THE CORONA CRISIS
A House - Five Floors - Different Fates
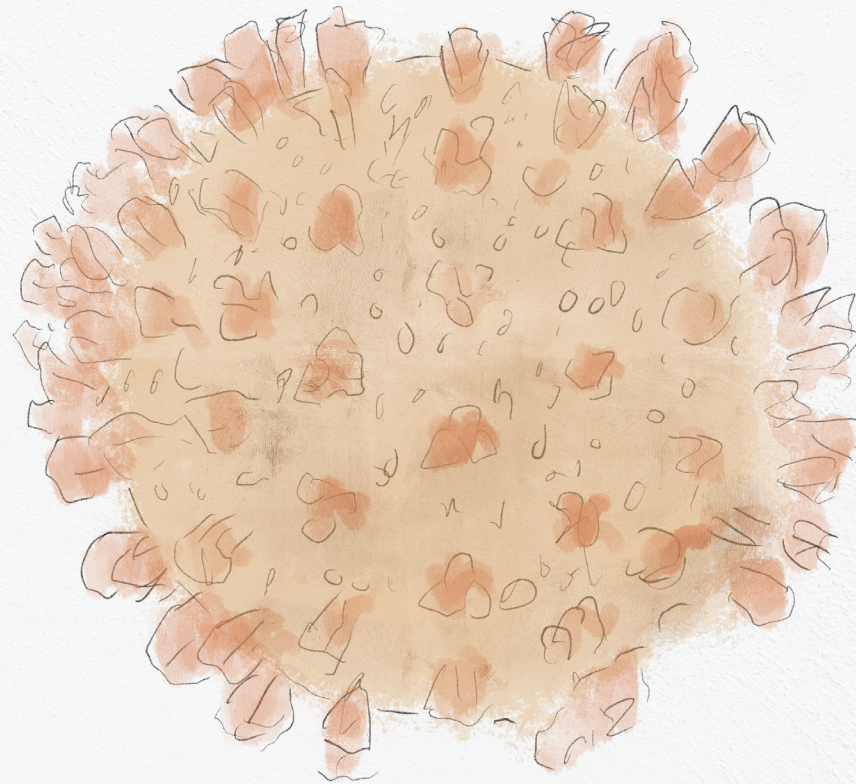
VISUAL REPORTAGE
FABIENNE T.
BERNE, JUNE 2020
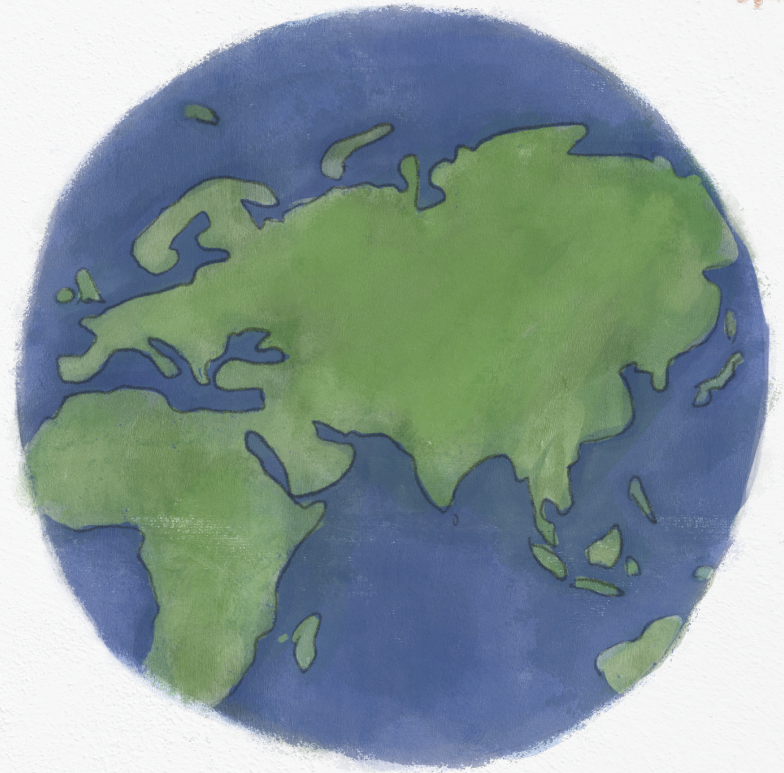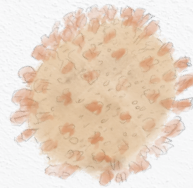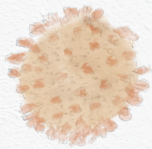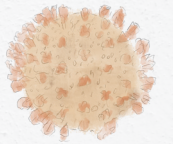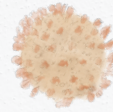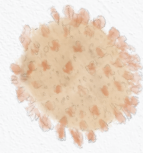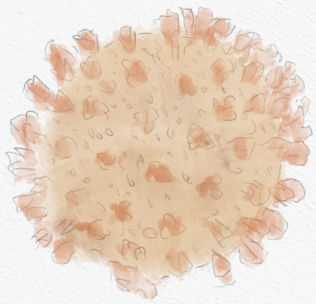
The coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, keeps the world in suspense. The infectious disease was first discovered in China at the end of 2019. The virus spread rapidly all over the world. Since the beginning of March 2020, also Europe has been experiencing the global pandemic. In particular Italy is badly affected with more than 230.000 cases. While 6.600.000 people worldwide have tested positive for the virus, more than 390.000 people have already died.
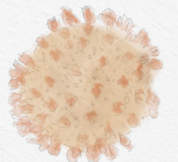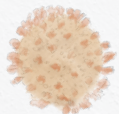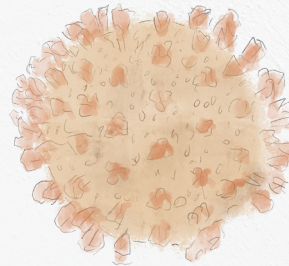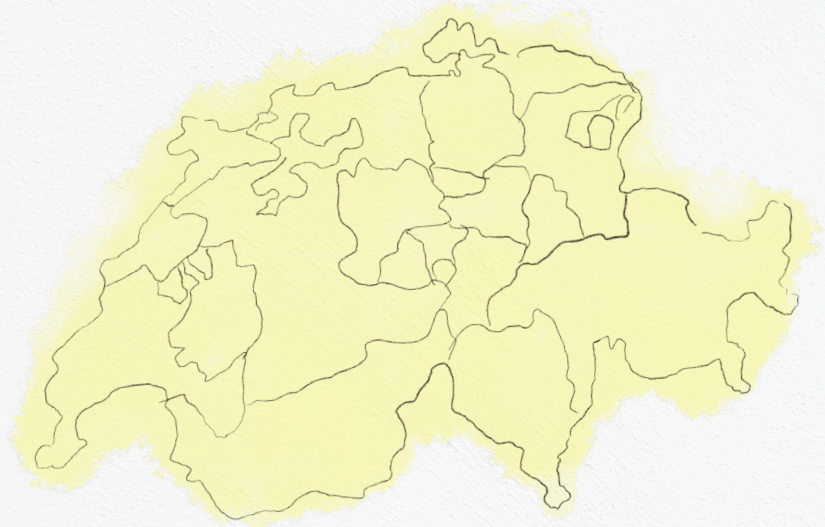
In Switzerland, around 31.000 citizens were tested positive for the virus and more than 1.900 people died as a result of the lung disease. Switzerland has been at a standstill since mid of March. The lock down decided by the Federal Council led to an economic and social standstill. Shops, bars and restaurants, cinemas as well as schools have been closed - only grocery stores are allowed to be open. Insecurity is spreading among the population. For everyone it is time to keep distance, wash their hands and stay at home. Group gatherings of more than 5 people are forbidden and those aged 65 years and over should not leave the house, as they belong to the risk group. The pandemic has arrived in Switzerland.

CURIA CONFOEDERATIONIS HELVETICAE
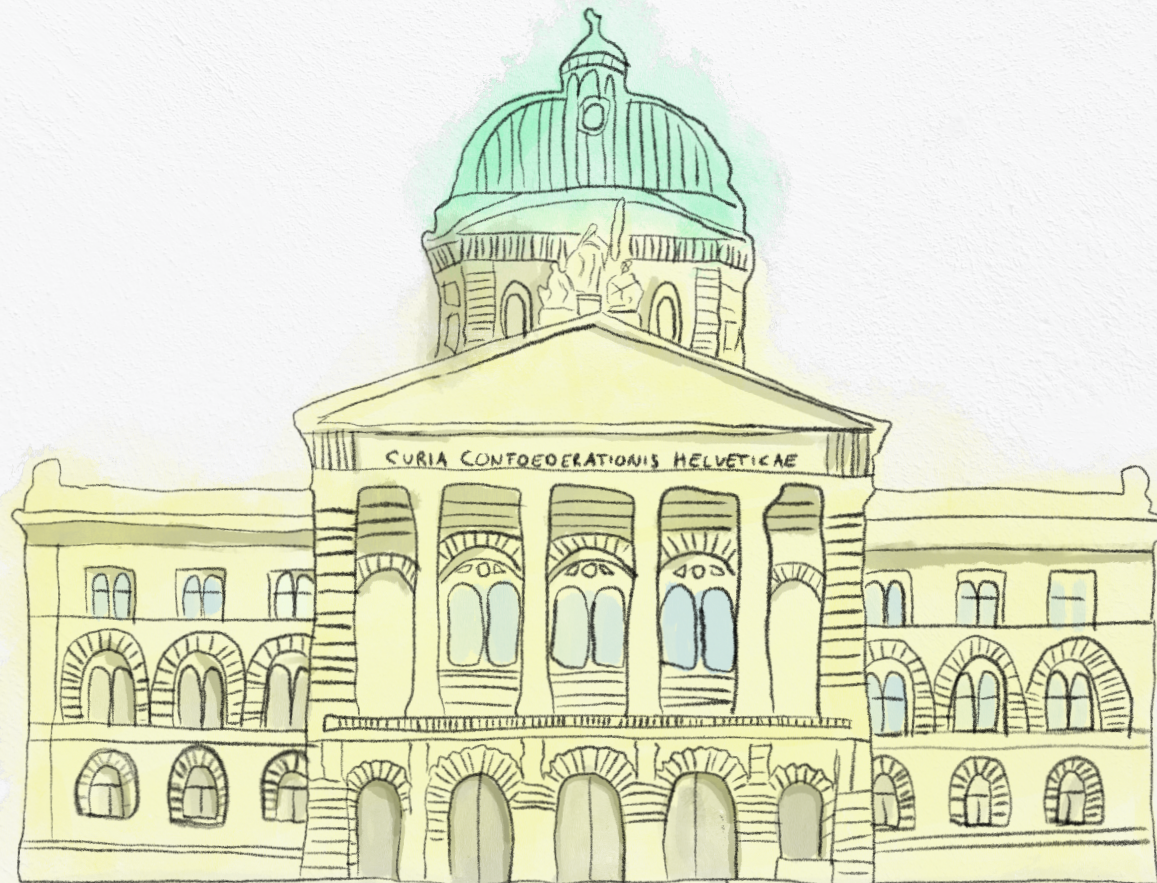
But what does the corona crisis mean for each one of us? What are the consequences of the pandemic? How does it change our everyday life?

We are located in the trendy Breitenrain district of Berne at Flurstrasse 10. All residents of this house have one thing in common: they are affected by the corona crisis.

Ground Floor

We enter the house. In front of us is a red, closed door. It is the door of Nadine's hairdressing salon. The 30-year-old opens the door and tells us that five years ago she fulfilled her dream and opened her own salon. During the lock down she is forced to close her shop. Without income for several weeks her existence is in great danger.

Nadine is afraid not to be able to pay her bills, the rent and the wages of her employee Lena. Her last hope is the government: Nadine can apply for short-time work for her and Lena and thus receive 80% of her previous salary. Whether she will economically survive the crisis is not clear.
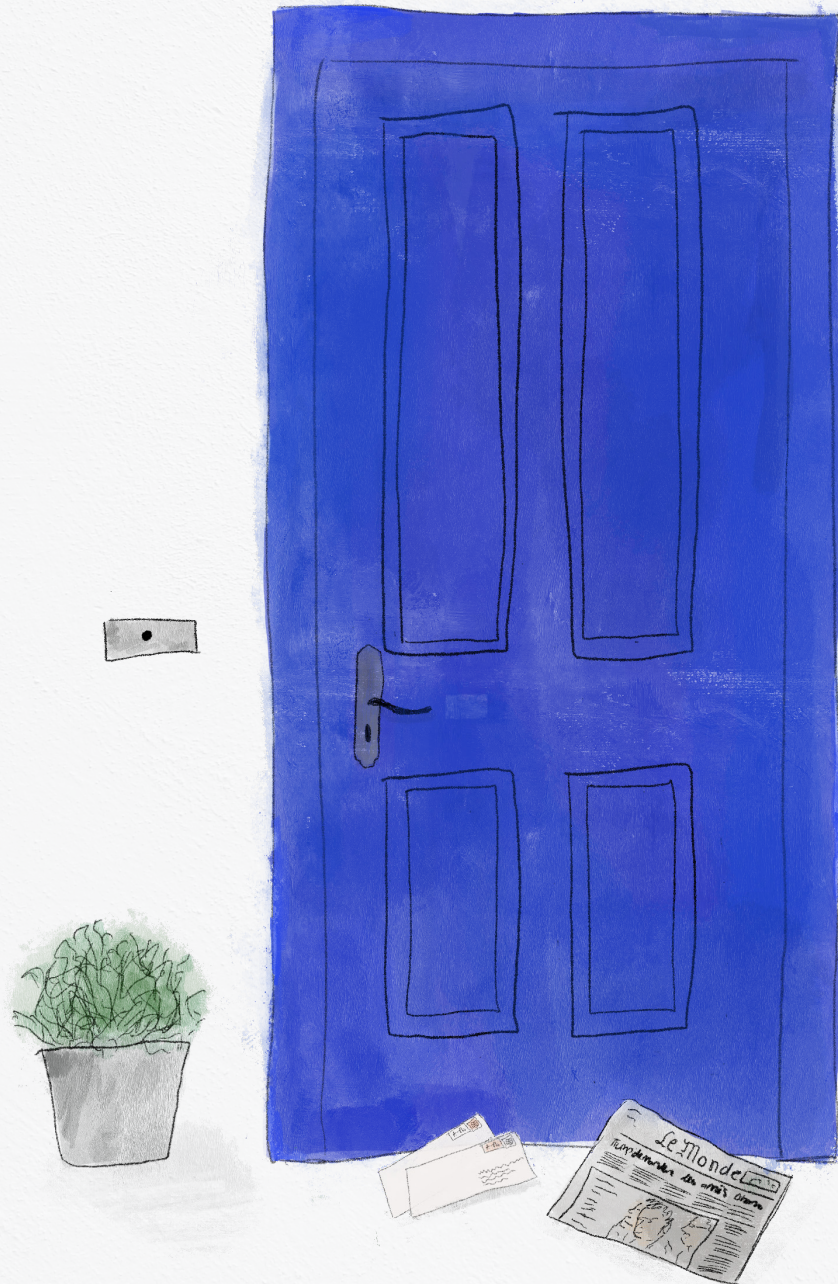
1st Floor

On the first floor, letters and old newspapers pile up in front of Helene Hauser's door. No one is opening. We learn from Nadine that the 67-year-old lady died of the coronavirus last Monday. Her lungs and many other organs have failed as a result of the virus. Helene died in the intensive care situation of the "Insel" hospital - an agonizing death without the succour of her family. Nobody was allowed to visit her during the intensive care unit. A lonely death. Even the funeral will be sad: Only a few people will be allowed to attend the funeral and there will be no ceremony.
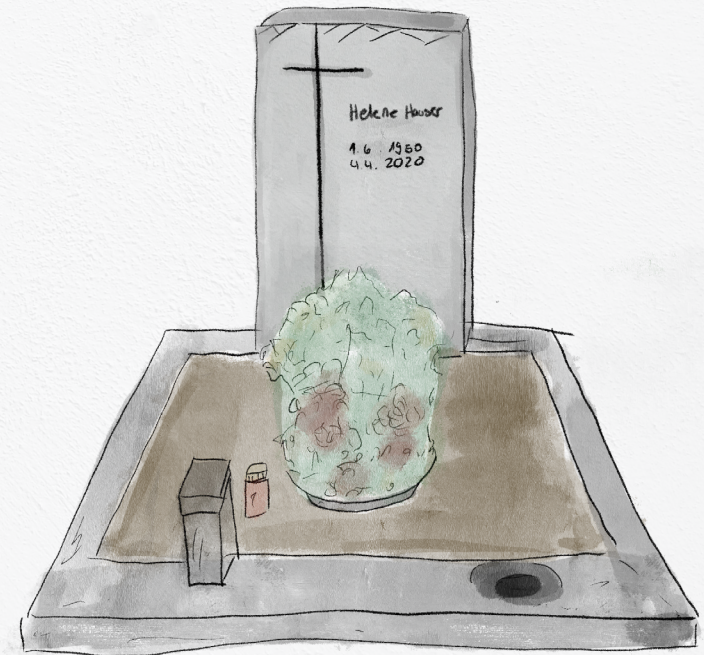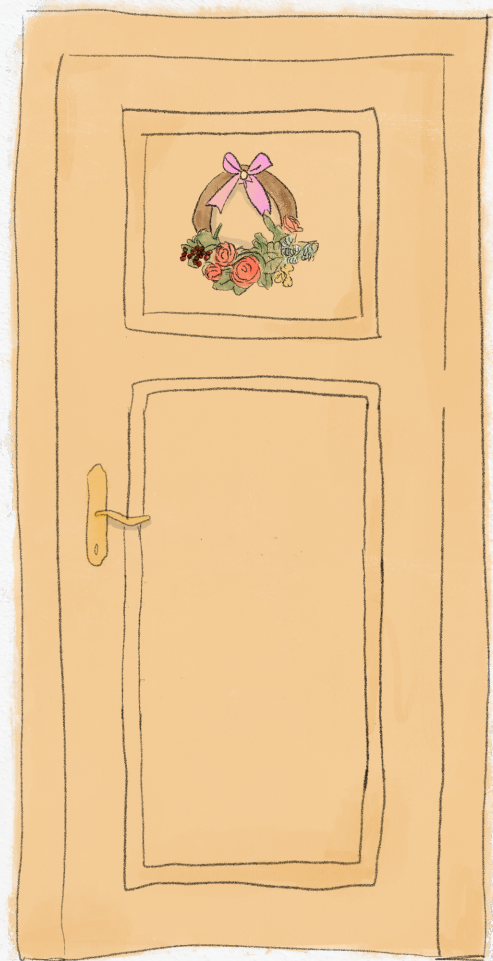
2nd Floor

Lost in thought we knock at Maria's door on the second floor. After a while the 80-year-old widow opens the door. She is happy about the visit, because she has been alone for weeks now. She tells us that her family, who live in Basel, cannot visit her at the moment as they fear to infect her. Maria is missing the closeness and love of her family. As she has health problems, she is dependent on a cleaning lady. However, due to the current situation she is not able to come to Maria's place.

Staircase

In the stairwell, we come across the old cat Miro, which belonged to Helene. He misses Helene very much. Nevertheless, Miro is happy about the lockdown, because many residents are now at home and he can benefit from countless cuddles. Currently, all residents of the house are taking care of him.
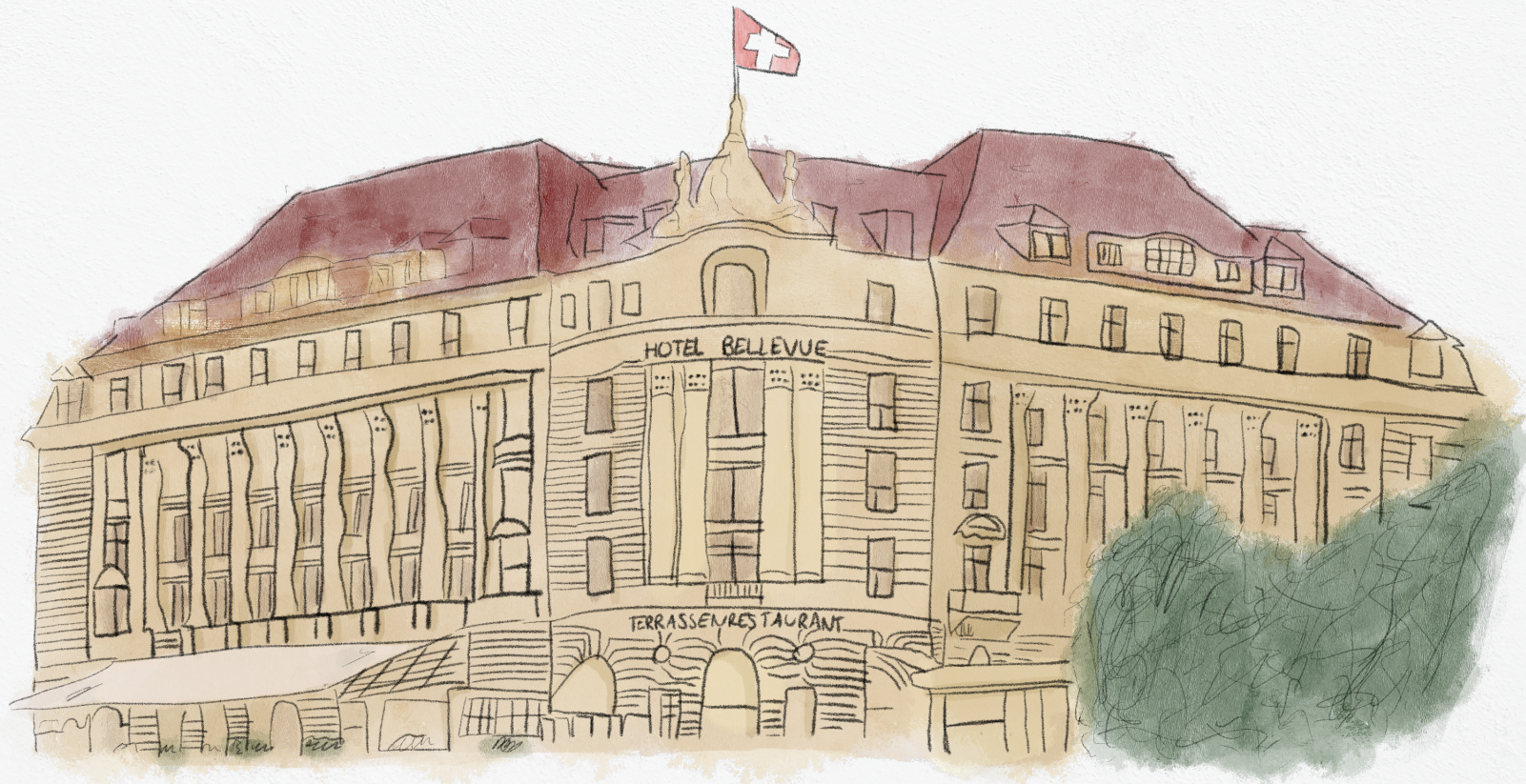
3th Floor

Arriving on the 3rd floor, we knock on the door of Akilah. A beautiful young woman opens the door with a shy smile. In broken German she explains to us that she has moved to Switzerland two months ago.

She is having a particularly difficult time right now. Akilah worked hard to come to Switzerland. As she arrived, her dream job at the Bellevue Palace Hotel was cancelled due to the lock down. Moreover, she cannot attend a German class at the moment. Akilah has no friends yet. She has been sitting lonely in her small apartment for days and is hoping for a job. Slowly she runs out of money. She is afraid of going back to Turkey.

As a small extra income, Akilah is several times a week doing the grocery shopping and some housekeeping for Maria.

4th Floor

On the fourth and last floor, ten-year-old Elias opens the door. Elias lives alone with his father in the apartment, since his mother died of cancer two years ago. He tells us that his father Joshua is at work right now.

Joshua works as a male nurse at the "Insel" hospital. Since the beginning of April he has had to work 12 hour shifts. The long shifts are hard for him, physically and mentally: Every day he gets confronted with life and death.
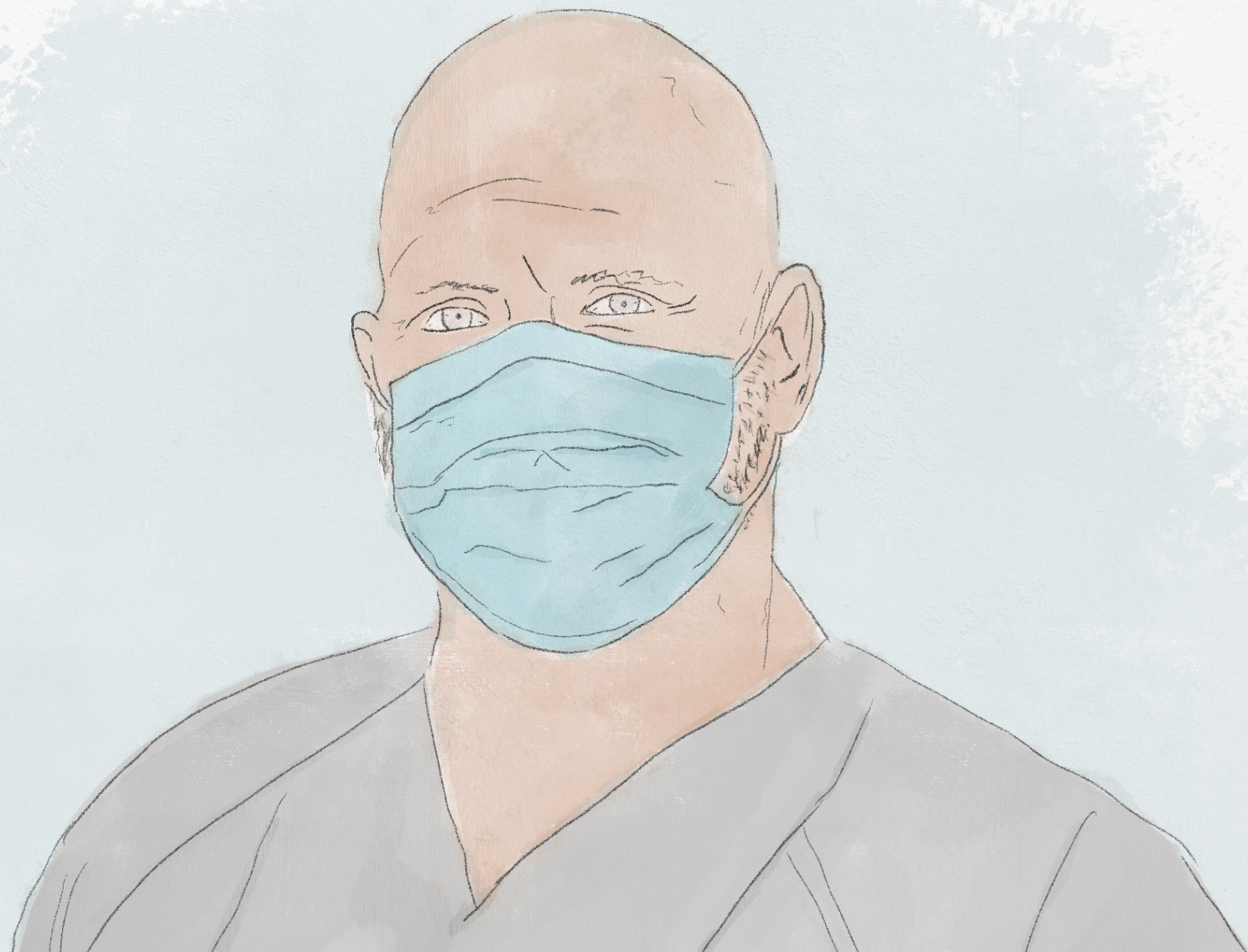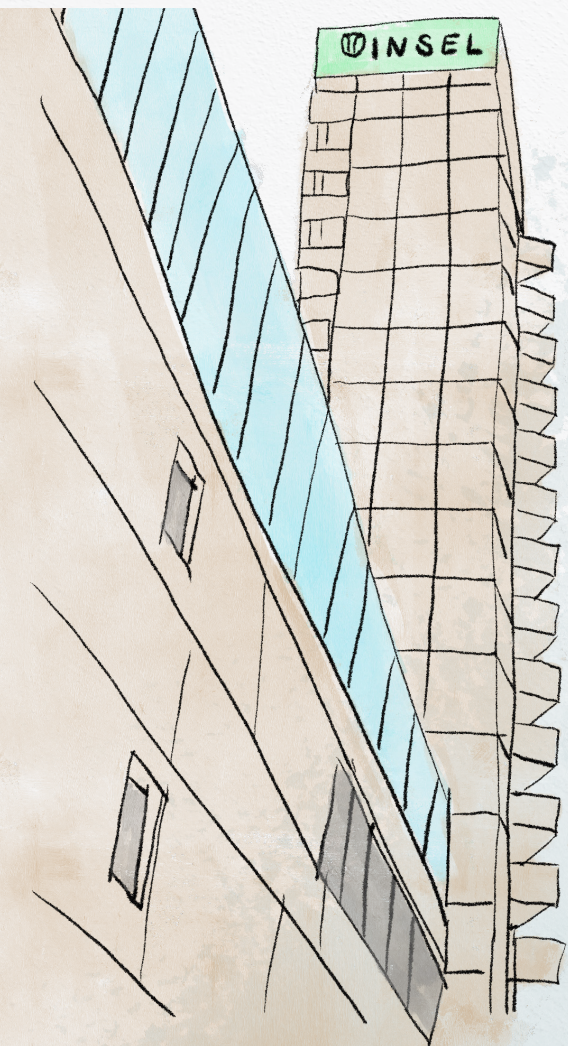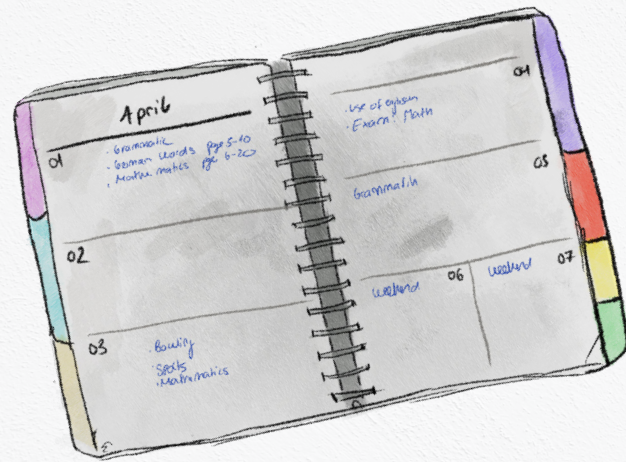
Currently, Elias cannot go to school due to the lockdown. However, he still has to do a lot of homework. He shows us how diligently he does it.

The fact that Elias cannot go to school turned the whole life of the small family upside down. Who is looking after Elias when his father is working? Who helps him with his homework? The situation is challenging for many parents. Fortunately, the residents of the housing block know how to help each other and everyone helps where they can.So, Akilah regularly looks after Elias and cooks for him. Maria helps him with his homework. A win-win situation - for everyone.

It is already dark outside. We leave the house and take a look back. A visit that will not soon be forgotten. Five doors. Seven destinies. However, these are just a few of many.
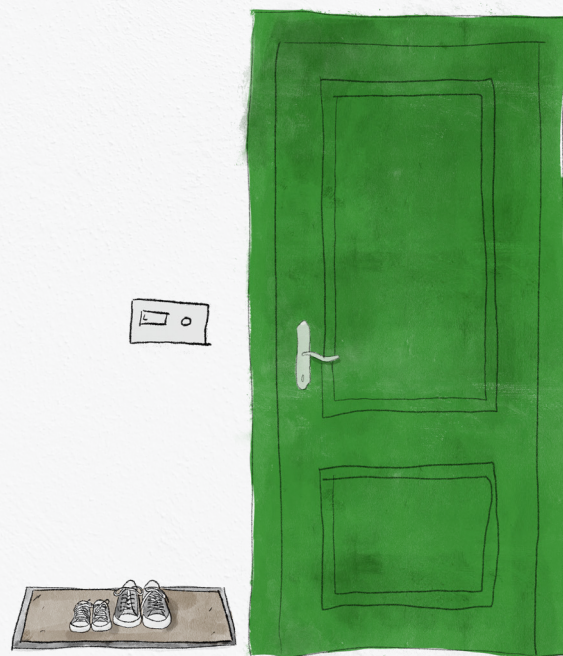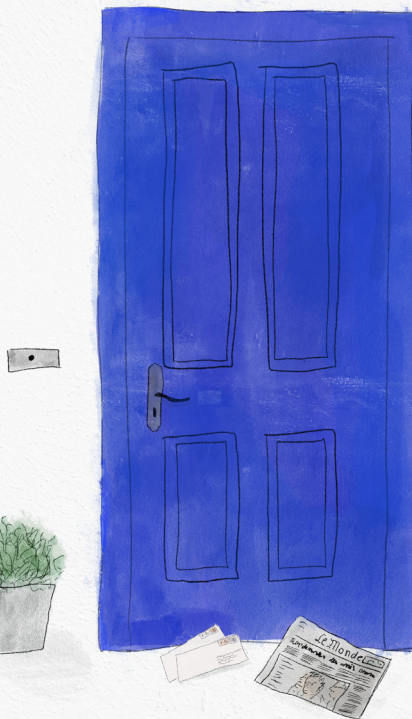
Many doors will remain to be closed to us. Now it is time to stop thinking only about ourselves! Solidarity is needed. Let us help each other, let us stick together in times of fear, loneliness, helplessness and pain. Because only together we can overcome the crisis. **One for all - all for one. Together.**