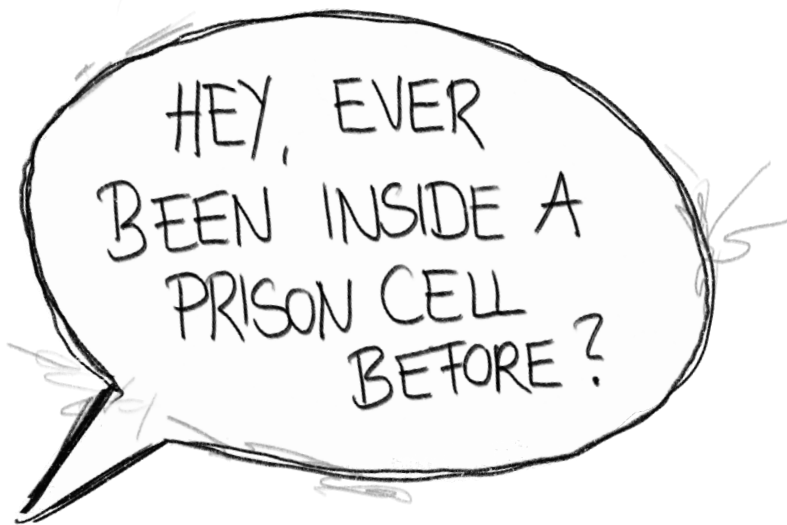


A story about freedom

A reportage about the time during the coronavirus lockdown

**Elea Bank
Chur, Grisons, Switzerland
June 2020**



This story takes place in the Swiss city of Chur, somewhere towards the end of April.

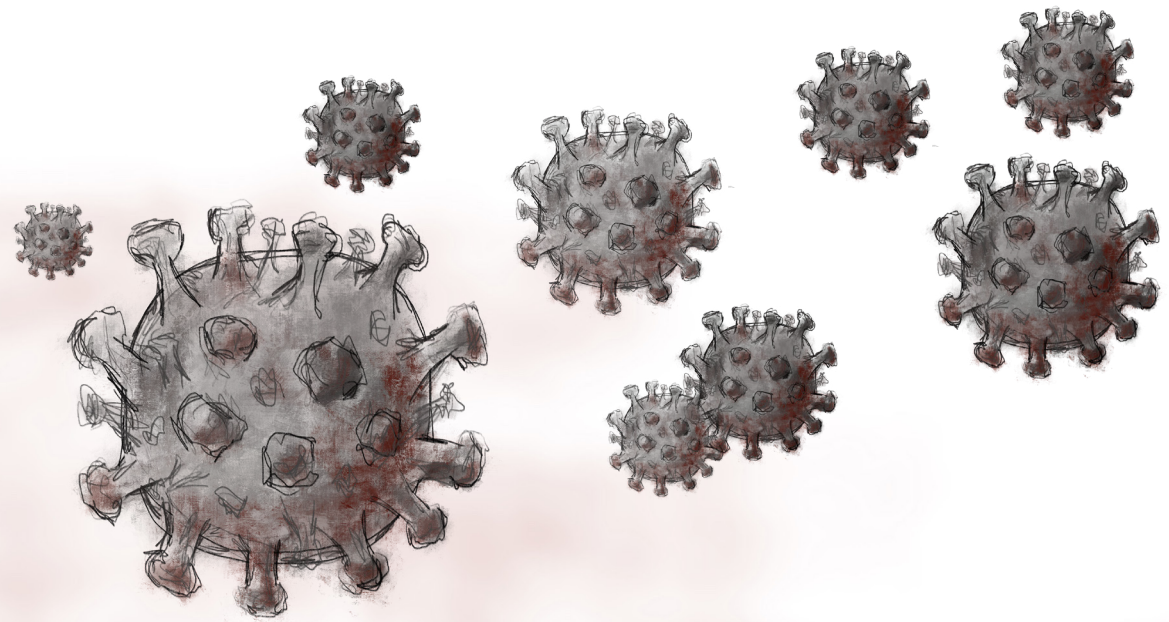
At that point in time my boyfriend Jan and I have stayed inside our one-room apartment for over a month already.



Even though the apartment was decorated nicely, I began comparing it to a **prison cell**. I even hung up a calendar, on which I counted the days we've been stuck inside. In a few years from now one might ask, what had happened? Well, let me explain.



For us Swiss people it all started in early 2020, when the **coronavirus** slowly started spreading all over the world. Then in March the Federal Council of Switzerland declared a **nationwide lockdown**. We were advised to stay at home and only leave our houses if absolutely necessary. So that's what we did.

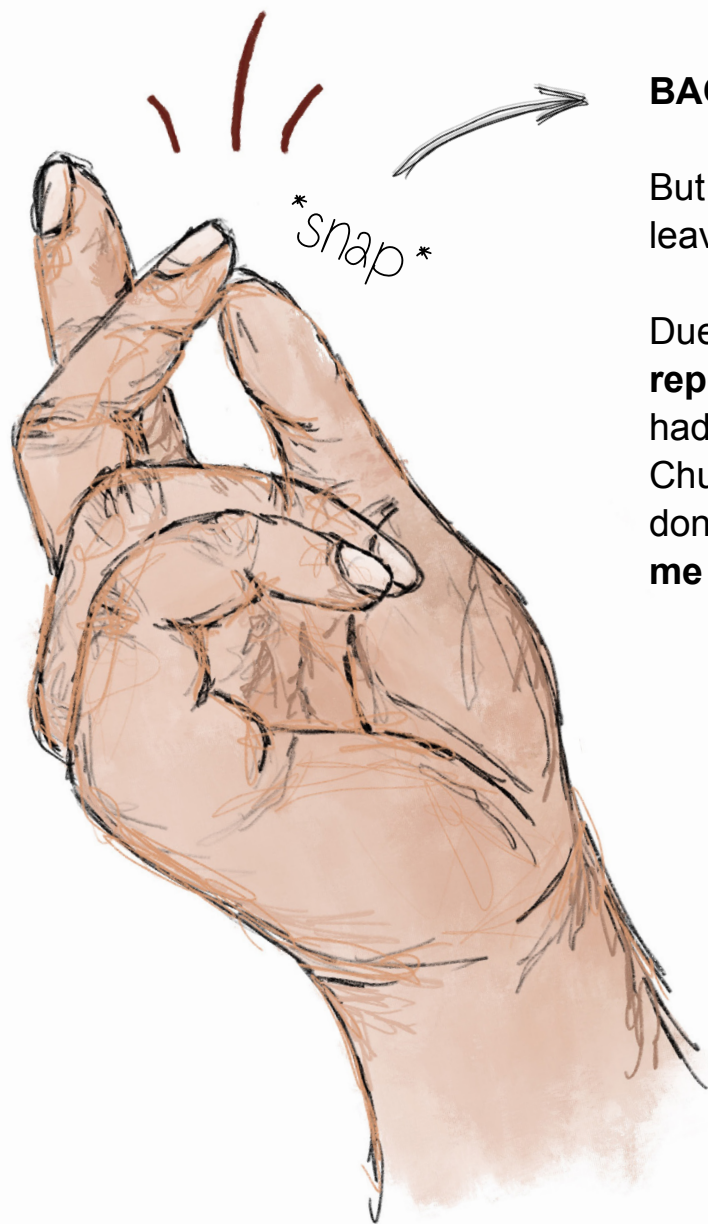


BLEIBEN
SIE
ZUHAUSE!

In the beginning it didn't seem too bad, but a few days into the lockdown and people started feeling deprived of their freedom.

Yet, everytime we left the apartment without a real reason we felt extremely guilty. We only went outside to go grocery shopping, or sometimes for a short walk. We didn't feel comfortable being outdoors, because we weren't supposed to be there. But being stuck inside for over a month didn't feel any better...

Federal Council
Alain Berset



snap

BACK TO REALITY

But then, somewhere towards the end of April, we got an opportunity to leave our home without feeling guilty.

Due to the cancellation of events Jan's **film team** wasn't able to do their **reportage** on the Carnival of Basel, as they had initially planned. They had to start all over again and decided to do their story on the old prison of Chur, which is empty at the moment. Because some of his team members don't live in the area and weren't able to leave their homes, **they've asked me to help them out on set.**


My ticket to freedom, at least for a few hours.





Of course agreed to help them out, not only to get out of the house for a few hours but because they are my friends as well. I was excited to actually do something instead of sitting inside in front of my laptop all day long.

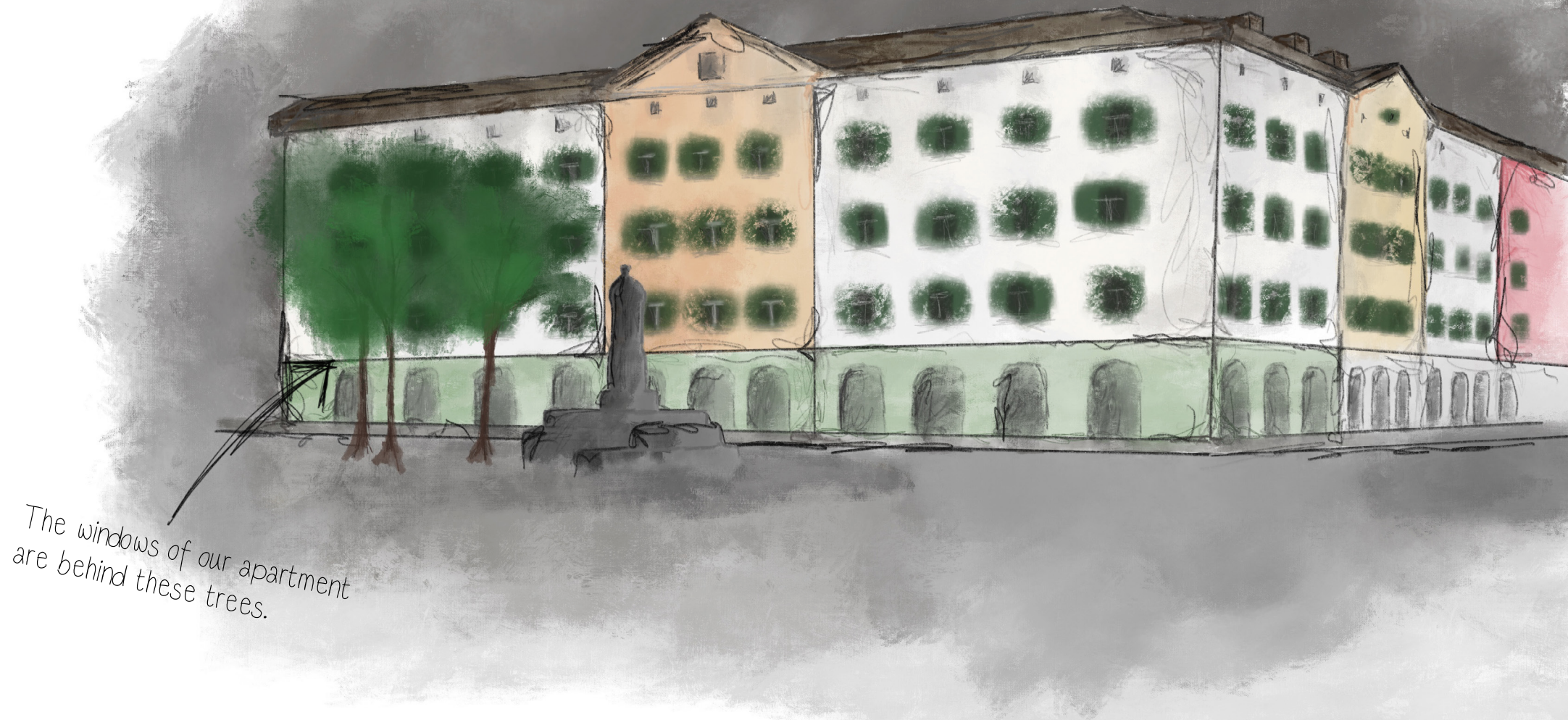
So we grabbed our camera gear, dressed up and **went to the empty Sennhof prison** in the old city of Chur.



I wore jeans again for the first time in weeks. It felt quite weird wearing real pants and a nice shirt, instead of sweatpants and a hoodie.

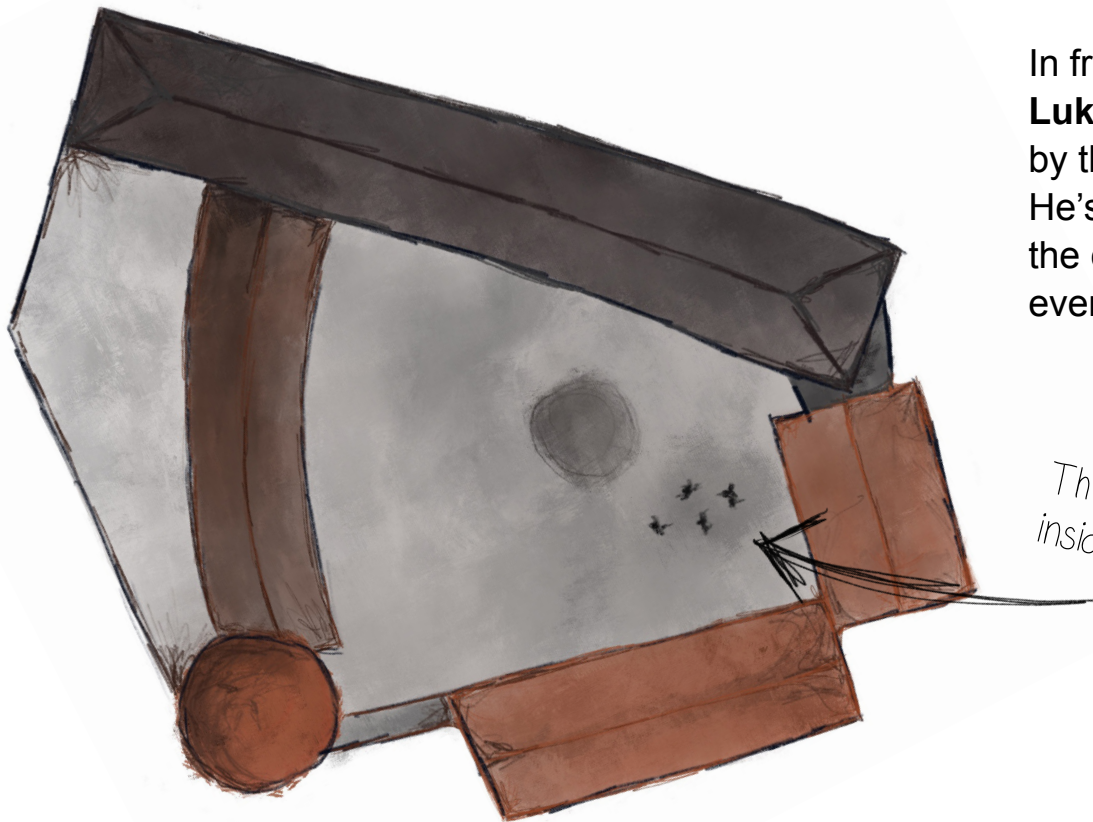
Unlocking the front door already felt weird in a certain way. But as we walked through the abandoned streets of Chur, I must admit I still felt uncomfortable.

The **mood in the city was rather dark** and dull, it seemed like everything was covered in grey fog. The joyful and loud twittering of almost felt threatening.



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In front of the huge prison door we met our classmate **Lukrezia**, who is also part of Jan's crew. We were later joined by the architect **Michael**, who gave us a tour of the facility. He's got the lead of the project, where they are going to rebuild the old prison into a public area with restaurants, shops and even apartments for students.

The four of us, standing inside the prison's courtyard.

We had to enter the Sennhof prison through multiple doors. The first thing that caught my eye was the intimidating **barbed wire fence**. It was everywhere: On the doors, on the windows, along the walls and even on top of them. They really made sure that **nobody was ever going to get out of there**.



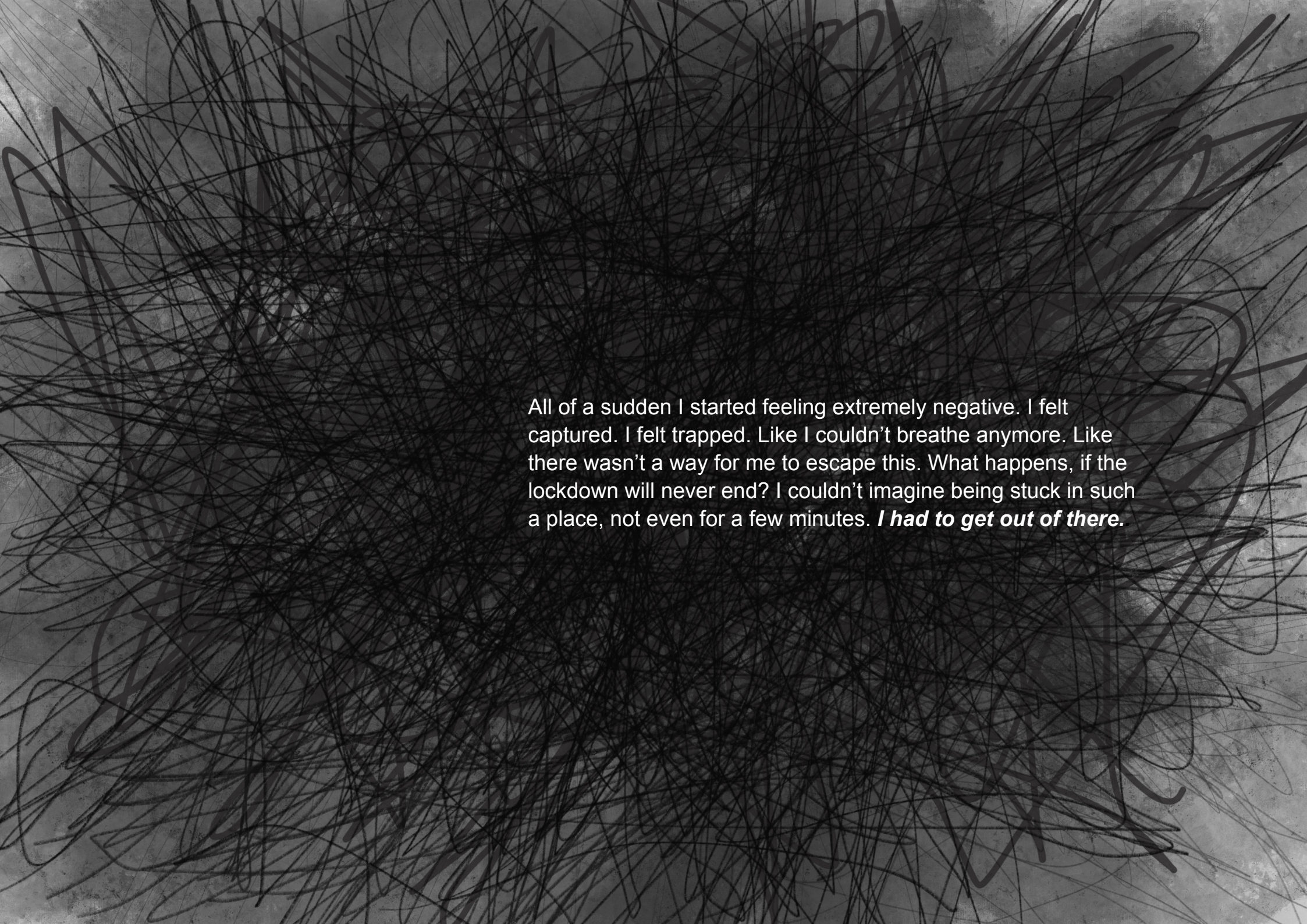
We then went into the main building, where the **inmates used to live**. The hallways were narrow with tiny windows, guarded by massive iron poles. There wasn't much light already, but the dark blue painted doors made everything seem even more **dreary and bleak**.

The most intense moment was, when we got to step foot in an actual prison cell. It was so small, the four of us didn't even fit in there together. **None of us could imagine living in such a dark, small and depressing space.**



There are multiple
locks on a cell door.





All of a sudden I started feeling extremely negative. I felt captured. I felt trapped. Like I couldn't breathe anymore. Like there wasn't a way for me to escape this. What happens, if the lockdown will never end? I couldn't imagine being stuck in such a place, not even for a few minutes. ***I had to get out of there.***

While getting lost in dark thoughts, I wasn't aware that I grabbed the next close thing to me and started clenching my hand into a fist.



IT'S
OKAY.

EVERYTHING
IS GOING TO
BE ALRIGHT.

Jan's jacket

Abruptly the bad feelings went away again. I felt the warm embrace of a hug, someone holding me tight, giving me comfort and safety. I took a deep breath and looked up into the beautiful and loving eyes of Jan.

The next thing I remember is the four of us standing in the prison's courtyard again, waiting as the big gate as it slowly opens up, revealing the **beauty of freedom** again.

Thank the Lord I get to decide for myself, when the door opens up and when it doesn't.



When we set foot outside again, I came to a realization. Compared to life in prison, **our lockdown didn't seem as bad anymore, as it did before.**

As we walked back through the empty streets of Chur, everything seemed a lot more peaceful. The air was fresh and pleasant, and the birds were happily twittering their melodies again.

Eventhough we're advised to stay at home during the lockdown, **we are not trapped, we still have our freedom.** From that day on we started going on walks more often, sipping our coffee outside again and even enjoying it like we used to.

But I still choose to stay home most of the time, because it's the right thing to do at the moment. It could, or better said, it actually does save lives.

I am more than grateful, that I don't have to go through all of this on my own. I appreciate all the loving and caring people in my life, now more than ever.

Thank you, all of you. We'll stand this through together.

Everything is going to be alright.

Thank you.

