

Lockdown diaries: Ignacio, firefighter on duty & Spanish national lacrosse captain

The people in my town are making handmade masks to help doctors, nurses, policemen, and firemen. I got one customized from my neighbor and it made me so happy and has made me feel safer at work.

Providers of essential public services are working round-the-clock to maintain order during the COVID-19 crisis. Ignacio, a fireman, reported that his team of firefighters is taking extra precautions to protect their health while saving lives.

Ignacio “Nacho” Farjas Gómez is a 26-year-old Madrid-native working as a fireman in Huesca and during peacetime acts as captain of both the Spanish national lacrosse team and Madrid’s local lacrosse team, the former of which has granted him the opportunity to travel for international competitions in locations such as Gloucester, Massachusetts, and Netanya, Israel. While walking his dog in the vacant streets of Huesca, he befriended a stray kitten that followed him home and joined his family. He named it Covid.

What was your life like just before the lockdown vs. today?



I used to live in Madrid before the lockdown. As a fireman, I work 24-hour shifts and then I have 4 days off, so I was able to live in Madrid and commute to work in Huesca, up in the Pyrenees. I used to workout 4-5 times a week and play lacrosse with my club team (Madrid lacrosse) twice per week. I also had tryout weekends with the national team.

Now everything has changed, I relocated to the countryside with my fiancée to be closer to the fire department where I work because commuting between Madrid and Huesca would be impossible during the lockdown. I adapted a room in our new house into a gym so I can keep fit for my job and for the lacrosse championships. The upcoming European cup was supposed to be next July but it has been postponed.



How has the lockdown impacted your industry?

I continue to work, as firemen have to be constantly prepared in case of an emergency. The current situation makes our already high-pressure tasks even more complicated. At the fire station, I have to be a safe distance from my colleagues so we don't get infected from each other, so we feel lonely during the shifts. During car accidents, we have to try to save people's lives and at the same time protect ourselves from potential coronavirus infection.

On a particularly rough day, we got a call from social services saying that a woman, who was diagnosed with the virus, was on the verge of suicide. When we arrived at her building we saw the woman in her window, on the phone with her

psychotherapist.

We were told that she wanted to jump off the window because she could no longer cope with isolation and the symptoms she was suffering. We covered ourselves with protective gear and were prepared to quickly scale the facade from the roof to the window in case the psychotherapist was unsuccessful in her attempt to persuade the woman not to jump.

Police got in position inside the building to give us access. The psychotherapist bought us a lot of time but ultimately informed us that she couldn't calm her patient so we had to act. The intervention started with the psychotherapist distracting the patient while we descended from the roof. When we got close to the woman we pushed her inside of the apartment, at the same time the police broke down the door. We left her to continue speaking with her psychotherapist, the police, and other doctors.

Afterward, we disinfected our equipment in the street before returning to the fire station. It was a challenge to coordinate this operation with everyone involved, as everyone's faces were obstructed by masks.

Have you noticed any acts of kindness or uplifting things recently?

The people in my town are amazing. They are making handmade masks due to their shortage to help doctors, nurses, policemen, and firemen. So I got one customized from my neighbor. It made me so happy and has made me feel safer at

work.

During the lockdown, I was walking my dog and I found a kitten that liked us and followed us back home. My fiancée and I adopted it and we decided to name it "Covid."

What goals are you hoping to achieve as our time in lockdown continues?

I will keep up with training and studying as I want to get promoted. It is important to remain focused when spending the entire day at home. I like to have a routine and stick to it.

What's the first thing you'll do once this lockdown is over?

My fiancée and I will have pizza at Lisanderella, our favorite Italian restaurant in Madrid. Then I will play lacrosse to burn all the extra calories I have been eating during the lockdown.

Do you have any tips for how we can help those in need?

Try to keep in contact with friends and family via Skype. Help your eldest neighbors with the groceries. Try to cheer everyone up from your window or balcony with music, dancing or playing bingo.

Who are you in quarantine with? Any advice for people in a similar situation?

I am using this opportunity to have quality time with my fiancée and go deeper into our relationship. We have plenty of time to plan our future wedding. I highly recommend spending this time to plan future trips and events to avoid overthinking.

Check out all [Madrid lockdown stories](#)

If you'd like to get involved and share a compelling story from this ongoing chapter of history, reach out to Daphne Binioris (daphne@veracontent.com) and Daniel Catalan (a96039@aup.edu)

Food4Heroes: Madrid restaurants come together to cook and deliver free meals directly to hospitals

We're an open platform with over 90 partners among restaurants and brands. We cook and distribute food for free, to support our health care workers in the fight against COVID-19. Because our heroes wear white coats and our

motivation is born from their effort – Food4Heroes

We all know that Madrid is one of the hardest-hit cities in the world right now, and restaurants have had to shut their doors to the public until further notice (sans delivery and takeaway). But that hasn't stopped them from opening up their kitchens and doing their part to make this situation better for all.

Today we'd like to give a well-deserved shout-out to the volunteer-based initiative [Food4Heroes](#), in which over 90 Madrid establishments have come together to prepare meals and deliver them daily to hundreds of medical professionals in hospitals across the city (and the country) – especially to those working in ICU and ER.

Food4Heroes started on March 13th when the CEOs of the restaurant group [Grosso Napoletano](#) sent a WhatsApp message to all their contacts so they could deliver pizzas to Madrid's hospitals. It went viral – hundreds of messages from medical professionals came in from dozens of different hospitals – which motivated even more partners to volunteer and join forces to show their support.



Managers of [Grupo Larrumba](#) restaurant group, one of the participants in #Food4Heroes

Now, Food4Heroes has become an open platform with a simple format: health care workers contact the group by email (info@grossonapoletano.com) to tell them what they need. The group collaborates with its partners to make it happen, and then they create WhatsApp groups with the health care workers to coordinate time and place of delivery. The food trucks drop off the meals outside the hospitals, normally near the ER doors, and the health care workers go out to pick it up.

It's incredible that through WhatsApp and solidarity, hot meals are being delivered to hospitals daily. As we can see from Food4Heroes, despite all the hardship that's going on, there's a lot of good that's happening as well. This is one of the many heartwarming ways in which the city is expressing its admiration and appreciation towards hospital workers, such as the citywide clap every evening (with the designated hashtag #aplausosanitario).

I found out about Food4Heroes from a member of [Grupo Larrumba](#), one of the participating restaurant groups, who also sent me the images in this article.

Follow [Food4Heroes](#) on Instagram to get to know more about their partners and initiatives, and to show your support!

(Source: [Food4Heroes' social media](#) & [Profesional Horeca](#))

Do you know of any other initiatives helping to make this situation better for all?

Get in touch with us at daphne@veracontent.com and a96039@aup.edu

See stories from our [Madrid Lockdown Series](#) here

Lockdown diaries: Lauren, from long distance to lockdown

My advice to anyone under lockdown with a significant other is to try to understand that this is a scary time and you're both sure to experience a range of emotions.

Lauren Bonheim is a globe-trotter, digital marketing consultant and the founder of [Lauren on Location](#), a travel site that has taken a huge hit following the outbreak. Lauren has been living on and off in Madrid for the past six years, but recently moved back in January to join her boyfriend who was relocated to the Spanish capital for work. Madrid is Lauren's true happy place and no matter where her adventures abroad take her, her heart always leads right back here.

What was your life like just before the lockdown vs. today?

I officially moved back to Madrid just a little over a month before the Coronavirus came to Madrid and the lockdown was announced. I work remotely, and so I had just set up my home office and was getting used to working from the quiet comfort of my new home, in my loungewear sans make up. After almost a year of nonstop travel, I was loving the alone time to focus in on my work and catch up on delayed projects.



Police checkpoint outside my apartment

Then the lockdown happened. My once solo working environment is now shared with my boyfriend, who is also working from home. He works in sales and is constantly on the phone. All. Day. My once calm and quiet sanctuary has been invaded by ringing cellphones and noisy conference calls. It's been extra hard to concentrate, but we're working together to find

solutions, like using headsets for calls and designating separate work spaces.

Before the lockdown, I also left my apartment at least twice a day. I usually start my mornings early, either by going on a run or attending a workout class. I also work from a [coworking space](#) or a café once a week, and have Spanish classes first thing in the morning twice a week. So, being stuck inside involuntarily, without the option to go for a walk, or meet a friend for coffee is obviously much more restrictive than before.

Even as someone who's used to spending immense amounts of time within my apartment, these 12+ days in home quarantine have been extremely taxing.

How has the lockdown impacted your industry?

The travel and tourism industry has taken a huge hit following the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic. Many of my friends and family who work within the industry have had their salaries reduced, been forced to take unpaid vacation time, or even been laid off. My travel site, along with many other bloggers I know, is seeing a major dip in traffic, and most press trips and sponsored collabs have been postponed until further notice.

Do you have any tips for how we can help

those in need?



Takeout from [Mazal bagel shop](#)

While this situation is affecting everyone, there are certain industries and small businesses that are really suffering

right now. Their business's cash flow has been abruptly cut off and if they're going to make it through this, they need our help. If it's allowed, order takeout or delivery from local restaurants. And if you can afford it, reach out to your favorite small business owners like your yoga teacher or physical trainer, etc., and offer to buy a gift certificate or front them the money for a future service like a yoga class.

Have there been any comical moments in this unprecedented time?

I'm very fortunate that my partner is a total clown and keeps me laughing daily. Even when things get stressful, tense or scary, we've been trying to combat the negative feelings with silliness and laughter. We've realized that since this whole situation is out of our control, all we can really do is focus in on our happiness and make it a priority in the coming weeks. Whether that means an impromptu tickle attack or Twizzler war, or blasting reggaeton and dancing around the kitchen, our plan is to keep on laughing.

How are you coping?

I'm taking my lockdown day by day. There are days I wake up energized, motivated and ready to crush my to-do list. Other days I wake up feeling fatigued, anxious, and can hardly muster the motivation to get out of bed. It's been a real emotional rollercoaster.

The best way I'm finding to cope through this quarantine is to listen to my body and not judge my feelings. I'm trying my

best to be nice to myself and to others. When I'm feeling productive, I work my way through this list of [100+ home activities](#) I created last week, and when I'm feeling low, I let myself rest.

What goals are you hoping to achieve as our time in lockdown continues?

I have such a long running to-do list of things I'd like to accomplish during this lockdown, but my main focus is to simply maintain my normal routine of exercising, working and eating healthy, the best that I can. My other goals include developing my meditating practice, getting some major spring cleaning done, and spending quality time with my boyfriend (although that one's kind of been forced on us!)

What's the first thing you'll do once this lockdown is over?

Go for a run. The first thing I will do is throw on my running shoes, plug into a good podcast and take a long run around the Canal track. Running is my "me time" and what allows me to clear my head and combat stress. Being pent up inside, and not able to run, especially now, has been extremely taxing.

Who are you in quarantine with? Any advice for people in your similar

situation?

I'm currently in quarantine with my boyfriend. We recently transitioned from being in a long-distance relationship (*him here in Spain and me in NY*), to living together. And now we're under lockdown. It's been quite the interesting adjustment, but for now we're fairing the abrupt contrast pretty well. We've made a list of things we'd like to do together over the next few weeks, from recipes we'd like to try, to home improvement tasks we'd like to tackle, and are trying to use this time to connect on a deeper level and get to know each other better.

My advice to anyone currently under lockdown with a significant other is to try to understand that this is a scary time and you're both sure to experience a range of emotions. It's important to be patient with one another, support each other during both the high moments and the low moments, and give each other space when needed.

Another thing I've found helps a lot when it comes to working from home together, is to discuss a plan and set boundaries before things start to get tense. Doing things like designating separate work spaces and setting daily working hours, will help you stay focused, motivated, and on the same page as your partner.

Follow [@laurenonlocation on IG](#)

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Lockdown diaries: Melanie, international advisor and co-founder of Volition

As an owner of a small business working with other small businesses, it's been 24/7 crisis management and creative ideation mode, while also transitioning to working in a shared space and making sure to take care of my health. It's been quite a learning experience!

From journaling every morning to actually turning FaceTime *off* at times, Melanie shares ways she's learned how to cope with the drastic life changes most of us are experiencing right now, as well as how we can help those in need. And her message to her hometown of Vancouver: please lock it down!

Melanie Ewan is originally from Canada and has been living in Madrid since November 2018. She's a Co-founder and Managing Partner of [Volition](#), an international advisory firm that works with startups and entrepreneurs. She's also Lead Researcher for [Women in Tech World](#), a Canadian nonprofit dedicated to supporting and advancing women in tech.

What was your life like just before the lockdown vs. today?

While I have worked 100% remote for almost two years now, my company, business partner, and our team are all based in Western Canada, and while I often work with clients remotely and launched a virtual masterclass in January, most of our services and events are held in person. In fact, I had a Women's Pitch Night Madrid booked at Google for Startups Campus on March 11th, right when things were starting to ramp up here in Madrid.

There are two main ways in which my life has shifted since the lockdown (and even right before). Firstly, I am now sharing my workspace with my husband, who is working remotely for the first time in his life. More on that later... But secondly, there has been a major shift in my work life.

How has the lockdown impacted your industry and work life?

Given that we work with entrepreneurs and small businesses, mostly in-person, COVID-19 has added this extra layer of work and anxiety that permeates my workday. While we have been shifting and pivoting quickly over the past two weeks, today I finally sat down and drew out our response plan, including everything from stating who we want to be as a business during this time and what we want to bring to the community, to how I can support my team at this time.

The first thing for us to address was moving all services and events virtual, and how to communicate this to our communities across Canada and Europe. We had never held our signature event, our Pitch Nights, virtually, so this created a steep learning curve for the entire team. The next step has been to figure out our longer-term communications plan and how we can adapt and mitigate the effects of COVID-19 both for our business and the businesses that we work with and support.

I do feel incredibly fortunate to still have work at this time – many in my life no longer do. That said, as an owner of a small business working with other small businesses, it's been 24/7 crisis management and creative ideation mode, while also transitioning to working in a shared space and making sure to take care of my health. It's been quite a learning experience!

What does the street look like?

To be honest, the neighbourhood that I live in, Moncloa, is always pretty quiet relative to most other areas of Madrid. The most noticeable difference is that everyone is walking around solo with a distinct air of quiet determination – they are on a mission to get to and from somewhere as quickly as possible. And there are no kids, no random bursts of childish laughter or chatter from students on their way home from school. All you see are adults and dogs.

Have you noticed any acts of kindness or uplifting things recently?



As I'm sure others have mentioned, the 8pm balcony applause is always incredibly heartwarming – it makes you feel like you're a part of something, that you're a little less alone in all of this.

Also, our rooftop area – which we can see from our window –

has been the scene of a few uplifting moments, such as an elderly couple using the space to get in their steps for the day, or a family setting up chairs to be entertained by their kids, who had seemingly concocted a mini dance show for the occasion.

How are you coping?

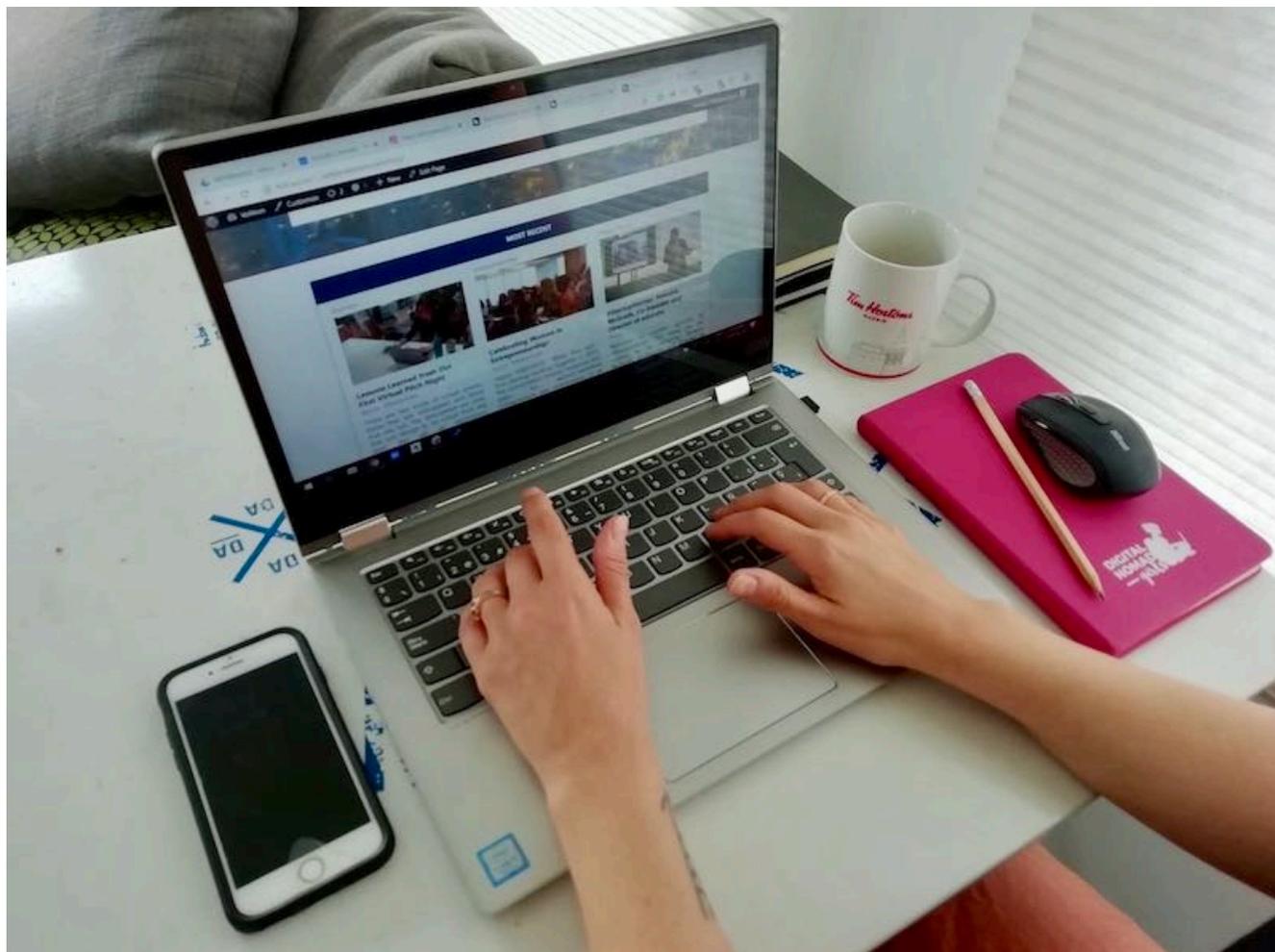
COVID-19 has made my life 10x busier, so for me, that has meant being more intentional than usual about my wellness routine (10-30 mins of yoga using an app, journaling, and 10 mins of reading). The journal prompts that have helped me include: what am I feeling, what do I want to feel, what I can control, what I can't control, and my intention for the day.

As an introvert, carving out alone and quiet time has also been important this week, which seems funny to say during a lockdown. Thing is, in addition to sharing the home space 24/7, my phone has been buzzing continuously, and with daily meetings and virtual events throughout the week, by day 7 of lockdown I was so tired from 'facetime' that I canceled as much as possible, stayed off the news, and curled up in bed by 8:30pm.

Whether you're an introvert or not, I highly recommend carving out personal time in your schedule – a time where you do something just for you, without guilt or judgment.

Who are you in quarantine with? Any

advice for people in your similar situation?



On the topic of sharing space, while I can't imagine what it must be like to be a caregiver at this time, I can provide some insights on the couple's front. The moment we knew that we would have to share the space (barely a 1 bedroom flat), we sat down and compared our daily schedule. We revisited our habits and needs for space, times we were likely to have meetings, and how to work with our very different eating schedules. It took compromises on both sides and a commitment to respecting each others' space and not being offended by the need for alone time.

We agreed on some ground rules, and have also talked through how we can support and motivate each other in ways that we need. Each day we talk about what each of us wants to achieve that day and what our schedule looks like. We also have a food plan in place so that we don't have to think much about that – on the food front I admit I am super lucky as my husband loves to cook and food, tea, and wine just magically appear by my side 2-3 times a day. I had to adjust my eating schedule for this, but was more than happy to make the “sacrifice”!

The key thing for us was to lean into our individual strengths and then just communicate, communicate, communicate. **Earplugs and random dance parties have also helped.**

What's the first thing you'll do once the lockdown is over?

Go out for food. Even though we don't eat out that often, we have already been dreaming about our favourite restaurants and just lounging on a terrace in the sun, wine glass in hand. I have a list of all of the places that I want to visit as soon as we can, and I'm also foreseeing lots of picnics.

If you could tell the government one thing right now, what would it be?

That's a good question. When everything first started happening I really struggled to find resources in English that clearly captured what was going on in Spain and what the government was recommending. While I have been learning

Spanish, it's not up to snuff for situations like this, so this gap caused some anxiety for me. Even now my main source of information is [El País English](#) (Twitter account). Thankfully, I have good friends here who have sent me the most urgent news, and Google Translate for Twitter is fantastic.

I know that offering translations of official announcements, updates and recommendations is not at the top of the priority list, but it is important to ensure that all those in your country are informed. I also know that this has been an issue in many countries – my home country of Canada was just called out for not providing sign language translations of urgent announcements. Just something to consider to ensure that urgent communications are accessible for all.

Have there been any comical moments in this unprecedented time?

Of course! These days I seek out moments of laughter, and my partner often has *The Tonight Show: At Home Edition* or *Trevor Noah at Home* on during our lunch break. My favourite comical moments are the random things that we end up doing in our daily life. For instance, recently I started hopping around the kitchen (because, why not) and Tom decided to start copying my every move...it turned into a ridiculous game that took up a good 5 minutes, got us some exercise, and left us in a pile of giggles. It made no sense, but that was the beauty of it.

Do you have any tips for how we can help

those in need?

There are so many ways! First off, ask what you can do to help – ask your community, ask your friends and family, and truly listen to what they say. If you can't directly help, often someone in your network can.

I recently reached out to my community to see what they needed help with, and learned that what many need most is access to a support network and resources to overcome unexpected burdens – financial, childcare, mental health. [Here is one resource I wrote up](#) to give back to my community (Canadian startups and entrepreneurs).

You can also help small businesses and brands by showcasing them on your socials and blog, buying gift cards, providing opportunities to continue to network and learn, and giving them reviews and testimonials.

There are so many other ways to help those in need. I am very aware of those who are being locked in with abusive partners, for instance, as well as those who are struggling with their mental health at this time. Research and share local resources for these people, and check in with everyone in your network.

What's going on in your hometown and would you like to send them a message?

Honestly, now that we're in lockdown here in Madrid, my daily dose of anxiety comes from my hometown of Vancouver. I worry

for my friends and family as they aren't yet in lockdown and many residents aren't taking social distancing seriously.

My message is for the provincial and municipal governments – please lock it down! And make sure that support is in place and accessible for those who are in difficult situations with their work – if both parents are 'essential service workers', find a way to ensure childcare is readily available so that grandparents aren't taking on that burden. Make it easy for employers and employees to make health a priority. Learn from others' mistakes!

You can connect with Melanie Ewin on [LinkedIn](#) & [Twitter](#)

Check out all [Madrid lockdown stories](#)

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Lockdown diaries: Terry from Desperate Literature Bookshop

The amount of love the bookshop has got from the community is really sustaining. Lots of messages and lots of people ordering stock. Thank you everybody.

Terry Craven is a bookseller, painter and writer who runs [Desperate Literature](#), a community bookshop that has opened its doors every day for the past six years in the heart of Madrid. It's been tough to close, but they've also received a lot of love and support. Terry thinks that solidarity and finding gratitude during this time is very important, as are Zoom meetings, dancing, dressing like you're going on a third date...and having a cat.

Desperate Literature is now shipping books during the quarantine and you can enquire [here](#). They also run a [literary prize for short fiction](#) running until March 29th, so spread the word!

What was your life like just before the lockdown vs. today?

Have you noticed any acts of kindness or uplifting things recently?

I think finding gratitude is pretty important in such times, right, so yes, today I heard a few conversations between neighbours, over the streets we were talking to the *correos* (mailmen). People who, in all likelihood, have never spoken before. Solidarity in these times is very important and it shakes me out of The Fear, absolutely. I got a big rush of happiness hearing those folks talking. A blackbird has started visiting us in the shop, and stealing my cat's food, too (I live in the same building). That's pretty joyful. Honestly, though, the amount of love the bookshop has got from the community is really sustaining. Lots of messages and lots of people ordering stock. Thank you everybody.

Have there been any comical moments in this unprecedented time?

My hair is getting pretty comical. That said, I think the Mad Max meets the 1980s German footballer look is probably a shoe-in for early summer.

How are you coping?

Dance every day. Dress like I'm going on a... mmm... third date maybe. Zoom meetings with anybody and everybody. Reaching out to people who might be in need of community or help. Trying to have a rhythm. Turning off my computer around 10pm. Calming the nervous system (without booze), because I have a tendency

to be in fight or flight in order “to survive”, but that doesn't help.

Be kind to myself when I fail to do the above, which is every day.

What goals are you hoping to achieve as our time in lockdown continues?

Honestly, I'm a tiny bit weary of being too goal-oriented during this period, both personally and politically. Sure I've a few books I'm working on and the real goal is to keep the bookshop alive, but otherwise if I can stay calm and try to be present then I'm doing ok.

How has the lockdown impacted your industry?

Enormously. So many booksellers I know have been fired, not to mention folks in publishing just deathly anxious about their positions. Any of us bookshops built around community, especially those of us without an enormous online retail presence, well, we're both financially and emotionally isolated. But I can see across the board, over in the UK as well as here in Spain, that indie booksellers are adapting. The folks at [Burley Fisher](#) in London are doing an amazing job (their podcast has the best jingle I've ever heard, not to mention the rest of the work they're doing).

Of course we (Desperate Literature) have a very specific problem: so many of the anglophones of Madrid have gone home, meaning that even when we open it will be interesting to see who's left. There's a lot of questions to be asked about the sustainability of teaching programs that can benefit from folks travelling across the world to teach, who are signed into temporary contracts with very little security and promptly dropped when things get tough.

It's a problem of precarity across the board and the whole point of working with community is to fight against it. If nothing else, we at Desperate Literature can ask ourselves how we do better, now and after. So yeah maybe that's also a goal for something to come from this period.

What's the first thing you'll do once this lockdown is over?

Sit in the sun, reading. Hug my friends. Hug my friends in the sun.

Do you have any tips for how we can help those in need?

I don't know any more than anybody else, but I'm just trying to call around and make sure we're all doing ok. If you're part of a community, there's the question of how to build up financial backstops, how to come together to stop evictions. Talk to people, I suppose I'd say. But as I've hinted, that's tough because the main thing I personally have to fight

against is my own desire to hide away and worry.

Who are you in quarantine with? Any advice for others?

At home: my cat.

My advice: get a cat.

If you could tell the government one thing right now, what would it be?

Stop rents.

What's going on in your hometown and would you like to send them a message?

The UK has just entered a full lockdown, and the only thing I'd say is that it has taken me 11 days to start to get to stability, so stick with it. That and I love them.

- *You can follow Terry on [Instagram](#) and find all of Desperate Literature's social media channels and info on [their website](#)*

- *Also read my previous article about [Desperate](#)*

[Literature: So much more than a bookshop](#)

- [Please share their Literary Prize for Short Fiction](#) across all social media channels and spread the word to anyone who you think would like to apply. The deadline is March 29th, two days from now!

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Lockdown diaries: Love in the time of Corona can blossom too (anonymous)

In the week preceding the lockdown, Nancy* entered a clandestine relationship with her coworker Ira* and they embarked on a romantic getaway to a rural house in his home

country and were there when the state of emergency was declared. With abundant wine and clean air in a serene location removed from society, they are exploring their feelings for each other away from the prying eyes of their colleagues.

Nancy is a 20-something-year-old who has been living in Madrid for two years. She pivoted away from teaching and became a copywriter at the international firm where she met Ira. Their fondness towards each other has escalated from covert cigarette breaks to safeguarding each other as the world crumbles around them.

*At the request of the subjects, their names have been changed.

What was your life like just before the lockdown vs. today?

Before the lockdown, my life was pretty average. I had recently broken up with my ex boyfriend/*pareja de hecho* with whom I still technically share a flat in Madrid. I've started getting involved romantically with my colleague Ira after months of playful banter and subtle glances.

Our team has been encouraging us to get together for a while now, but we've been wanting to take it slowly to avoid outside pressure. They make on-the-nose jokes about us as they've speculated that we've hooked up already. They're an intuitive and nosey bunch. I look forward to finally coming clean and telling them everything. We plan on sending flowers to my

manager as she's the one who first introduced us when I joined the team.



Now, I'm quarantined in a serene rural location with Ira, which we fled to after mutually declaring our feelings for each other. Our respective living situations in Madrid are less than ideal as they're not shared with people we would want to endure a strict quarantine with. We made the split-

second decision to flee Madrid to visit his parents at their rural house in his home country.

I wasn't imagining the lockdown would last this long, and I had assumed I could easily get back to Spain if needed, but now it seems like I'm here in this countryside paradise until Semana Santa at least.

Thankfully, everything is working out. The anxiety I experienced on the flight was insane, I am genuinely happy to be where I am. We have more space and fresh air than in Madrid and are in a place with few cases of the virus and with enough wine stockpiled for the apocalypse. There is little else to do outside of teleworking, siestas, and NSFW activities.

Have there been any comical moments in this unprecedented time?

Right now, I feel like my entire life is one romantic comedy a la "Love in a time of Corona." Since our coworkers remain in the dark, it's funny when they talk to us about each other while we're sitting next to each other.

We set up our teleworking stations in different rooms so that we could conference with our colleagues without blowing our cover, and it's always fun trying to playfully distract the other without anyone finding out.

How are you coping?



Wine. Lots of wine. Otherwise, talking to my friends back in Madrid and spending quality time with Ira and his parents, practicing their language, and helping out around the country house when I'm not clocked into work. I wouldn't call it "coping" though, as I am enjoying the beautiful countryside with someone whose companionship I savor.

What goals are you hoping to achieve as our time in lockdown continues?

Right now all of this feels surreal, but I'm beginning to get

a workout routine, and hopefully, I'll learn more of his language.

Otherwise, I am so excited to see where this quarantine takes my new relationship. So far, it's been amazing and we're learning so much about each other that would have taken months to learn under regular circumstances. I don't doubt this will set the foundation for a relationship that is solid, full of trust, and long-lasting.

What's the first thing you'll do once this lockdown is over?

See my best friend and go out for drinks and spill all of the tea about what can only be described as a 21st-century romcom. We will dabble in 4/20-friendly fun as these resources are beyond our reach at this time.

Any advice for people in a similar situation?

My biggest piece of advice is to communicate with those around you. Ira and I haven't had much time to set relationship boundaries and guidelines and now we're thrown into this situation together where we are learning as we go along. Thankfully we're both strong communicators so that isn't too difficult for us but it's unprecedented for both of us to go from 0 to 100 so quickly with a new partner.

Make sure to take some “you time.” It’s difficult to be outgoing and engaged every second. In the mornings I always take time for myself to get ready for the day, despite not actually needing to go to work or leave the house. I listen to political podcasts that allow me to remain an informed and socially conscious citizen while being so far removed from society.

We’re also lucky because his parents’ property is set up with a separate building for their guests, so “adult time” isn’t restricted and I can go and hide for a few hours if I become overwhelmed by a language I don’t speak and people that I’ve only recently met in an environment that I am still adapting to.

Have you noticed any acts of kindness or uplifting things recently?

Recently, at the grocery store, with lines out the door, I saw several people make way for seniors and the elderly to let them inside first. It was cold and raining, and to avoid crowds inside shoppers needed to queue outside and had to wait patiently to be granted access. It was a human moment witnessing people let those more vulnerable to the elements enter first.

If you could tell the government one thing right now, what would it be?

Don’t let economic factors drive your policy. The cost of

human life is far more important. Keep the quarantine going for as long as necessary, because even one infected person can prolong the threat.

My hometown in the USA has no cases, but it's spreading in my home state. To everyone in my hometown, don't be stupid. Even if the mayor doesn't specifically call on people to isolate, do so. We've seen what can happen in a short period of time if people don't take this seriously, don't let your situation get as bad as it is in Europe.

Check out all [Madrid lockdown stories](#)

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Lockdown diaries: Dr. Victor de Benito Vellisca, bravely attending to COVID patients at a hospital in Leganés,

Madrid

There will be many opportunities to serve your communities in the aftermath of this crisis, but for now, stay at home.

A shortage of medical aprons has forced some of Madrid's doctors to wear garbage bags while attending to patients, says Dr. Victor de Benito Vellisca, a medical professional with 40+ years of experience, currently working directly with COVID-19 patients at a hospital in Leganés. He can't even go near his family without a mask on. And he urges us all to stay home.

While Victor was a surgeon for most of his career, he is now working in a primary care unit, which has granted him insight into how the Spanish healthcare system functions as a whole. He says the medical community is working round-the-clock to bring this crisis to an end. They hear our daily applause at 8 PM as they bravely serve their communities.

* Victor's son, who shares his name, arranged this interview, translating and transcribing his father's answers.

How has your life changed since the lockdown began?

My life has changed drastically. I can't come closer than one meter to my wife, and when we're near, I have to wear a mask. I can't meet my children at home to avoid infecting each other. My life now consists of working in the morning and

spending the afternoon at home.

What goals are you hoping to achieve as our time in lockdown continues?

My daily goals are to stay healthy to avoid infecting my wife. It is crucial for me to continue assisting my patients who are depending on me for their treatments. The medical community is working hard to find a solution to this problem and I am going in every day and doing my part.

How has the lockdown impacted your industry?

We are overwhelmed with work. We are all under pressure and I have the feeling that I am not achieving as much as I would hope to. The strain on staff and the lack of supplies are apparent.

Have you noticed any acts of kindness or uplifting things recently?

Yes, I have noticed that the population is grateful to healthcare professionals. When we go on call to their homes or they come to see us, they don't stop thanking us for our work. The cheering at 8 PM every day is heard and appreciated by me and my colleagues.



Image from [@lablfoto](#)

What's the first thing you'll do once this lockdown is over?

The first thing I'll do will be to kiss and hug my wife. It pains us that we cannot be close while this crisis is happening. I'll also meet my daughter and hug and kiss her. I will greet my friends and people I know in the street by shaking their hands and I will congratulate my colleagues for the accomplishments of their work.

Do you have any tips for how we can help those in need?

There will be many opportunities to serve your communities in the aftermath of this crisis, but for now, stay at home.

Who are you in quarantine with? Any advice for people in a similar situation?

I am in quarantine with my wife. I would recommend that people in quarantine with their spouses find ways to keep themselves entertained to release stress, such as reading, watching TV, communicating with friends and chatting over the phone.

If you could tell the government one thing right now, what would it be?

The top priority right now is to control the spread of the virus. I would ask the government to be less lenient towards people who are breaking the lockdown rules in order to avoid an increasing death toll.

Do you have a message for your community?

My message to my neighbors would be to remain patient, stay strong and control the spreading of the virus. We hear you on your balconies at 8 PM, applauding us as we work for a solution to this problem.

My main tip is that people refrain from leaving their house except for when buying food and going to the pharmacy. Being

confined at home is the best way to isolate the virus and avoid it continuing to spread. Let's hope that soon this nightmare will end once and for all.

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Lockdown diaries: Alan, currently writing a book about modern day Spain

It's ok to be stressed, and it's normal to be losing it. Most of us are. But we are doing it together.

It's ok to be stressed, and it's normal to be losing it. Most of us are. But we are doing it together," says Alan McGuire, who used to be a psychiatric nurse back in the UK. Now a writer and English teacher here in Madrid, he's struggling to use this time to finish his book about modern day Spain. It's hard to concentrate. He's also observed that the grey pollution cloud above Madrid, known locally as the 'boina', has lifted off the city, but the clouds in people's

minds are growing by the day.

You can read Alan McGuire's written works [here](#).

What was your life like just before the lockdown vs. today?

When the lockdown started, I had already begun to prepare to work from home a bit. In a previous life I was a psychiatric nurse, so I had a feeling from watching the news that it would get bad. Seeing how China locked down the country and stopped their entire economy, the largest in the world, to try and stop the virus, it made me think. Then when Italy got hit, I had a feeling it would reach Spain. My wife's friend that I normally tease for overreacting agreed with me, that confirmed my suspicion that things were getting more surreal in the world (We have already had Brexit and Trump). Being a nurse you always assume the worst will happen, however I never expected it to be this bad.

If two weeks ago you told me I had to spend a month at home I would have thought '*great, I can finish writing my book and I don't have to see people or get interrupted*'. But since it has actually happened, it hasn't been great. It is getting worse by the day. I find it hard to concentrate and end up staring at bad news all day. To top it off I haven't written a thing. I have to say, this has started out as a depressing article!

What does the street look like?



I live in a commuter town south of Madrid called Leganes. Normally it means leaving a night out early to get the last train home or travelling for an hour on the last metro back at 1am. However now it is nice to be away from the busy centre.

I have a small green area with a woodland near me where I can walk my dog India. It has a great view of Madrid, but just looking at it makes me feel desolate. Knowing all those people are cooped up stressed in their houses, worried about their jobs and homes more than their health. I think it is a sad reflection of our society. The grey pollution cloud above Madrid, known locally as the 'boina' or beret, has lifted off the city but the clouds in people's minds are growing by the day.

Have you noticed any random acts of kindness or uplifting things recently?



I saw two dog walkers talking to each other outside my flat and one of the older neighbours started shouting at them to not stand close. I thought 'good on ya'.

I have also seen the local street cleaners putting out a large sign outside their depot, saying thank you for the applause that happens every night. **The applause is ramping up here with music and instruments, although it got a bit much when they started playing 'I Will Survive'.**

How are you coping?

I keep reminding myself we are all in this together to a degree. Reading philosophy has helped, and my e-book has been revived with many cheap or free domain philosophy books. Great time to catch up on the classics! Reading is a great form of escapism after staring at a screen all day whilst simultaneously entertaining 4-year-olds or correcting the pronunciation of sheep for the fifth time.

I hope that people stop pretending to be ok and stop this social competition of *look how creative I am* and *look how altruistic and relaxed I am*. **I think it is ok to be stressed, and it is normal to be losing it. Most of us are.** But we are doing it together. In solidarity and there is help if people need it. We just need to find each other. See, even people with dogs are struggling, it is not the golden ticket.

What's the first thing you'll do once this lockdown is over?

Of course, I would like to say go to the beach or visit the UK to see my family. But I won't have the money, I will have spent it all on baked beans as even the Spaniards won't eat them. It will be all that is left on the shelves of DÍA (supermarket) after the apocalypse. Well, that is how it feels at the moment.

In all honesty, I will probably be adjusting to hearing about things other than Covid-19. **I never thought I would miss the day Brexit was on the news.**

Oh and of course a beer on a terrace with friends.

If you could tell the government one thing right now, what would it be?

Keep it up and don't forget the people when the threat of the illness goes away. When the economic fallout happens don't forget to protect the people that you govern, the businesses that will be struggling and the services that have saved us.

- You can follow Alan McGuire on [Medium](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#).
- Read Alan's article on [The Rastro's Political Flea Market](#), which he wrote for Naked Madrid just before the lockdown
- Also read his [recently published article](#) on the history of Spain and COVID-19

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Order pizza from Lab 84 and take the sting out of lockdown

Every time you order in from a small business, they do a little happy dance

Madrileños are social creatures, there is no doubt about this. The concept of a complete lockdown (which is currently what we're all living through) is all the more difficult in a city that lives its life out on the streets. From sipping *cañas*, to munching *pinchos*, to swigging *copas*, we love to go OUT. Out to eat, out to drink, out to dance. It goes without saying that being a social butterfly simply isn't an option right now (as an aside, how well the city is respecting social isolation is actually incredible). But if you're craving a break in the monotony of cook, eat, clean, repeat, there are still small businesses who are able to deliver as I discovered.

Last week as a treat for not killing each other in our tiny flat, myself and my boyfriend [ordered pizza from Lab 84](#). We tend to always go out for pizza, our favourite regular place being NAP (just off Plaza Olavide) and we're both chomping at the bit to try out Mister Pizza 01 on Ponzano when normality is restored – oven pizzas are a poor substitute for the real thing from a wood-fired oven. Unfortunately neither of the aforementioned options are delivering currently, so we took a chance on [Lab 84](#) via Uber Eats (it's also available on Deliveroo & JustEat!) and didn't disappoint.



We ordered one each as we were lucky enough to have a discount code (40% off at the time of writing this) so we splurged on a veggie option and a meaty treat. The veg option was great, topped with mushrooms, roasted peppers, courgette, spinach and tomatoes. My pizza came with gloriously spiced chorizo, mozzarella and red peppers. Obviously nothing really replicates the joy of going out for dins, but at least it gave us a night off cooking and all we had to fight over was who would do the washing up.

The biggest reason why I encourage everyone to order in if they can (I know that people are already feeling the pinch and may have their own reservations about deliveries) is that when you do a small business will do a little happy dance. These are scarily uncertain times and if I can do my own tiny bit to keep them afloat during this time, I will. And while these crazy times which have us clambering for human interaction, we finished chowing on down (let our food digest) and then got right on with a Bodycoach workout, how times have changed

Lab 84 pizza bar

- [Facebook](#) & IG: [@lab84madrid](#)
- [Website](#)
- Phone: 685818096

*You can get deliveries from places all over the city with: [@ubereats_esp](#) [@deliveroo_es](#) [@justeat_es](#) [@glovo_es](#)

By Cat Powell, aka [@littlemissmadrid](#)

Read [Cat's lockdown story here](#)

Lockdown Diaries: Travis

opens up about being quarantined with his ex

Not everyone has the good fortune to be in lockdown alone or with friendly faces. Travis Diamandis had a volatile breakup with his husband in the weeks preceding the lockdown, and now they're awkwardly trapped together along with innocent bystanders in the form of their roommate, dog, and cat.

Travis has been living in Madrid for four years and teaches English to young children while trying to see the best in people. He is often weighed down by nihilistic existentialism which he combats by partying, traveling, and forming meaningful connections with others.

What was your life like before the lockdown vs. today?

My life consisted of walking to school and teaching kids ranging from infants to 12-year-olds. I'm newly single so I was starting to enjoy that by connecting with guys and hanging out with them occasionally. Now all of that has changed.

A month ago, I split up with my Argentinian/Italian husband with whom I currently cohabitate and share the co-parenting duties of our dog and cat. Our breakup was volatile as our relationship had become toxic and our differences irreconcilable. I had intended to move out in April but now that is no longer feasible due to the lockdown. The circumstances are as nightmarish as one would imagine.



Can you elaborate on what it's like to be in quarantine with an ex? Any advice for others with comparable circumstances?

I share this flat with my soon-to-be-ex-husband and another roommate from the UK who has been living with us since August. He is an innocent bystander and mediator. I try not to involve him in the petty conflicts with my ex, but at times it's unavoidable due to the small space and thin walls of the flat. I appreciate that our roommate is with us because it gives me a much-needed confidant and allows me to distance myself from my ex.

My advice for anyone living with an ex is to avoid confrontation and deescalate arguments as they arise in order to maintain peace. It doesn't serve anyone to bicker or add additional tension during this indefinite quarantine. I'd advise others who can relate to my circumstances to breathe,

go to another room of the house/apartment and take any measures needed to get through this in one piece.

For an even more tense period, we were five people confined to the apartment as my ex's mother and half-sister were staying in the flat as they were visiting from Argentina. Fortunately, they left yesterday and I'm relieved. The rental contract is in my ex's name so I didn't have a say in whether or not they stayed with us, and I was worried that they would be trapped here. They were incredibly stressed, and understandably so. They were civil and cordial towards me for the most part. However, I was extremely embarrassed when my ex initiated a loud fight with me while they were within earshot. Fortunately, Argentina repatriated all 23,000 Argentinians who were seeking to escape Spain over the course of a three-day period and now we're three in the apartment once again.

Have there been any comical moments in this unprecedented time?

The thin walls of the apartment cause my ex and I to overhear snippets of each other's video calls with friends, family and our respective romantic interests. Often, I catch him badmouthing me to his friends who we used to share and it's awkward to inadvertently overhear his skewed perspective of events. I take comfort in knowing that this chapter of my life will be a riveting story to tell my future grandkids, and more imminently on first dates after things go back to normal.

Do you have any tips for those in need?

Trying to keep distance within social distancing is not easy. I try to read, I walk my dog to get some fresh air, and I watch educational videos on YouTube so I don't feel worthless for wasting my time.

My tips for others would be to reconnect with family, old friends, coworkers, or romantic interests. Just because we're shut-in doesn't mean we have to be isolated from the world. It's important to safeguard mental health in times like this. In an attempt to lean less heavily on my roommate for emotional labor, I turned to the online community of the [Depression and Anxiety Support Group \(Madrid\)](#) to share my feelings in a safe space.

Those of us who are healthy but suffer from mental health issues or anxiety need understanding and compassion during these times rather than the go-to "suck it up" advice.

Do a few pushups, sit-ups, and stretch. Read a good book. Watch a movie that lets you feel what you need to feel. For me, that is *The Wizard of Oz*. It has been my favorite movie since I was young and it never fails to put me at ease.

What is the first thing you'll do once the lockdown is over?

I want to keep this PG but I'll definitely see some of the romantic interests I have been corresponding with in these trying times. I'll have a belated birthday party or dinner because I celebrated my birthday alone in quarantine.

What's going on in your hometown? Would you like to send the people there a message?

My suburban Texas hometown is just now coming to terms with the gravity of the situation and I hope that they follow the measures that health experts are proposing. I want to beg the people of my predominantly Republican southern town, a place where the open carrying of firearms is prevalent, not to be paranoid and racist towards Asian-Americans and distrustful of health experts. The world is in a precarious state and being careless or vindictive will only exacerbate problems.

If you could tell the government one thing right now, what would it be?

I've seen a lot of older people still out and about like nothing is happening and that infuriates me because we're in quarantine with our lives effectively paused for their well-being. It is such a slap in the face. I'd want the authorities to focus more heavily on restricting their movements as opposed to what they're doing now: entering the personal space of dog walkers and grocery shoppers to gauge how far they are from their registered addresses.

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