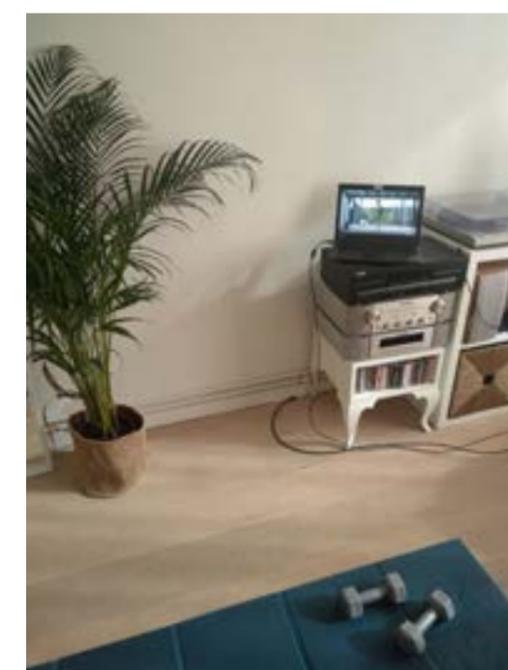
"I'm so mad and disappointed by people who are not following the restrictions."

I'm thinking about doing something with freelancing. That's why I watch a lot of videos about entrepreneurship, online marketing and so on. I bought a new drawing tablet, hopefully I'll soon be able to make some good drawings for my writings on my blog. Last but not least; I go for a walk a few times a week. Only in the mornings, after that the streets get too crowded. Seems crazy, doesn't it?

The time goes by quite quickly I am absolutely not bored at all. I'm grateful that my boyfriend and I have this place together, otherwise we would have to miss each other way too long. He's the only one that can keep me calm in this difficult situation, we made the right choice staying together in quarantine.

I try to look at the situation with perspective; I'm not short on anything, and if no one in my close surroundings gets sick - or worse: dies - it's not so bad. We have to accept the situation, but I'm also allowing myself to have bad days. I hope everyone understands that it's okay to have bad days, or to feel scared or sad.

I'm so mad and disappointed by people who are not following the restrictions."



Name: Brooke Petermann

Land: Nebraska, USA

Age: 39 Years old



Hello! My name is brooke petermann. I am 39 and I am an artist living in Nebraska. For me, Covid-19 has meant a lot of hours staying home with my husband (who is a high school teacher now teaching from home) and my three children.

The one emotion that keeps coming back to me through this situation is an overwhelming gratitude and a consciousness of the goodness of people. So many people are going above and beyond to do what they can for others. The individuals who run my children's school and church activities just keep showing up for them in new and beautiful ways and it has brought me to tears on more than one occasion. Beyond my personal journaling and photography, I have decided to mark this time by creating daily art / styled photographs around what the "stay home" orders have looked like for my family and am using the hashtag 100daysofshsh (stay home stay healthy) to collect this project.

"So many people are going above and beyond to do what they can for others."



Name: Cindy Land: Zakynthos, Greece Age: 29 Years old



Zakynthos, the island that is full of about 2 million olive trees and which has around 45,000 inhabitants. After months of olive picking, the first week of March, we unfortunately also had to deal with the coronavirus.

What seemed so far away from us suddenly became a reality here. The source of the infection was a 66-year-old man who recently returned from his vacation from Israel. The people who travelled by bus with this man were also infected with the virus. From Zakynthos 4 became infected. I must say, looking back after that crucial first week of the contamination here on the island, I am extremely proud of the strict and quick approach of the Greeks here. Not, "we will deal with it later," or "we will examine the situation over the next few days," but WHAM! The day after it was known, immediate action! Urgent measures were taken quickly. The four affected persons were immediately quarantined under supervision. The schools, museums, sports clubs, fitness centres, theatres, the cinema, all closed for the next two weeks. Organized excursions were also strictly prohibited.

We can now report that, after the two weeks of home quarantine, the four who were infected from Zakynthos are doing well! They had mild symptoms and are feeling well even now. No other infections have been reported here since, and we hope to keep it that way with all of us working together. Now at the end of March, other measures have since been added. Everything is closed, except supermarkets with adjusted operating hours, pharmacies, bakers, banks also have issued measures, petrol stations, and the postal service. The ferries are still going, but with an adjusted itinerary. Groups of people together, are strictly forbidden. There are huge fines as punishment! This is how the situation is here at the moment. The Greeks themselves now realize that the virus is serious, and if we want to prevent further infections we have to work for it. Everywhere there are bottles of antiseptic, people wearing gloves and mouth masks. Greeks had a hard time, the kissing and cuddling as a greeting is deeply embedded in the culture. But now people are increasingly talking to each other and distancing themselves, no matter how difficult.



I notice that many Greeks are afraid here. So out of fear they stay at home too. There has been a week when we saw panic buyers. Enough toilet rolls still on the island, but the milk and the dettol hand soap bottles were sold out. The elderly stay at home, they do not go outside. Family brings them food and drinks. Everyone wishes each other health, and warn each other, to be careful.

Staying healthy is now priority number 1!!

We are trying to get the best out of it right now. Here and there humour is used about the nasty situation. It is also necessary! I try to stay positive even though I am very concerned. I also see beautiful things happen. Many friends who have a family with children spend a lot of time together and do fun things together. Play games indoors, or go in the garden and take care of the chickens and rabbits. Friends who are sporty and are members of a sports club now do classes virtually on the computer or on the phone. The purpose is to keep going and keep in touch with each other. My coffee addicted young Greek friends, who no longer get cappuccinos or espresso's in plastic cups, they now make old fashioned coffee by hand, in a BRUKI. Cheaper and more environmentally conscious.

Zakynthos is very concerned with the environment and nature. Volunteer groups went out together to clean the beaches and organized outings with the Greek children at the schools to clear up nature from trash. That is currently not possible. However, many individual actions are being taken to make Zakynthos even more beautiful and cleaner. For example, there are people who artistically paint a garbage can or electrical cabinet in empty streets.

We cannot do much more than wait and see at the moment. Every day is a new day. The weather is now blissful here. The sun is shining, it is pleasantly warm. Spring has really arrived. This morning, after a night of worry... I sit on my veranda with a coffee, I see the sun rise and think, how special it is that despite what happens to people, nature does not care... I hear the birds chirping, watch the wild flowers rise and smell the herbs, you will experience Zakynthos with all your senses. I give my dog its wanted kibble and give my baby goat a morning hug. Moments later, the two are happily hopping around among the olive trees. Zakynthos and its nature remain special...

"Staying healthy is now priority number !!!"



Name: Matthijs and Shelly Land: Spain Age: 24 and 23 Years old



In the morning of Sunday March 1th we are ready to sail away.

The rhythmic humming of our diesel engines announces our department. Catamaran Zilt a Lagoon 39, counts a four-headed crew. David, my dad, is the sailing master, my mother Jose-Anne his assistant. My girlfriend Shelly is responsible for the fenders. On the airport in Seville, Shelly and I get news that the first Corona patient in the Netherlands is a fact. In that moment we're far from worrying. "We left right on time" Shelly said jokingly. Aboard, the coronavirus feels far away. It's crazy to say, but back then, the coronavirus felt like some flu or cold that went around. Looking back, this was the first moment we were in touch with COVID-19. What we didn't know yet, was that the virus would quickly catch up on us.

Feels like war

The sunlight's playing with water in a fountain on a little square in Estepona. It is Saturday March 1th, 13 days after we departed from Cádiz. On our way to the centre, Shelly and I notice all the closed shops on the sides of the street. On the windows and doors are handwritten notes: "in relation to COVID-19 we're closed for undetermined time." Saturday afternoon the official state of emergency is announced by the Spanish government. Restrictions are; people are only allowed on the streets for essential groceries or to walk the dog. Shops, bars, cafes, restaurants, cinemas, everything needs to close down. All ports in Spain shut down. Anyone who still sets sail, risks getting a fine up till 600.000 euros. Reality slowly sinks in; for the time being, we're stuck in Estepona.

Life in lockdown

There are few things in life that confront you with the facts like patrolling army vehicles. Olive Green landrovers with their yellow markings and orange flashing lights, stand out harshly against the soft coloured buildings. Police cars are driving systematically through the streets. Their speakers requesting everyone monotonously to stay inside. I'm standing in a small night shop, staring at the empty shelves. No soap, toilet paper, or cleaning supplies. All preservable foods, like pasta and tomato sauce, are also gone. When I take a picture of the empty shelves, an employee starts to yell at me. "In Spain it's forbidden to hoard groceries", explains the scottish Gary to me. He is also living on his boat together with his girlfriend. "The supermarket's probably scared they get in trouble because of the empty shelves." Without buying anything I leave the store. Luckily, we still have some supplies aboard. The walks with our dog turn into a luxury. We thankfully take shifts. It doesn't matter if you're walking the dog or do groceries; three times a day you get stopped by the police or Guardia Civil, we're doing nothing wrong and they can hold nothing against us. It starts to look like bullying. Especially when one of the cops points at our full bag of groceries and says "You need to do some more shopping, this is not enough to be allowed on the streets." My mom takes this stuff the hardest "i can't help it, everytime I see a police car drive by, my whole body shivers."



Surreality

Despite one of the strictest lockdowns in the world, the number of infected rose by 30 percent. [Spain] looks abandoned and neglected. Once you're on the streets it feels uncomfortable. Because we need more water than one person can carry, it sometimes is necessary to go to the big supermarket with two people instead of alone. Meanwhile, we know exactly how to do that. With scarves around our head and gloves on - the gloves are required. We need to walk apart from each other and can't communicate, so we made hand gestures. Aboard there's a lot of time to think about the surreality of the situation. In Spain, you don't only need to watch out for drones and police vehicles, but also for people. If Shelly and I get spotted together in the supermarket, the security calls the police immediately. And while we are the only ones left in our pier, people call the police, when we are stretching our legs on our own pontoon. "It looks like a police state" My mom says indignant, while two cops are standing in front of our boat. Al Jazeera wrote March 31st: "Spanish cops beat man with a baton, because he wasn't following restrictions of lockdown." Almost 1000 people are arrested."

Through the BBB, Shelly and I are finally on the waiting list to be repatriated. After multiple of our flights got cancelled, this is our last option. "If we want any chance left to graduate, we have to get back now, while it's still possible." Shelly enjoins me. She's right. While we wait for 72 hours on confirmation from the ministry of Foreign Affairs, I'm curious about the leaving impact of COVID-19. Will we soon talk about a world before Corona and a world after that? A world where everything's the same but still different.



Saar, 16 years, The Netherlands

Name: Hilde Land: Sydney, Australia Age: 36 Years old



In my first week in Sydney I didn't notice anything about the Coronavirus. While the Netherlands went in complete lockdown, I was walking through the botanical gardens, the famous beaches and went to see the Opera House. A friend from Sydney asks me to go on a roadtrip with her, a trip to the outback where she grew up. Cool! Off the beaten track.

After a 12 hour road trip, she drops me off at my airbnb in the evening, no idea yet about the chaos that is coming. I go to sleep and wake up the next morning with the news: Australia will go on lockdown within the next 48 hours. All who have been overseas in the last two weeks must self isolate. Then it hits me "how am i going to do that? I am literally in the middle of nowhere!"

Peter & Kaiko (the people where I'm staying) help me search the local marketplace. Within 2,5 hours I find an advertisement for a campervan, I call the owner and decide I have to trust him. I make a down payment of 550 dollars. To pick up the camper I have to make a drive of "just 4 hours". The problem is, I can't drive I have to use public transport, in total it took me 15 hours plus an overnight stay to get the camper. For the first time I get an eerie feeling, I get yelled at at the bank: "you shouldn't be in here! You should isolate yourself." That's right, I do need to isolate myself, but to do that I need a camper and to buy that camper I need money. I feel so guilty, but what else can I do? To my relief, the owner of the camper is super sweet. He invites me to his house for dinner and trusts the online payment I make.

It's 8:00 pm, dark, and I've got my portable house. At KMart I buy a pillow, a blanket, a few plates, cutlery, a kettle, a yoga mat and some decorations. Finally, at least I can sleep. Still got to find a place where I can put my camper, I start driving and pass a parking lot next to the beach. There are toilets here, mission accomplished! For a split second I start crying, all of this is causing so much anxiety. Am I still allowed to do groceries? Can I even go to a camping? The sunrise is slowly awaking me. It is beautiful here! This is giving me faith that I'm doing the right thing. Time to go to the supermarket and registration office. At the office I have another

"Go with the flow, with an open heart- With that in mind I got on a plane to Sydney on March 13th. No plan, no bucket list, just looking where life will take me."

setback: "you are not allowed in here, you must isolate". I'm tearing up, "I'm trying!" The lady from the office calms her voice: "It's ok sweetie. Just take your van somewhere safe and isolate for 2 weeks. You can do registration later."

In that moment I decide to drive. If the borders do close, I'd rather be in Queensland where the weather stays warm and nice. Six hundred miles later, I'm driving past the border without any struggles. I come across a campsite only opened for people like me: no permanent place to live and no option to go home.

Finally peace, finally safety.



I enjoy where I am staying. Doing yoga, going for beach walks, meditating, reading, looking at the sunrise, the moon above the ocean every night, listening to music and video calling with homefront, the Netherlands. My van is awesome, the pink heart garland is peacefully greeting me every morning. If you get stuck somewhere in the world, this is the perfect place. I'm slowly getting used to the idea that this will be my home for at least 4 months. In the meantime, everything in Australia has gone into total lockdown. If I leave the campsite, the owner has to report me to the police. I get a message from the Emirates, they were supposed to fly me back at July 11th, the flight has been cancelled. Friday Night I get a message from BBB: you can join repatriation upcoming Thursday, the flight will depart from Sydney. Shit! Very little time and a lot of arranging to do. But with the help of all the lovely people here I get it together. In a day and a half I have: storage for my van until it is sold, packed and cleaned everything and found transport from here to Sydney. Ready to go. I get into bed for the last night in my camper when one more email arrives: "BBB- the flight has been cancelled."

For the first time I'm down, really down. What a total mindfuck.

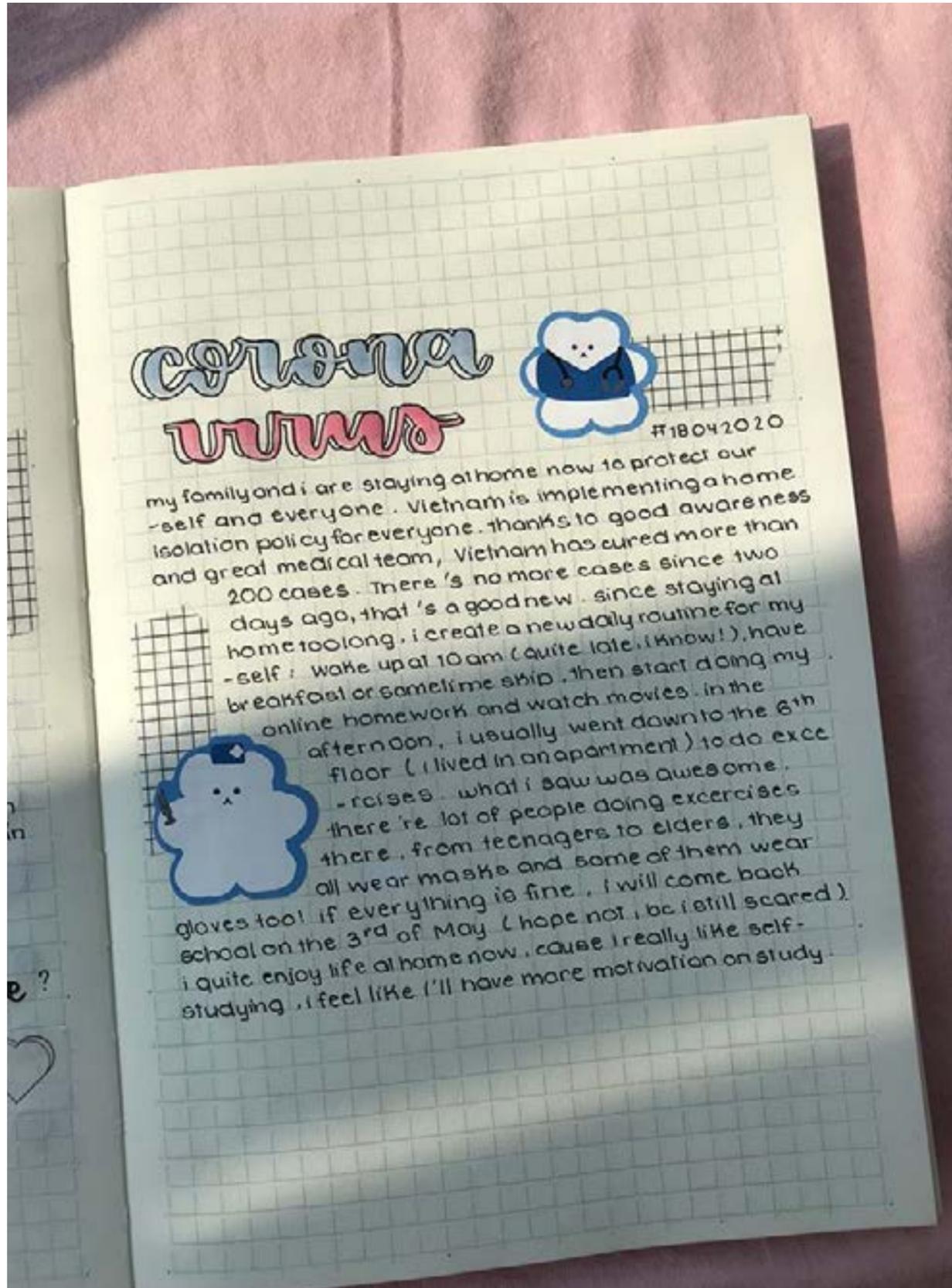
The next day I find my car key (which I lost for 5 days) and start laughing in disbelief. The universe always seems to help me exactly at the right time. I start to accept (again) that I may be stuck here for months, on my own, with my van. At least I will have enough time for reflection. Until all of a sudden I get another message from BBB: "the flight may still be on for Sunday" And that's all we know so far.

And so here I am in my camper on Wednesday evening. While writing this, I don't know if I'll have to pack up tomorrow and start my trip to Sydney to catch a flight, or whether I'll be living here for weeks (or months). Fortunately, I find guidance with the Stoics: Change what you cannot accept, accept what you cannot change.

So I keep doing what I started my journey with: go with the flow with an open heart



Abby, 34 years, USA



WORRIES

1. If any of my loved ones catch covid during this dire period, especially since we've had a multi fold spike in unlinked cases
2. Should we still proceed with our wedding or is it still too early to tell seeing that we are approaching the peak
3. Catching covid myself (context: am a ward pharmacist) - worst yet, passing it on to one of my family members

Name: Ryanne Horn Land: USA Age: 22 Years old



Hello, My name is Ryanne Horn. I'm 22 years old and I live in the West Coast of the United States. My life has been really juxtaposed since the start of the quarantine. There's been a lot of good moments, but these have come with pitfalls and feelings of insecurity, frustration and fear of the unknown. Physically, I've kept busy by drawing, painting, sewing, redecorating, etc. Emotionally and mentally, I've reflected a lot on who I am to myself and what I would like to represent myself as to other people, and myself. Combining these two things has really made a huge difference in how I've kept afloat during this global pandemic

I want to bring to light that no matter how anyone spends their quarantine, it's extra time to

reflect and think about where we are at, as people, as a community and a population and ponder different things we never feel as though we have the time to think about in our normal life and routines. I have a lot of personal ambitions and goals that have always had loose ends or no plan of action when it came to obtaining it. The time we have to remain at home has given me a chance to be more thoughtful and intentional in the things I do.

Examples! Here are some things that have kept me busy and things I have done that have benefitted me as a whole in general, mostly doing things with intention. Enjoy!

A product of quarantine has been filling my day with intention, for example, instead of putting decor onto my bedside table, I replaced the objects that collected dust with things that benefit me. Ask yourself, what do you think of at night while you're in bed that you wish you had beside you? I made a list of essentials, chap stick, a nail file, hair tie, perfume, lotion, a notebook, a brush, eye patches for my baggy under eyes. Intention!

It makes such a difference in connecting yourself to your surroundings.

For the past half decade, taking photos has been therapeutic and equally stress inducing for myself. With the extra pocket time I've had, it's allowed me to take more photos, BUT, with the intention of me doing things I would mostly be doing either way. I've struggled with this before, crafting a life through photos in an unhealthy way, but this has given me an opportunity to continue to take photos but give them meaning as a representation of my life. I've been making mood boards to reflect my life, while allowing me to live out my days in the way that I portray them to be in photos. It's made me so much more driven and content with progress even if life doesn't look a certain way, that doesn't mean you can't enjoy and experience it. There is real power in knowing you have a say in the way your life looks to you.

I took a fashion class! It's titled, Understanding Fashion, From Business to Culture, provided by The Institut Francais de la Mode. The course explains the impact fashion has had on culture and society as well as consumer behavior. Not only has it kept me busy and has given routine, but I'm learning about things I really care about- which doesn't make it feel like busy work, but work that will only help me now but also in the future.

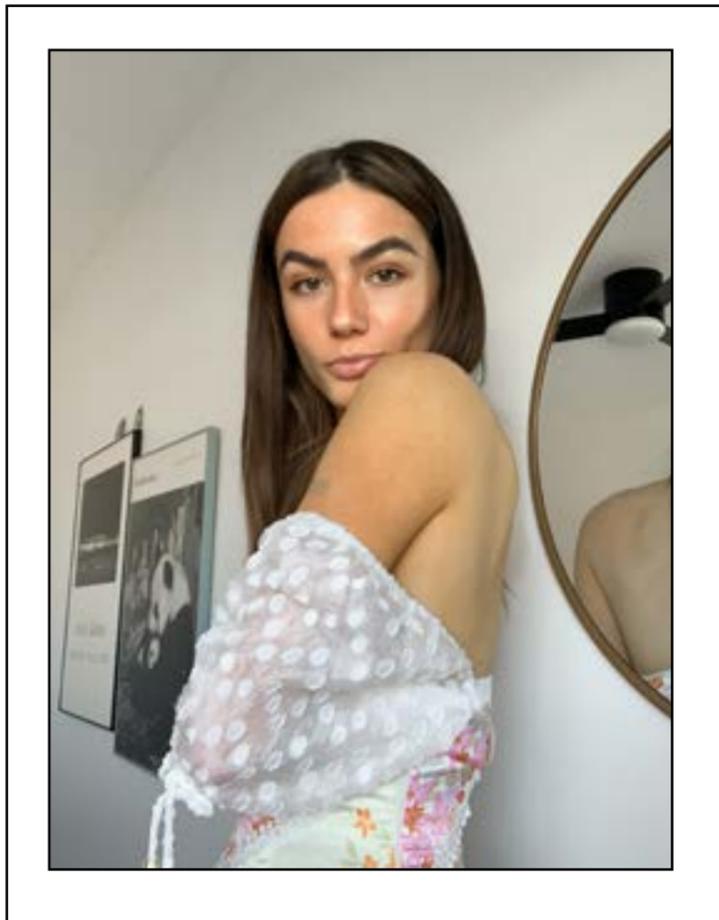
Draw baby draw! It helps that I'm in a drawing class through college but I've been trying to be better about drawing figures and specific pieces of the body. On top of this, both painting and sewing has also worked closely with drawing lately as well. It's given me something to focus my attention on while having fun.

Learning how to make better coffee! My favorite recipe right now is as follows:

1. Coffee
2. Ice
3. Vanilla almond milk Coffee creamer
4. Sugar free vanilla stevia drops

Daydreaming has been fun lately, not about unrealistic things and definitely less romanticizing than when I was young, but it's given me more purpose in the things that I do and has shifted my perspective on what I would like to fill my days with in order to live through my goals in the future, and what accountability means to me.

Of course there have been moments of extreme uncertainty and thinking of worst case scenarios, but the hardest thing for me has been missing human interaction. Whether introverted or extroverted, there is so much nourishment in feeling connected to the people around you. This experience has completely rebuilt my gratitude for everyday moments like going to get coffee, walking my dog with friends, going to the store without fear, visiting friends and family. I hope that we all as a human population can take this experience and replace frustration with gratitude, there has been deep sadness and extreme uncertainty which should not go unrecognized, but in the era of COVID-19, the only thing we can do is be mindful of the lives that have been lost, the people risking their lives for others, and be grateful for our ability to just stay home.



Rob Worst , 30 years, The Netherlands



Troy, 39 years old, Greece

Name: *Katrisha Cuellar Acosta*

Land: *Colombia*

Age: *31 Years old*



Dear diary,

My name is *Katrisha Cuellar Acosta*, I am 31 years old and live in *Colombia*.

One of the most shocking things about this pandemic for me is without a doubt knowing that our rhythm of life has completely changed. Something that for us is difficult to understand or accept.

This great change has made us see life in a different way. Something uncontrollable could alter people's vulnerability, and made us think that it only takes seconds to understand that the world can react to our actions. That we are inhabiting a space in the universe in which we will not be forever and that in this way we have been able to see that everything around us happens with a purpose.

"We are footprints in the sand, we are what we learn in difficult times"



I miss the color of the sun,
spreading its bleached bottoms over the horizon
making the sunrise

The array of contrasting stars,
suspended into space
wandering like cane

The bulging darkness of the clouds
and the non stop urination
while erect umbrellas roam the market square
like diseased dogs

I miss the greedy gnashing of car tires
protesting against the gravel
violent sirens like the prison gongs
announcing the presidential procession

I miss the zebra crossing moment
holding the world at pause,
mocking the angry engines
posh cars giving me a standing ovation
while I cross on my toes.

I miss the aromas of the street
the spiced blend of dust and diesel fumes,
the waking noise and the silence,
of landing loeings and lombardiers
the choking hullabaloo of hawkers,
at the bus stop

I miss the inebriated orientals at Inema
singing in remix and dancing to boujee,
the sluggishly dressed lady puffing ganja,
singing along with her breasts whining to the beat of raggae

I miss All, its evenings
gambling with assignments
pleading with time
worked out brains, trafficked minds
jammed bottoms
trying to beat the deadlines

I miss the mobs at open space
the chatter of quarreling peer groups
the ravishing hugs and alluring pecks
the crushing and crashing
the scent of lovebirds cuddled in pretence
the legal porn in Iujumbura).

I miss I miss

Samuel Bosire, 18 years old, Kenya



BLESSINGS

1. I get to still go to work, help and have organic conversations with patients and colleagues
2. We've got a pretty good healthcare system - just gotta be careful not to exhaust it
3. Being able to start our pre marital course virtually - it's been such an eye opener

Lucinda, 17 years old, Singapore

Name: Jennifer Kindt Land: Ghana Age: 24 Years old



Hi, my name is Jennifer, I'm 24 years old and currently living in Ghana. I got here in September, 2019. I came to Ghana to try and built a live for myself, because this was going quite well, I decided to stay here. Despite the upcoming Corona crisis and extra flights home.

I did move from the capital city to a small town, 1,5 hour drive removed from the biggest city in Ghana. I live here in a guest house, where I also lived the first 3 months of my stay here. So I knew exactly where I would end up. In a city called Accra and a few other cities, there's a lockdown going on. Where

I am staying I have a lot of freedom. We are allowed to go to the village (a five minute walk away) but we're not doing that. We live here with five of us, 3 adults and 2 kids, the personnel comes in shifts.

Everyone is properly informed on the restrictions and precautions, social distancing, washing hands and so on. To be honest, days are flying by, but we don't know how long this will last. The lockdown officially ends upcoming Monday, but we have to see if they will extend it or not.

There are 300 infected so far in Ghana, especially in the capital city. So far I feel good and safe here.

Of course I need to wait and see how it will evolve and if things get worse, but if you didn't know better, everything looks (almost) normal here where I'm staying.

By the way, this is my 11th time here in Ghana + my goal to build a life here, are the reasons I didn't go back to the Netherlands. If I was on a vacation or if this was my first visit I would've gone back home.

The dutch government did a good job trying to get me a flight.



Name: Maartje Van Norrd Land: Austria, Tirol Age: 24 Years old



My name is Maartje and I am 19 years old. Every winter I work as a ski-instructor in Obergurgl, Tyrol, Austria. When I started my season full of motivation again in December 2019, I could never have imagined what the end of the season would look like. Together with 50 other young people we live in the ski instructor's house, which belongs to the ski school. We share a kitchen with a small TV where we put up the news every morning. It increasingly concerned an outbreak of the Coronavirus in Wuhan. For us, however, this drama ends when we turn off the TV and then do our work on the slopes. We could see the impact of the matter, but it didn't influence us right away.. At least we thought so. The ski instructor bubble you are in gives you such a different sense of reality that you feel almost immune to everything from the outside world. Every day there was more and more talk about the Coronavirus, but even after it spread rapidly at an exponential rate, we just put on our goggles and went skiing. Nobody stressed about it here.



Until we were told in March that the Ski School in St. Anton was sending people away, and shortly after Ischgl decided to close the ski resort earlier. What did this mean for us? On March 12 it became clear that all ski resorts in Tyrol would close on March 16. It felt surreal. The best part of the season, the warm April month with the Easter holidays, was coming. This just had to continue? The next day, the entire ski school was called to gather in the conference room. The last time we all sat there was to celebrate Christmas together. Now the atmosphere was completely cut. Everyone listened to our boss shuddering, who said that it was over. Everyone quickly had to fill in and sign all kinds of papers and contracts. The same day, half left for home. I also planned to catch the plane the next morning. I called my parents to discuss the situation. However, they came with even worse news. My brother had become very ill and my family feared the Corona virus. They went into isolation with the family for a minimum of 2 weeks and strict hygiene rules were set up inside the house. "Maart, do us a favor and stay there!" I didn't know what to do.

My gut feeling told me to leave as soon as possible, but my mind told me to stay. I decided to listen to my parents and stay. Out of the 100 ski instructors of the ski school, together with 8 others, I formed the group that did not leave. On the 15th, the resort was already closed. In a panic, all lifts were already slammed shut at 12:00. Since Obergurgl is at the end of the Ötztal Valley, there is only 1 way out. The Timmelsjoch, the road through Italy, is much higher and is covered with snow and ice in winter. So it was closed. The only way home was through Sölden. But Sölden got a blockade on the road with army and police at the end. Everyone had 1 day to leave, so as of March 16 nothing was left of the lively atmosphere in Obergurgl. Although nothing could happen to us, it was one of the most exciting things I have ever experienced. I am 19. When you see elderly people, like your own responsible boss, in full stress, you know that it is serious. This was the first time something like this had happened for all of us. With the group that stayed here we formed our own "Quarantine Hallway". We knew it would take at least a month before we could leave. We made the best of it all. Drew up a calendar, filled it in with self-invented events and themes. We had poker evenings, a mini festival, Cluedo, cooking evenings, pancakes for breakfast, Gender-reverse-day, Royal Escort horse racing and much more. The atmosphere was great, until someone from the house became very ill. Another housemate decided to call the doctor and the next morning someone walked into the house completely dressed in a white suit with hood, gloves, a mask and glasses. An am-

balance was ready outside. It just looked like an IT movie scenario. Obergurgl is a small village so all residents knew in no time that our house was a "black zone". We were completely isolated, were not allowed to do more shopping ourselves, but had to have this arranged by emergency help.

Shortly afterwards we received an email from the municipality. Sölden opened for 1 morning, for everyone who was stuck to leave. But because we were in isolation and we were still waiting for test results, we had to stay here. 5 days after the departure time on April 3, we got the results. Negative. So everything was for nothing. Everyone was done with it, wanted to go home. The vibe was completely gone and everyone retired to their own rooms. Then sit out until the 13th. Quarantine would then have ended. 12 April. Everyone was packed, and wanted to leave. We received a message from the municipality saying that the Quarantine was extended until April 26. How can this be? The stress was good again. To this day, we are still busy calling our Embassies and the city and trying to leave. Looks like it's going to be okay! I can't wait to see my family again. My brother is now doing better and everyone is enjoying the Dutch sun in the backyard. We take the situation very seriously, but we prefer to do it when we can all be surrounded by our own family. My wish is for everyone to get back together with their family and loved ones. That's all the support we need in unprecedented times like this. Stay at home, take care of each other and protect the weak. Only then can we defeat this virus.



Name: Selin & Zainab

Land: Portugal

Age: 26 & 28 Years old



Lockdown experience Portugal from Selin and Zainab

Portugal is one of the better countries in Europe to experience a Lockdown. You have the weather that is fine with you, the country is beautiful, there is no unnecessary fear because since the chaos we have always had toilet paper from day one.

Now, we only need the restaurant and cafe's back for a relaxing coffee and dinner time, as well as, healthy people walking around without the anxiety of a pandemic. As for the rest, I hope we all learned a valuable lesson when it comes to what needs to change

Portuguese people are very much on their own as long as you keep it to yourself and not bother them whatever you do.

You don't hear much about Portugal. Portugal is freedom. We both grew up partly in the Netherlands, we shouted out freedom but is there really freedom?

Before the Government announced the Lockdown, a lot of the people chose to stay at home already. You don't have to give these people instructions, they are simple and logical.

The government is so understanding that they announced the following before Easter: There will be extra controls. We know our people, they love being with their families during Easter.

The government advises not to go, but they will not be for sale with threats. They do not threaten their people as if little children and the people do not behave as spoiled little brats either

A moment for appreciation: We all should learn and realise that how we perceive a situation is how we live it. Being happy and worry-free is a choice. Just as being worried is also a lifestyle to live by.

These are not destinations

Measures have been taken, there is usually a line outside during groceries (in the meantime you can enjoy the weather outside because mostly the weather is awesome), you can go outside for a walk or visit someone. On the weekends there is more control than during the weekdays. For example, you will get addressed by the police when you are sunbathing in the park for instance, from what I witnessed.

Therefore, during this lockdown, that what should make us happy is that you get to spend everyday with your loved ones and do not waste time and environment for unnecessary work travels. Without the city rush, finally birds can be heard along with the waves from far away. Finally, what matters most is not what you achieve or fail, but the time you spend and memories you create. Finally, we went back to basic and learn that we can life without excessive shopping and buying stuff we don't even need. It ain't all that bad.

There are more things going on than just a virus. When we look around to other countries and what we hear and get, we are in Portugal well. Of course if the story's are true. However if we compare it with the Netherlands, we will still prefer Portugal.

And you know what they say, bad news always goes faster than good news. Have you heard anything about Portugal since the COVID-19, not really right?

In the meantime, one of us has moved to their own apartment during the COVID-19, painted the apartment, ordered furniture and still need to do many other things that can also be done with the Lockdown. Nothing is open a few small shops only but with connections here and there you will get a lot further.

Selin; What I personally miss would be sitting down for a coffee while strolling the streets. Although, our locals started to selling them to go (not so much a portuguese custom) but we are there to support the small local shops! Even in chaos Portugal can make you feel still alive and in peace... [specially now that are almost no people around. The earth is healing and animals have their spaces back, one of my greatest appreciations during this time. We make our lives as they are, we are responsible for the outcome. It is up to us to learn from this and make some changes for the better. I hope for humanity to heal, not physically but more mentally!

Zainab; The thing I personally miss is simple. That the subways are full again, that we are pushing each other to save the next metro, or that you sometimes no longer have a place to walk on the street in Lisbon (it can be quite busy). To be able that close to each other and not to worry. At the same time, I also enjoy how awesome it is to see the switch in technologie. Our generation went from playing the flippos or marbles outside to work from home? This is something that will not just happen again until the next revolution, war, whatever you want to call it or think it is. It's a temporary break, enjoy it. Everything comes to an end. Never forget that!



Jantien Derks, The Netherlands

Name: Noelia Land: Spain, Madrid Age: 32 Years old



Hello, my name is Noelia and I'm from Madrid (Spain), I'm 32 years old and have been confined for 37 days. My grandfather died 3 weeks ago in Galicia (northern part of the country) and I could not even go to say goodbye to him, when they ask: what is the first thing you will do when this is over?, I am clear, fire him as he deserves. It is true that there are good days and others not so good, I always try to be busy with things I like, makeup, photos, cooking, tidying cabinets, cleaning ... Or even without doing anything, which is also a good stop in this life rampant that we always carry. With my friends and my boyfriend I make video calls every day, my boy and I got caught all this away from each other, he with his parents and I with mine, but we are so strong that we can withstand this and more. There were days when the smile went away, but it is true that I have a character that does not allow me to be sad for a long time and I get over it, I know that something very good will happen to us after all this, for sure. Ah! I did not tell you, I am a fashion stylist, I do sessions for magazines and e-commerce sessions and of course now I cannot telework or work ... but my mind does not stop creating ideas for the future. We will get out of this little by little, we will be able to embrace all those we love and those who were left along the way, so be strong, encourage yourself and continue fighting this war that we had to live. a greeting from my home and a virtual hug.



My Covid Diary

As one of the initiators of The Covid Diary I got inspired to create my own Covid Diary as well. Day after day I was collecting stories from people all over the world. I didn't know them, but their warming way of contacting and reading their stories I felt like I was getting to know them. This connection was created, because they were willing to open up. That inspired me. They inspired me. I decided to share some of my own thoughts and feelings out of my Covid Diary as well. They may be not all as positive and shiny as you hope for, but they are real. And by sharing this, I honestly believe in the power of connecting with you and let you know that you are NOT alone in this battle. I'll stand with you. The Covid Diaries will stand with you!

Dear Covid Diary,

I don't like the way you are. Standing over there and looking at me with your blank pieces of paper. Waiting for me to write down about how I feel. Well I feel like a shitty rollercoaster.

Going up and down, laugh and cry, seeing the most horrible and amazing things at the same time, but no hugs or kisses are allowed.

I'm Insecure, out of control. I don't like that. I don't know where we all are going or how our life will ever look like again. I know nothing. You know nothing. Nobody knows anything.

I would love to dream about the time where we can truly laugh again. The days where we can kiss and make up, party like animals, going crazy and discover all kind of new places all over the world.

But dear diary, I am so afraid. Will that dream ever come true again? Is this how the world will look like again? Or will this be nothing more than a memory of the most amazing life we ever had?

With an insecure love,

Your Covid writer.

Hilde Mulder, 28 years old, Utrecht

2020 is gonna be my year
That is what everyone said
now they are all stuck inside their homes
and everyone is sad

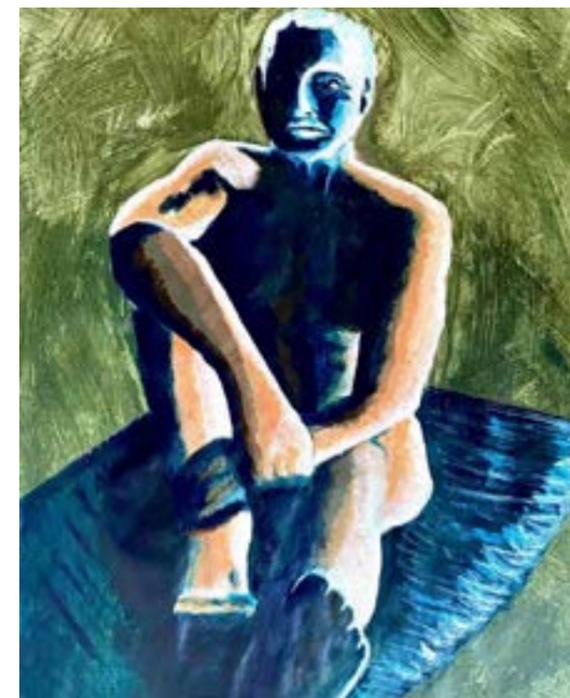
try to keep your head up though
atleast that is what I try to do
take this time to rest
because next summer you got
some catching up to do

work on yourself
your dreams
your passions
and your knowledge

so you can finally say after 2020
new year, new me

the best version of yourself
that the world did not expect to see

Rens Muller, 22 years old, Naarden



Max, 24 years old, The Netherlands



Victor Kagiorgis, 27 years old,
The Netherlands

Dear Covid,

I'm writing this letter to you. You're like a wildfire, destroying everything you touch, searching for more grounds to burn, searching for more dry parts to spread your flames onto.

Dear Covid, what else can I say about you? Nothing nice that's for sure. Except maybe one thing, you unite us; the whole world, united against the same enemy. Maybe after you're gone everyone will become kinder; kinder to themselves - each other - the nature. Maybe people will start to appreciate everything just a little bit more, even the little things, learn to take things more slowly and learn what's really important.

Or will we fall right back into our self destructive behaviors?

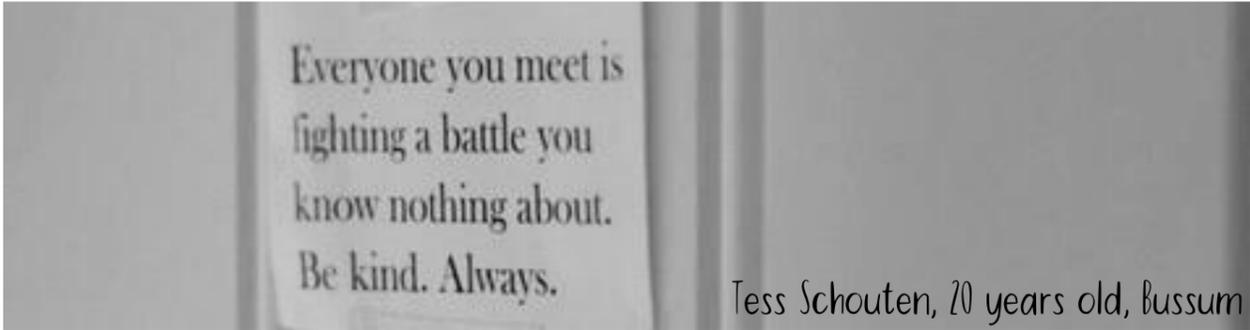
Dear Covid, as you can see there are a lot of maybes in my letter, because life;s unpredictable, YOU are unpredictable.

Maybe you will never leave, and we will have to learn to live and cope with a new world and a new lifestyle.

Dear Covid, I could go on and on with my maybes and what if's, but you're not worth it.
So this is my letter to you.

Dear Covid, I hope you leave rather soon than later. Until then we'll keep fighting.

Sincerely yours,



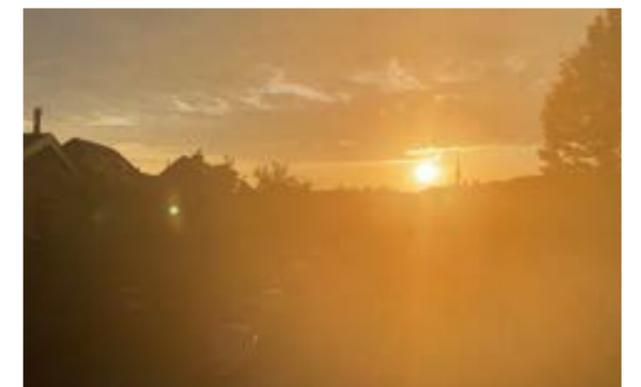
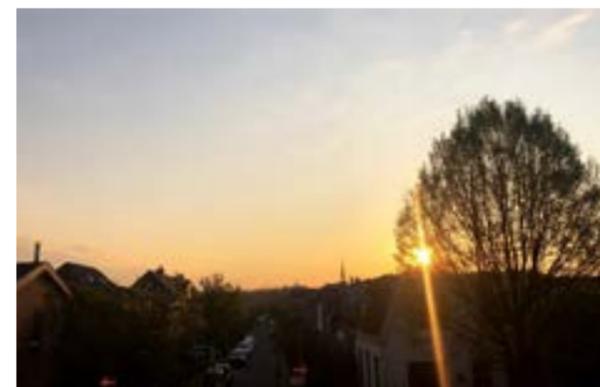
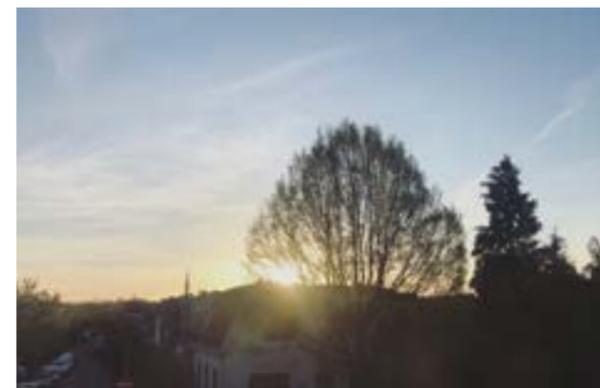
Everyone you meet is
fighting a battle you
know nothing about.
Be kind. Always.

Tess Schouten, 20 years old, Bussum

The smell of summer, The feeling of vacation and a warm spring sun, unfortunately that is not the first thing I think about when I wake up. A hopeless summer without parties, holidays and new encounters, this is difficult for me. Rules, and distance that is what is planned.

2020 is a strange year, for the first time something is not going as planned, not only for me but for the whole world. It is crazy to experience but at the same time also very special. For my internship project The Covid Diaries I have the honor, together with my fellow interns, to collect and bundle stories from all over the world. I do not experience this crazy time as negative, but as an educational moment.

One thing remains the same, the sun rising and setting every day. The sun cannot be stopped by a virus. The sun shines for everyone and everywhere. I take a picture of the same sun in the same place almost every day, to remind myself how beautiful she is.



Tinka Gieling, 20 years old, Bussum

Diagnosis

I went to the doctor and got diagnosed with
an empty city inside me.

The streets are broad and mostly clean.

Trees are few and far between.

No cars and bikes are parked on the street.

Where did the tourists go?

They went back to their homes, it seems so.

We live so distant, in this world we live 6 feet apart

Loneliness inside of us

I went to the doctor and got diagnosed with
a lonely heart.

The streets are empty, no one's inside the bar

The only noise is a patrolling police car

The doctor went to city and diagnosed it
with being empty

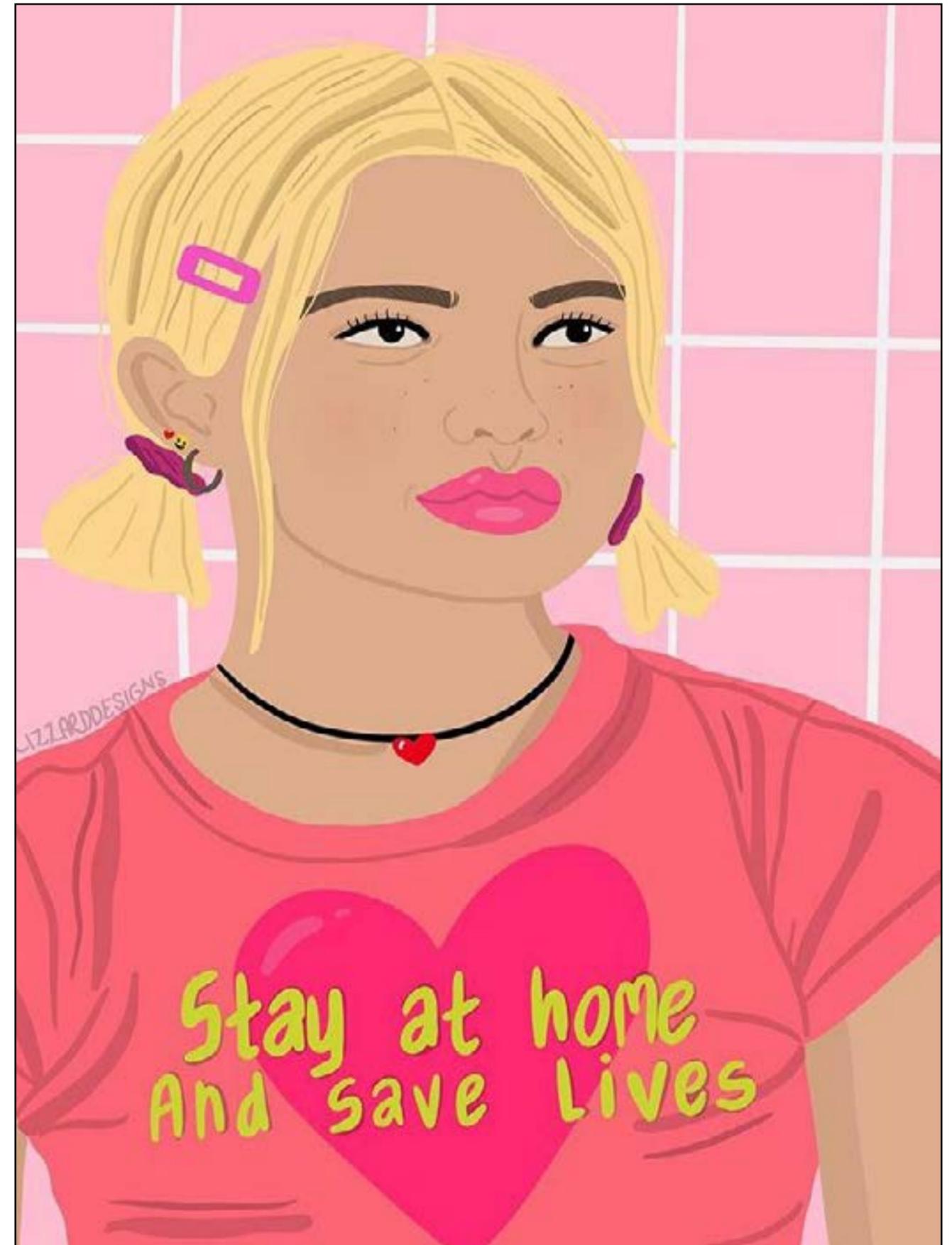
The streets are empty, no one to see

but that's exactly what the doctor wanted after working 11 hours on the 11

So stay at home, let the streets be lonely and
make sure the the diagnosis of the empty city shall be the only



Cheyenne Fiene, 20 years old, Amsterdam



Lizzy, The Netherlands

Thank you!

When we started The Covid Diaries we never thought it would be this fun and this successful. But the opposite has been proven and that could not be done without any help. Therefore we would like to thank some people; the writers of the great entries. All the artists who made their beautiful artwork available to us. And every reader who has taken the time to check the art & stories we put online. Thank you very much!



Julia, The Netherlands

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